

WORKING BETTER TOGETHER

How Young People's
Foundations are raising the
game for local collaboration

INTEN

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“They bring energy, and provide a development framework by building relationships with organisations that Councils often find hard to coordinate. They provide a united sector and raise the standards and quality of provision.”

Jayne Vertkin, Head of Early Help,
Family Services, City of Westminster

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report was commissioned by YPF Trust and was researched and written by the INTEN partnership, a group of independent social sector consultants who are members of the Experience Network (www.experiencenetwork.org.uk): Hilary Barnard, Jane Cockerell, Ruth Lesirge, Marcus Ward, and Steve Wyler.

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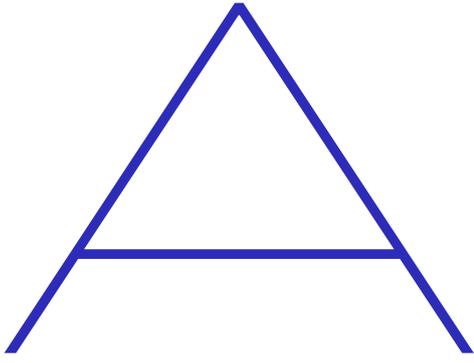
The aims of the report were to examine the impact of Young People's Foundations before and during COVID-19, and to assess their potential value in any local system for children and young people in the future. The intended audiences for the report included, but were not limited to, national and local government.

Section A is an Executive Summary. Section B addresses the aims of the report by describing the Young People's Foundation model, and setting out what the Young People's Foundations have achieved before and during COVID-19, and what they might contribute in the future. Section C provides additional context for the activities of the Young People's Foundations, by describing the challenges faced by children and young people and the local organisations working with them.

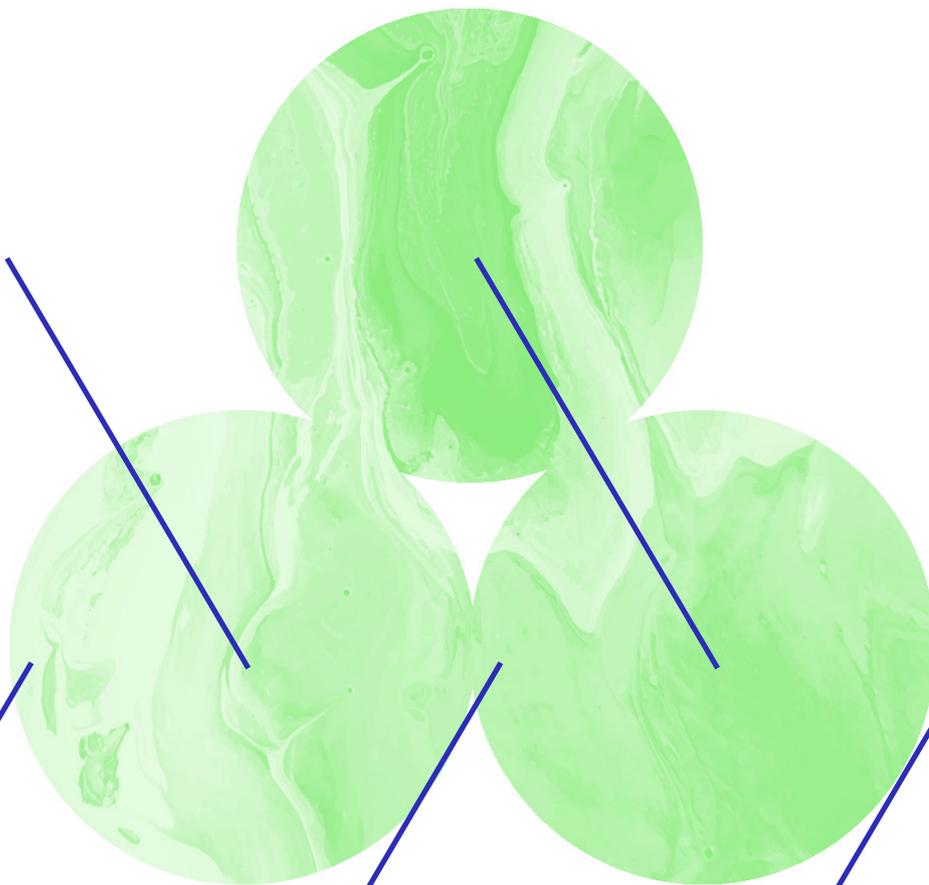
A note about the use of the term BAME: we recognise the diversity of individual identities and lived experiences, and we accept that BAME is an imperfect term that does not fully capture the racial, cultural, and ethnic identities that experience structural and systematic inequality. Whenever possible, we attempt to name individuals as they themselves prefer to be named.

The research was conducted in August and September 2020 and the methodology included on-line surveys of the nine Young People's Foundations and of a sample of 26 organisations working with children and young people in areas served and supported by Young People's Foundations. It also included 12 interviews with a selection of stakeholders (local authorities, funders, organisations working with children and young people, national youth sector agencies, national influencers), and on-line workshops with Young People's Foundations.

The INTEN partnership would like to express our thanks to all those who participated in the research, and in particular to Justin Watson and Kita Ikoku who oversaw the project.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



A1

OVERVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS

Our study found that Young People's Foundations offer a positive and welcome model of local collaboration.

They exist to improve the lives of children and young people, by supporting and strengthening the work of local agencies which contribute to that goal.

To date there are nine Young People's Foundations (YPFs), eight in London and one in Manchester. Although the first was established only five years ago, they have quickly demonstrated their value in their area.

THEY CREATE COLLABORATIVE LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

The Young People's Foundations have built productive relationships with local councils, businesses, funders, and with large and small charities.

Together, they have already brought together 1,279 organisations into collaborative local partnerships.

Of these 498 are small local charities and community groups, at the front line of work with children and young people.



THEY INCREASE THE FLOW OF FUNDING FOR FRONT-LINE WORK

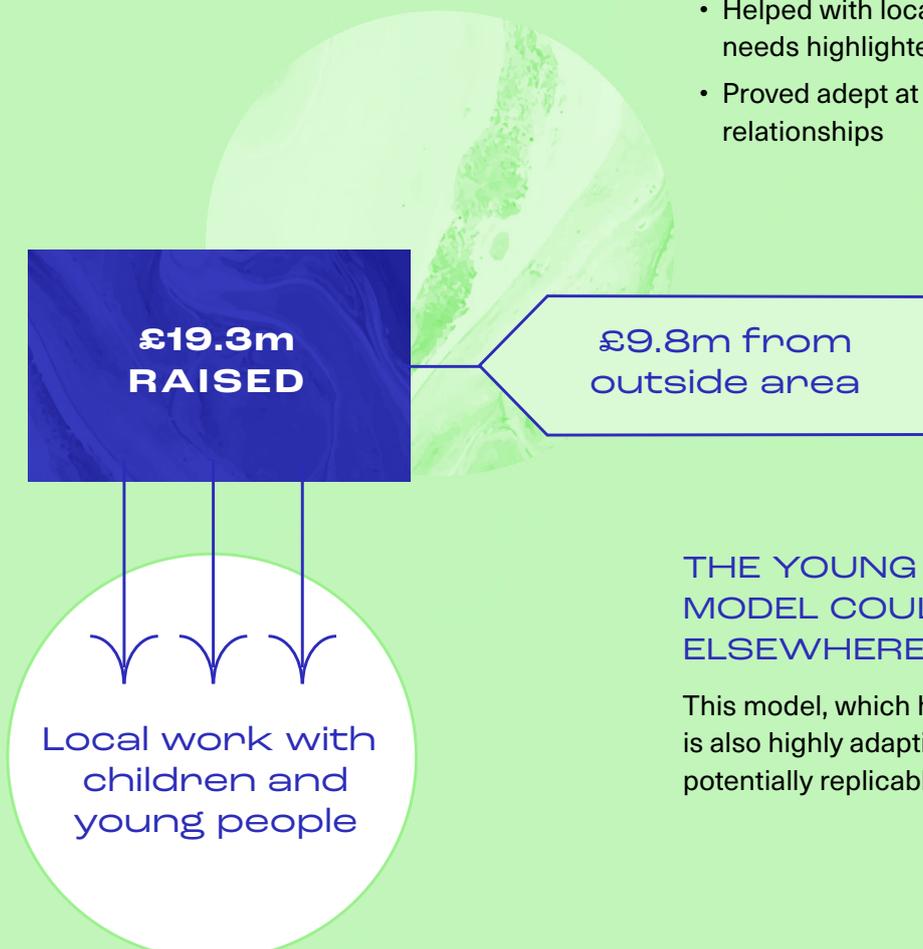
They have so far raised £19.3m of funding for local work with children and young people. Of this over half (£9.8m) is from sources located outside the local authority area.

They have used their on-the-ground knowledge to reach deep into their local communities, directing this funding to where it can have the greatest impact.

DURING THE PANDEMIC, THEY HAVE PROVED THEMSELVES FAST AND ADAPTABLE

Young People's Foundations very quickly:

- Became a go-to source of information
- Stepped up their fundraising and grant distribution activities
- Helped front-line agencies move on-line and remodel their services
- Exercised leadership within the sector, building on their learning, thinking and planning ahead, and enabling organisations to act collaboratively
- Helped with local responses to inequalities and needs highlighted in the crisis.
- Proved adept at managing a multiplicity of relationships



THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S FOUNDATION MODEL COULD BE REPLICATED ELSEWHERE

This model, which has some strong common features, is also highly adaptive to local circumstances, making it potentially replicable across the country

IN MORE DETAIL

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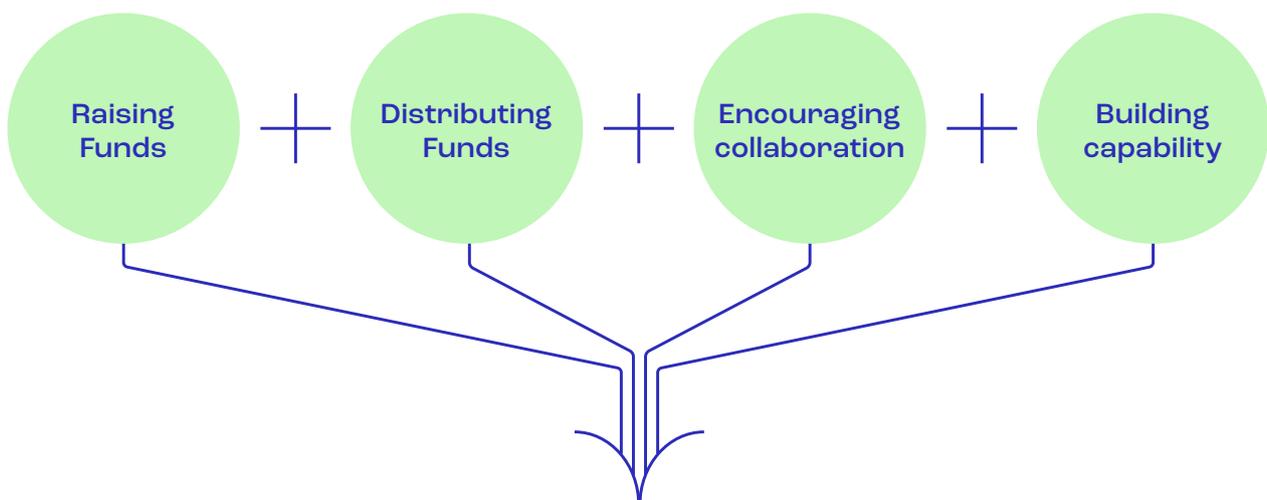
ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE'S FOUNDATIONS

The first Young People's Foundations were set up in 2015. They now number nine in total, eight in London (in Barnet, Brent, Camden, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster) and one in Manchester.

Their mission is to improve the lives of children and young people by supporting and strengthening the work of local agencies which contribute to that goal.

Significant similarities in the way they work include:

- **Raising funds** from a wide spectrum of sources (the public sector, independent grant makers, companies and high net worth individuals).
- **Distributing the funds** to small front line agencies, mining their local knowledge.
- **Encouraging collaboration** among local children and youth organisations, as well as with the local authority, other public sector and other agencies.
- **Building capacity and capability** among local organisations, enabling them to raise and sustain the quality of their work.



IMPROVING THE LIVES OF
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



A common national framework

Local variation
responding to
local needs and
opportunities

Young People's Foundations have a number of common operating principles:

- **They do not deliver youth provision directly.** Instead, they support others to do so.
- **They are membership and partnership bodies.** Their members and partners are primarily local children and young people's organisations but also include the local council, business sector partners, local branches of national charities, and others.
- **They do not compete** with their members and partners. For example they do not bid for funds where that would reduce the funds available for local frontline organisations.
- **They involve children and young people directly in their work**, supporting them to take part in research, co-design, and in the grant-making process.
- **They value and practice diversity.** For example in terms of ethnicity, across the network 39% of trustees and 47% of staff are from BAME backgrounds.

Within these common support services and operating principles there is much scope for local variation:

- They carry out local needs assessments, with young people, gathering evidence and insights from a wide range of local organisations (peer research).
- They direct their funding towards activities viewed locally as priorities. As a consequence, Young People's Foundations often engage with small and informal organisations that more formal institutions such as local authorities find hard to reach, but which can be particularly close to those children and young people most at risk - for example supplementary schools.
- They form consortia or alliances of local agencies to address particular issues of local importance.

Young People's Foundations in London have benefited from core support from John Lyon's Charity, and also from the City Bridge Trust. However, they have shown they are capable of raising funds from elsewhere for their operations, while keeping themselves lean and nimble.

They have also demonstrated that this model of collaborative infrastructure can attract high-quality and skilled staff and Board members, willing to go the extra mile to do what is needed.

In support of the Young People's Foundation initiative, an umbrella organisation (YPF Trust) has recently been established. Its purpose is to improve co-ordination across the network, build a quality assurance system for Young People's Foundations, and engage with corporates and others who want to support local activity that benefits children and young people.

A3

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

As set out in section C of our main report, small local organisations are often best placed to win the trust of children and young people and make a positive impact on their lives.

But acting alone they cannot hope to respond adequately to all the challenges young people face, to access sufficient resources, and to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for successful intervention.

So Young People's Foundations have a vital role in encouraging collaboration, in attracting funds and directing them to where they can best be used, and in driving up the quality of local action.

Young People's Foundations have made good progress in a short time, winning the confidence of frontline organisations and building positive relationships across different sectors, not least with local authorities and with local businesses (sometimes in places where this had not previously been the case). They have also operated in an entirely politically neutral way, regardless of local political party control.

As a result the Young People's Foundations have been able to play a local convening role, encouraging a greater spirit and practice of collaboration across local agencies. They have also demonstrated the potential for working effectively with each other across geographical boundaries on themes such as youth violence.

Young People's Foundations have collectively brought 1,279 organisations into membership or partnership.

This includes 947 organisations working directly with children and young people, of which 498 are small local charities and community groups (with a turnover of less than £100k).

These small local organisations are often at the front line of work with children and young people in their communities, supporting young people and their families that other agencies, including for example local authorities, find hard to reach.

The Young People's Foundations have also successfully established themselves as a trusted distributor of funding, able to apply detailed local knowledge to ensure that funding is distributed deep into the community.

Young people are often involved in the process, with Young People's Foundations supporting them to act as co-designers of funding programmes, and enabling them to contribute to evaluation and decision-making. The Young People's Foundations believe that participation of young people can improve grant-making practices and enhance the impact of the grants.

In total, over the last five years, the nine Young People's Foundations have produced a multiplying effect, raising and distributing £19.3m of grants for local work with children and young people.

This has included grants from national and local independent trusts and foundations, lottery funds, corporate donations, public appeals, donations from high net worth individuals, local authority grants and contracts, funding from health services, and from other public sector agencies.

Over half of this, £9.8m, has come from sources outside the local authority area in which the Young People's Foundation operates.

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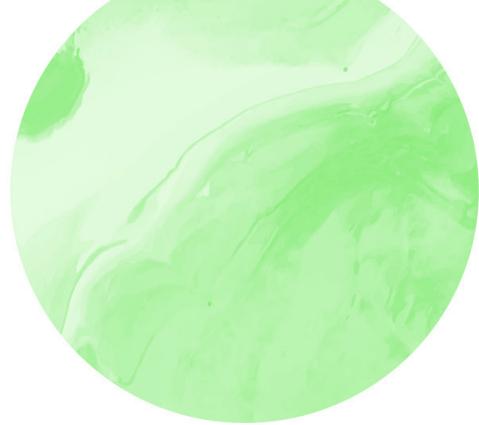
DEMONSTRATING VALUE AT A TIME OF CRISIS

The Young People's Foundations were fast to respond to multiple urgent demands from their members and others in the early stages of the COVID-19 crisis. Our strong understanding, supported by anecdotal evidence is that staff and Board members worked tirelessly in the emergency, and that their efforts were considerably augmented by the good local relationships they had built up over time.

Within days they were adding value to local responses to the crisis, often playing a critical leadership role. As set out in more detail in the main report, they acted swiftly and:

- **Became a go-to source of information** for those working with children and young people, across both statutory and voluntary sectors, interpreting and advising on often complex guidance from government and elsewhere.
- **Stepped up their fundraising and grant distribution activities**, becoming a lifeline for large numbers of small local organisations, many of whom would otherwise have missed out on national or regional funding initiatives.

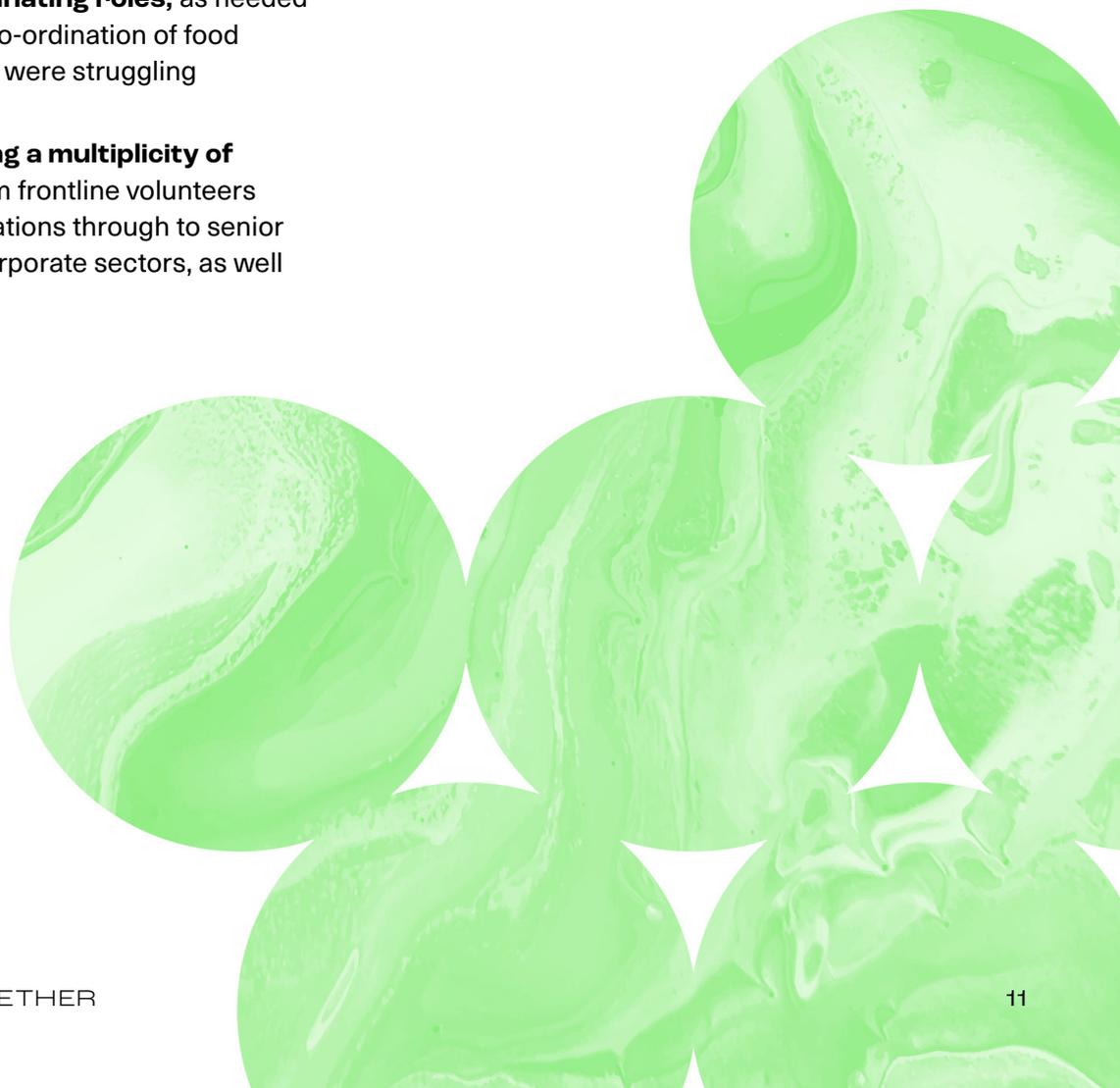




- **Provided practical support, training, skills and knowledge exchange** for local agencies which needed to move services on-line, or remodel their activities.
- **Exercised leadership within the sector**, building on what they were learning, thinking and planning ahead, helping organisations to act collaboratively.
- **Responded to the sharp inequalities and needs exposed in the crisis**, not least those experienced by children and young people from BAME communities.
- **Creating space and opportunity for those working at the frontline to share their experiences**, and directing funding and other support where that was most needed.
- **Played important co-ordinating roles**, as needed locally, for example in the co-ordination of food distribution to families who were struggling in lockdown.
- **Proved adept at managing a multiplicity of relationships** ranging from frontline volunteers in small community associations through to senior people in the public and corporate sectors, as well as funders.

At the same time they also enhanced their own collaboration across the network, for the benefit of all, for example:

- Co-producing a well-received webinar series which reached large numbers of children and young people's organisations in all the nine areas they serve.
- Convening a forum of local authority officials from different London boroughs and Manchester to exchange insights and tactics for responding to the crisis.
- Setting up a regular CEO online meeting to share experiences and support each other.



A5

POTENTIAL FOR NATIONAL ROLL-OUT

The children and youth sector has the potential to make a substantial contribution to many of the key national and local challenges and opportunities ahead.

These include:

- Developing new skills and employment opportunities in an economy deeply disrupted by the pandemic.
- Supporting the mental and physical health and well-being of children and young people.
- Doing more to reduce youth violence.
- Addressing poor housing.
- Tackling domestic abuse.
- Improving access to the internet while also making the online world safer for children and young people.
- Creating more platforms for young people to discover their strengths and make their contribution to helping others.

However, small local frontline organisations have by definition little or fragile infra-structure. They will only be able to rise to these challenges, and take full advantage of the opportunities ahead, if they are supported to consolidate the quality of their work, learn from each other, work together and benefit from alliances with the statutory and corporate sectors.

Our research suggests that Young People's Foundations are capable of providing that support. The model therefore has much to offer, across the country, in the next few years. For example, Government is considering a programme to support the creation of local youth partnerships; the Young People's Foundation model offers a potential template for these.

However, the Young People's Foundation initiative will need to give careful attention to the key issues below, if it is to ensure it continues to grow productively, trusted by and engaging with a broad cross-sector of providers.

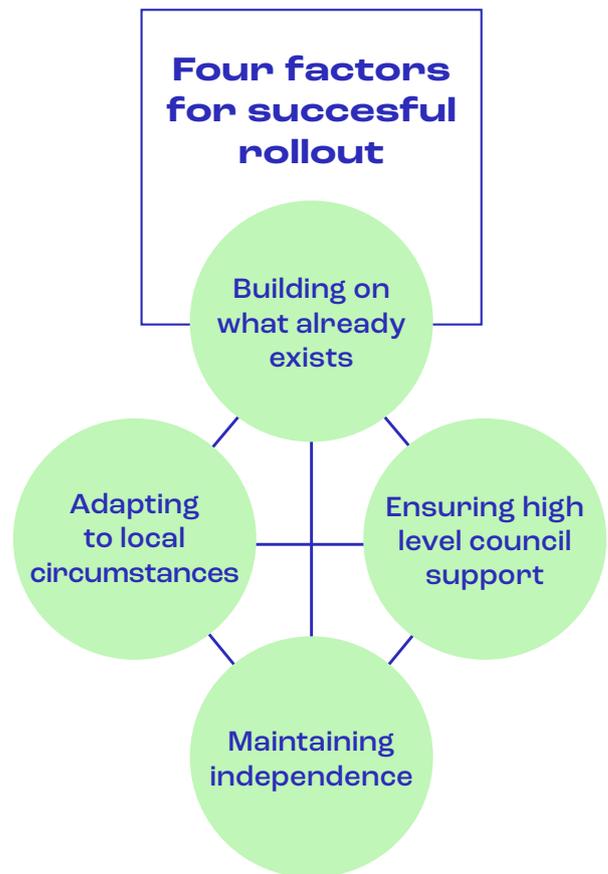
- **It will be important to build on rather than displace what already exists** in the children and youth voluntary sector infrastructure, or strong local authority youth service.
- Where previous practice may have been low quality, or where local relationships have been especially fractious, it may prove difficult to move forward, requiring considerable determination, skill, and diplomacy.
- **The support of local authorities** at the most senior strategic levels will be critical to success.
- This sits in tension with the imperative to become **an independent platform**, with a strong shared sense of ownership among all those working with children and young people in an area. It will be important to the success of the enterprise that Young People's Foundations are not thought to be simply an agency of local or central government.
- **Local flexibility** will need to be hardwired into any national programme, allowing priorities for action to be set in response to local circumstances, rather than determined from the centre.

Furthermore, the model is not yet tested outside metropolitan areas, and will need to take account of the different operating circumstances, for example in dispersed rural districts.

Inevitably, there will be both risks and opportunities:

- Growth of the network will bring its own challenges, as there can be diseconomies of scale, especially where the quality of human interaction, relationships and trust matters so much.
- There will however also be opportunities to build shared 'back-office' systems, for example for collecting core data, and assessing impact.

In addressing these challenges and opportunities, the work of YPF Trust will be critical.



A6

BUILDING ON SUCCESS GOING FORWARD

Our research indicates that for the coming period the following will be of particular importance:

A) HOLDING TO THE CORE FUNCTIONS OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S FOUNDATIONS

They are small organisations, and cannot do everything. In our view the two most critical and impactful areas of their work are:

- **Acting as honest brokers:** their co-ordinating/ convening function among children and young people's organisations, and with the local council, other public bodies, and with the private sector, encouraging collaboration, and a whole systems response.
- **Attracting funding from the public sector, independent grant makers, and from corporates and high net-worth individuals** for small local 'hard to reach' organisations, that are undertaking important capacity building by reaching deeply into their local community but which are largely invisible.

B) RETAINING THE CORE OPERATING PRINCIPLES OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S FOUNDATIONS

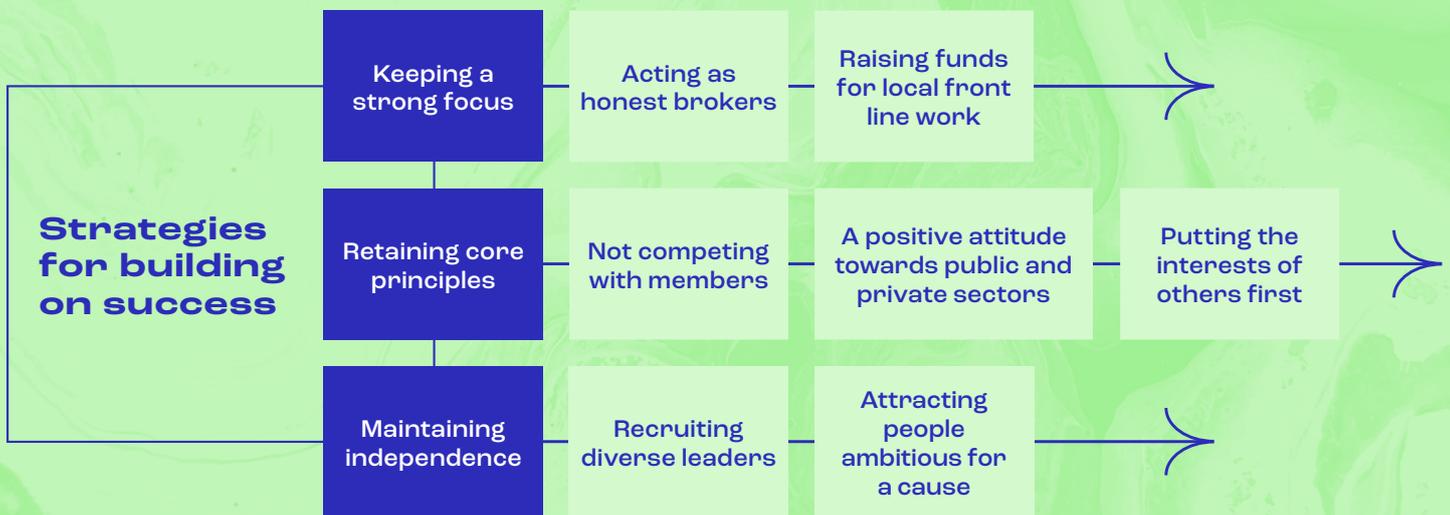
Young People's Foundations have gained the trust and acceptance of local organisations working with children and young people because of their modus operandi. In our view, the following are vital attributes, in order of importance:

- **The commitment not to deliver direct services, and not to compete with members.**
- **A positive attitude towards the public and private sectors,** seeing them as allies rather than adversaries. The Young People's Foundations have demonstrated that most is achieved when the presumption is that they are engaged in a shared endeavour with those from other sectors, for a common cause.
- **Putting the interests of children and young people, and frontline organisations working with children and young people, before their own organisation's interests,** remaining small, lean and agile in the process. This is more likely to be a sustainable approach where long term core funding is available.
- **A willingness to exchange skills, support and information across the network.** Common data collection and analysis could be a priority and, as indicated above, YPF Trust will have an important role in encouraging this.

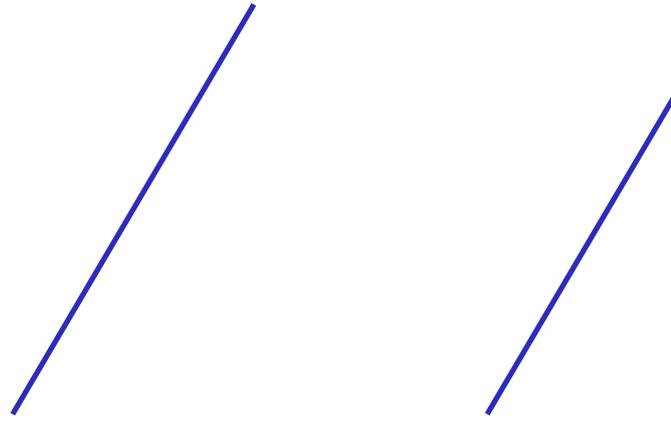
C) SHOWCASING POSITIVE MODELS OF LEADERSHIP

The expansion of the network is an opportunity to demonstrate a very positive model of social infrastructure. To date Young People’s Foundations have shown that they are capable of foregrounding the strengths and assets available within local communities and creating a space for local leadership to flourish. As the network grows YPF Trust could play a valuable role by:

- Continuing to engage a high proportion of women and people from BAME communities, as well as those from poorer backgrounds in leadership roles.
- Continuing to attract leaders who are ambitious for a cause, exceptionally good at listening and relationship building, and willing to embrace a flexible, inclusive approach.



B



PROFILE OF
THE YOUNG
PEOPLE'S
FOUNDATIONS



B1

THE MODEL AND ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

B1.1 LOCATION

There are nine Young People's Foundations of which eight are in London and one is in Manchester:

- Young Barnet Foundation
- Young Brent Foundation
- Young Camden Foundation
- Young Ealing Foundation
- Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation
- Young Harrow Foundation
- Young Kensington and Chelsea
- Young Manchester
- Young Westminster Foundation

The first Young People's Foundations were set up in London in 2015, in Brent, Barnet and Harrow. The most recent is Young Kensington & Chelsea, formed in 2019. Outside London, Young Manchester was set up in 2017.

B1.2 PURPOSE

The Young People's Foundations in London were established by John Lyon's Charity, an independent grant maker, which was concerned at the withdrawal from youth work by some local authorities, the reduction in public sector funding for local organisations working with children and young people, and the absence, or perceived inadequacy, of voluntary sector support infrastructure in some London boroughs.

The Young People's Foundations describe their primary purpose as follows:

Based in their local communities, each Young People's Foundation's services are led by their members and based on the needs and assets of their area. Together they share a common goal – to help create and champion a more impactful, co-ordinated and sustainable sector to ensure all young people have access to quality support and opportunities.

B1.3 COMMON CHARACTERISTICS

Young People's Foundations all exist to improve the lives of children and young people by strengthening the work of local agencies which can contribute to that goal.

They have some important characteristics in common, i.e. they:

- Are independent registered charities.
- Are membership and partnership bodies, and aim to support and strengthen the work of a large number of front line organisations and others with an interest in children and young people up to the age of 25.
- Are keen to encourage collaboration between their member agencies and across sectors.
- Believe that there is particular value in the work of small, locally based organisations which have deep local knowledge and can therefore build strong relationships with children and young people.
- Work to increase the supply of funding and provide small grants.
- Have taken the fundamental decision not to deliver front line services themselves, in order to avoid being in competition with their members.

While these common elements provide a distinctive character to the work of Young People's Foundations, constituting the main expectations for those who wish to operate within the Young People's Foundation brand, the model also allows for considerable variation in activities in response to local circumstances and needs. This is described in more detail below.

B1.4 VALUES

The Young People's Foundations have adopted the following values to guide their work:

- **We collaborate.**
- **We stay informed.**
- **We remain local.**
- **We are sustainable.**
- **Young people are at the centre of everything we do.**

Some have adopted further values of their own, for example Young Manchester states:

- **We work in an inclusive, open and collaborative way.**
- **We strive to make a positive and lasting difference to the lives of children and young people and the society in which they live.**
- **We are progressive and forward-looking, striving to be dynamic and an inspiration to others.**
- **We help to ensure that children and young people's voices and experiences are heard and are central to our work.**
- **We tackle the root causes which keep children, young people and their families in poverty, and continue to create an unequal society.**

B1.5 MEMBERS AND PARTNERS

Most of the Young People's Foundations describe themselves as membership bodies, although in Manchester the term 'partners' is used.

Regardless of the terminology, there is a common understanding that Young People's Foundations do not operate as narrowly-based trade associations, but rather as broad-based alliances of organisations with a common cause.

For all the Young People's Foundations, membership or partnership therefore means something more than a pathway to grants or other support. It means joining a community of organisations and people who want to make a difference for young people locally. In Camden, for example, this is described as follows:

Young Camden Foundation is part of a community of residents, children and young people organisations, statutory services, funders and local businesses working together to create meaningful opportunities for children and young people in Camden.

The primary members or partners in all cases are locally based voluntary sector organisations (charities, community groups, social enterprises) which work directly with children and young people. In some cases there are associate or affiliate categories of members for statutory or corporate partners for example.

On average a Young People's Foundations has around 140 members or partners, with some variation depending on local circumstances - and how long the Young People's Foundation has been established.

Between them, the nine Young People's Foundations currently have well over twelve hundred members and partners (1,279 in total at September 2020). Of these 947 are organisations which work directly with children and young people, of whom 498 are small (with a turnover of under £100k).

B1.6 RELATIONSHIPS WITH 'GRASS-ROOTS' COMMUNITY GROUPS

As previously noted, Young People's Foundations have taken the view from the outset that some of the best work with children and young is delivered by small grass-roots organisations deeply embedded in a place, or in a section of the community. Such organisations tend to be more dependent on volunteers than paid staff, and are more likely to be run by people from communities they are seeking to serve. They are less professionalised, and indeed frequently operate as unincorporated associations.

Although such organisations tend to be regarded as 'hard to reach' by the statutory and corporate sectors and also by many larger charities, all the Young People's Foundations have managed to bring a substantial number of such organisations into their membership.

We deduce that this is partly because they offer grants aimed at small organisations and partly as a result of sustained, proactive efforts on the part of Young People's Foundations to seek them out, to visit, get to know and build relationships with them.

B1.7 RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The quality of the relationship with local authorities is a key factor impacting on the ability of the Young People's Foundations to achieve their goals. Generally speaking relationships have been strong, even where (in the case of one London borough), there is to date no core funding from the Council.

Many interviewees pointed to the willingness and ability of Young People's Foundations to build constructive and positive relationships and to see their local authority as allies in a common endeavour. This, it was felt, is a key factor which distinguishes them from some previous local infrastructure bodies, where relationships were sometimes tense if not adversarial.

- In Brent, the CEO of the Young People's Foundation previously worked in the Council. He has been able to build constructive working relationships and trust with the local authority in ways which are in contrast with many previous forms of infrastructure in that borough.
- In Barnet, the Young People's Foundation was seen as playing a big role in catalysing the voluntary sector response to COVID-19. This has raised its profile with the Council, and created the conditions for a strong set of relationships.

This is not to say that everything always runs smoothly. The statutory authority's view of local priorities is seen in the context of its wide range of responsibilities and structures of public accountability. They may place emphasis on those matters where public concern is high (e.g. youth violence) or where the council is trying to develop a distinctive character for a place (e.g. promoting creative industries).

Charities, informal community associations, and children and young people themselves i.e. grass roots, people and organisations, may be more concerned with things that most directly affect the well-being of young people, for example poverty, homelessness, mental health, a lack of play facilities, unfair discrimination.

One of the principle functions of a Young People's Foundation as an intermediary body is helping all sides to understand these different perspectives, and coalesce around a common cause. This requires a high degree of skill and an open and positive working style.

As will be seen below, the positive relationships that Young People's Foundations have built with local authorities have produced a range of positive outcomes, including partnerships to distribute funds (B1.8.1), and activities that have contributed to positive systems change (B1.11).

B1.8 ACTIVITIES IN COMMON

The survey responses and interviews foregrounded the types of activity that Young People's Foundations have in common. They include:

B1.8.1 INCREASING THE SUPPLY OF FUNDING/FINANCE

- They undertake fundraising on behalf of local children and young people's organisations, in some cases forming consortia for that purpose.
- They distribute small grants to members. For example:

- In 2018/19 Young Manchester, in partnership with Manchester City Council, delivered a small grants programme with a total value of £40,000 to support the provision of outdoor learning and adventurous activities for 410 children and young people in Manchester, aged 8-19 years (up to 25 for those young people with additional needs).
- In 2019-20 Young Ealing Foundation provided small grants on behalf of London Sport to ten satellite clubs, which targeted 265 inactive children and young people with a variety of sport and physical activity.

- All the Young People's Foundations aim to raise funds from corporate partners for local grant-making. To date, the main successes have been in Westminster, for example:

- In September 2019, the Young Westminster Foundation was commissioned by Westminster City Council to distribute £180,000 in grants to youth organisations in Westminster. It used its networks of corporate partners and funders to leverage a further £100,000 investment into the Brighter Futures Fund.

It should be noted that the ability to attract significant local corporate support is not high in all areas, and Young People's Foundations on their own are not capable of ameliorating the generally low level of funding that the corporate sector has made available for social purposes. However, they have demonstrated that a positive and well-targeted approach to relationship-building with local companies can yield positive and worthwhile results.

- The amounts of funding made available for local work with children and young people can be significant. For example:

- Young Harrow Foundation has raised £4.5m for its members since 2016.
- Young Manchester distributed a £4.5m Youth and Play Fund over two years, in partnership with Manchester City Council and the #iwill Fund, and has secured a further £3.5m over the next two years.

To date £19.3m has been raised by the nine Young People's Foundations for local work with children and young people, from a variety of sources, including included grants from national and local independent trusts and foundations, lottery funds, corporate donations, public appeals, donations from high net worth individuals, local authority grants and contracts and funding from health services and from other public sector agencies. Over half of the funds which have been raised (£9.8m) have come from outside the local authority area.

B1.8.2 FOSTERING COLLABORATION

- They play an 'honest broker' and convening role, encouraging collaboration among children and young people's organisations.
- They also encourage wider alliances with other parts of the voluntary sector, with public sector agencies, with the local business sector and with funders.

B1.8.3 BUILDING THE CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

- They provide training, opportunities for knowledge and skills exchange, and other forms of developmental support for children and young people's organisations.
- They help organisations access and share venues as well as other resources.

B1.8.4 INVESTING THEIR OWN RESOURCES TO BENEFIT OTHER LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

Where Young People's Foundations form bidding consortia, they pass the funds raised to frontline consortia members: the research evidence confirms that administrative or overhead costs incurred are either absorbed by them, or only minimum payments are taken for staff time expended.

This way of working is possible when core funding is available for Young People's Foundations. Young Manchester does not receive core funding from The John Lyon's Charity but instead charges a modest management fee for commissioning activities on behalf of the local authority.

B1.8.5 NOT COMPETING WITH LOCAL SERVICE DELIVERY PROVIDERS

A significant aspect of the modus operandii is that (unlike some other infrastructure organisations) they do not undertake direct front-line service delivery. They also avoid competition with their members in fundraising.

Their practice is designed to live their values and their commitment to increase the local resources available. It enables Young People's Foundations to build trust and avoid wherever possible diverting resources away from frontline work with children and young people.

B1.9 LOCAL VARIATION

The evidence shows that Young People's Foundations carry out local needs assessments to guide their activities. For example:

- In 2017 Young Westminster Foundation undertook a peer-led Needs Analysis of young people in Westminster, gathering the views of more than 250 young people and 30 stakeholders on the services, support and opportunities available to young people living in Westminster. Four themes for its initial work were identified: crime and personal safety, the local environment, health and wellbeing, and accessing opportunities.¹
- A survey carried out by the Young Ealing Foundation in 2018 focused primarily on organisations from the children and young people's sector and identified several challenges in the years ahead, including: core funding, sustainability, and increased responsibility and pressure on staff and trustees (leading to possible retention issues).

In this way the Young People's Foundations are able to operate within the shared framework described, but tailor their activities to local circumstances as informed by young people, the frontline agencies which work with them and other stakeholders.

A few examples demonstrate the rich variety which emerges from this locally responsive approach:

Several of the Young People's Foundations have run programmes to support supplementary schools. These offer educational opportunities outside of mainstream school provision, particularly for children and young people from BAME communities, and have often been ignored by mainstream funders and infrastructure bodies.

- For example: In 2019 Young Barnet Foundation, with funds from John Lyon's Charity, provided ten local supplementary schools with grants of £2,500 for delivery of English, Maths or Science courses and an additional £250 for a monitoring and evaluation tool licence.

Several Young People's Foundations carry out bespoke research where there are gaps in the local knowledge base.

- For example: Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation in partnership with Imperial College produced a report on Childhood Obesity and Mental Health Services for young people from BAME communities.

In 2019 Young Hammersmith & Fulham Foundation, in partnership with the local council employed a community connector to offer training and advice as well as small grants for local Out of School Settings (OOSS).

¹ Young Westminster Foundation. (2017) A City within a City: Understanding the needs of young people in Westminster.

This project aims to ensure that the resources children and young people use outside of school time are safe. 15 training sessions focusing on First Aid, Fire Safety, and Health and Safety were co-created with local organisations. (See B2.8 below for a description of how this was adapted during COVID-19).

Young Manchester ran a Positive Engagement Programme, on behalf of Manchester City Council and One Manchester, aiming to improve opportunities for children and young people and reduce antisocial behaviour. Working through local organisations, this programme delivered detached youth work with 658 different children and young people across nine wards in Manchester.

In 2018-19 Young Brent Foundation, with funding from Sport England, convened a consortium of 14 local community organisations to support 120 families in a 12-week Fit Families programme, designed for inactive five to ten year-olds and offering free access to sports equipment, fun activities and prizes.

B1.10 PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The Young People's Foundations all engage children and young people directly in order to shape their work. Young Westminster Foundation consults with a team of Young Ambassadors on the development of new programmes. Young Camden Foundation spoke to over 300 young people and as a result decided to focus efforts on three themes (youth safety, health and well-being, and access to opportunities).

In Barnet, a local Youth Voice survey attracted nearly 7,000 responses. In Brent a youth voice strategy was prepared for young people by young people on two local housing estates (Chalkhill and Church End).

Young Manchester set up young people's panels to help design grant funds and application processes as well as to evaluate proposals and inform grants decisions.

- In 2019, Young Hammersmith & Fulham Foundation set up and supported an eight-member all-youth grants panel to distribute £15k of funding in small grants. The application process centred on a two-minute video and those bidding were encouraged to involve young people in creating and editing the video.
- In June 2018, Young Harrow Foundation delivered an ambitious assessment of the needs of young people aged 10-21 in Harrow. This was a collaborative and coordinated effort between 51 charities, Harrow Council, Harrow Youth Parliament, 24 trained youth peer leaders, 8 schools and colleges, and 30 community volunteers. The exercise collected the views of 4,358 young people.

B1.11 SYSTEMS CHANGE

Indications are that, as the Young People's Foundations have built relationships and trust, and demonstrated that they can add value, they are becoming sought after by local authorities and others as contributors to efforts to bring about wider systems change. For example:

- Young Harrow Foundation, with funding from Paul Hamlyn Foundation, developed a programme of support called Change Champions, to ensure the voice of young people is at the heart of new models of delivery. One example is work with a local hospital's A&E Department to improve the physical environment for young people, to help train staff in understanding their needs, and to ensure information on local provision is readily available for follow up care and support.
- The CEO of Young Hammersmith & Fulham has been invited to serve as a Commissioner on the local Police and Crime Commission and has also been asked to join a team working with the Design Council on reshaping public services.
- The Young Brent Foundation holds seats on the Safeguarding Board, Youth Offending and Community Safety Board, Children's Trust, and Early Help. It is leading a 'Let's have that conversation' series of webinars and podcasts to engage practitioners working with children and young people on the issues on institutional and systemic racism.
- The Young Barnet Foundation played a leading role in developing a voluntary sector manifesto², which has been adopted by the local council, and which is now being considered for adoption by others including Middlesex University, the local Clinical Commissioning Group and the Public Health Board.
- Early in lockdown Young Kensington and Chelsea played a key role in advocating for and securing funding from the council to support youth workers in parks, estates and public places. Working with local organisations and the police, four teams of detached youth workers went out three evenings per week, with 1,500 engagements with young people, signposting them to opportunities and services as needed. The youth workers worked together to promote all of the youth opportunities in the borough, not just their own individual clubs.
- In 2019, Westminster City Council allocated funding of £0.5m per year for the local youth sector. The Young Westminster Foundation worked strategically with the Council to shape how this funding would be commissioned. The Council provides £300k to five youth hubs, with the Foundation overseeing and chairing a steering group for these youth organisations and coordinating monitoring and evaluation. The remaining funding is distributed in small grants by the Foundation, matched with investment from other funders and corporates (see B1.8.1 above).
- Young Camden Foundation partnered with a local Trust and the Mayor's Fund to support local community organisations to set up holiday hubs (free food, access to enriching activity and nutritional education) during the summer holidays. 1,295 meals were served to 74 children. Following this success the council has committed to addressing food poverty in the borough and has established a Food Poverty Alliance for this purpose.

² Barnet Together. (2020) Barnet Voluntary Sector Manifesto : Working together for a better Barnet.

B1.12 LEADERSHIP AND DIVERSITY

The CEOs of the Young People's Foundations are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, including youth work, local government, corporate sector, as well as small and large charities. This variety of experience is enriching for the network. They tend to exhibit a high degree of passion and ambition for children and young people and for the work of front line agencies.

Other staff members we encountered during the course of our research displayed a strong understanding of the role and purpose of the Young People's Foundations as well as dedication to their part in delivering that.

The Board members of the Young People's Foundations are volunteers and have strategic and oversight responsibilities as charity trustees and as company directors. The Young People's Foundations have attracted highly experienced people from a diverse range of backgrounds to these roles.

Indeed a notable feature of the Young People's Foundations is the diversity of people they have involved. For example in terms of ethnicity, across the network 39% of trustees and 47% of staff are from BAME backgrounds.

B1.13 SCALE OF OPERATION

The scale of operation varies from an annual turnover of c. £200k to c. £700k in London, and over £3m in Manchester. In part this variation is driven by the availability of funding, and in part by geography, as well as by length of existence.

It should be noted that the Young People's Foundations have adopted a relatively lean operating model, usually with three to five core staff, often making use of part-time staff to address key functions in a cost-efficient way. Young Manchester provided £3.1m in grants in 2019/20, incurring £383k in direct and support costs, £223k of which related to staff costs.

B1.14 FUNDING OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S FOUNDATIONS

In London core funding for Young People's Foundations has been provided by the John Lyon's Charity on a continuing basis, currently at levels of £100k to £120k per year. Other significant core funding has come from the City Bridge Trust.

In most cases the local authority also provides core funding, for example £75k in The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea. In Manchester the local authority has been a major funding partner, and, while it has not provided a core grant, it has allocated substantial funding each year (e.g. £1.44m in 2020/21 for a Youth and Play funding programme) to commission work from local children and youth agencies, alongside a management fee which supports the running of the Young People's Foundation

B1.15 YPF NETWORK AND YPF TRUST

YPF Trust was established in 2019, as a registered charity. It appointed its first member of staff in December 2020.

Its purposes are to support the exchange of information, ideas and expertise across the network of Young People's Foundations, and to develop a quality assurance function to promote good practice. It aims to grow the network by offering assistance to those who want to set up new Young People's Foundations, or by welcoming existing organisations with compatible aims and structures who would like to join. It also seeks to build positive relationships with national agencies (public, corporate and voluntary, including funders) and to increase the flow of resources available for front line work with children and young people.

YPF Trust can therefore play a valuable role in stimulating co-operation among the Young People's Foundations beyond their immediate geographical boundaries. Where this has happened for example in a February 2020 'Challenging the Narrative' event (arranged by the London-based Young People's Foundations together with Partnership for Young London, for organisations who had received or applied for the Mayor's Young Londoners Fund), feedback suggests it has been worthwhile. In this case 98% of participants rated their overall satisfaction of the event either 'Excellent' or 'Good'.

YPF Trust convenes bi-monthly meetings with CEOs of Young People's Foundations. Interaction across the network can help to build strong working relationships: the CEOs report that it is especially productive when there are examples of a successful initiative or strategy that can be shared and replicated, and where geographical proximity can lead to joint action.

Since COVID-19 struck, the CEOs have met much more frequently, often once a week, to share practical information, advice, and tactics. This has created a safe space in very demanding time for reflection, the sharing of problems and the exchange of constructive challenge, and was an important factor in helping the Young People's Foundations mobilise quickly and effectively in the emergency, as described below.

Our interviews identified a shared ambition among the CEOs of Young People's Foundations that YPF Trust should in time play an influential leadership role, building cohesion across the network, as well as helping to shape the policy landscape.

B2

RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 EMERGENCY

B2.1 RAPID RESPONSE

From the outset, the Young People's Foundations were able to respond quickly, building on the connectivity and trust which they had developed among local organisations. Their networking enabled them to be in touch with many that were very small, but were closest to children and families who needed help. Some were also acting as a bridge to the larger charities and to the formal public sector agencies.

Some illustrative examples are below:

Young Kensington & Chelsea is the newest Young People's Foundation, only set up in 2019 with the CEO recruited in January 2020. Within the first three weeks of lockdown, in March/April 2020, it was able to achieve the following:

- Direct support for 27 play and youth groups to coordinate their response to COVID-19, including 1-1 support, sharing information, signposting promoting new services and activities for young people.
- This included VCS youth organisations delivering food or resources for children in BAME communities, Traveller children and disabled children.

- Organising fortnightly conference calls and bi-weekly email updates for 70 VCS providers.
- Acting as a bridge between the public sector (government, local authority, NHS, police) and voluntary sector.
- Arranging fortnightly update meetings for seven Councils and Young People's Foundations in North and West London, to share intelligence and ideas on a pan-borough basis.

In April the Young Ealing Foundation heard that the Young Adults Centre in Southall was sitting empty due to social distancing. In the space of just one week, the Young Ealing Foundation:

- Gained permission to set up a food distribution service from the local council, obtained a Level 2 food hygiene certificate, completed a risk assessment and teamed up with one of the Foundation's members, Southall Community Alliance.
- Made contact with City Harvest and the Felix Project who provided fresh surplus food. A local restaurant contributed 200 freshly cooked meals a day. A fridge was donated through the BBC London Make a Difference Campaign in exchange for an interview with Young Ealing Foundation's CEO on BBC London Radio.

The packing and distribution of each food parcel was done by volunteers from local schools, churches and member groups and was quickly distributing food to 300 families a week.

B2.2 FUNDING

Many of the Young People's Foundations increased their fundraising and grant distribution efforts in response to the urgent and continuing needs during the pandemic.

Several Young People's Foundations, in line with policies adopted by other independent funders, removed restrictions on grants where they had agreement from their source funders to do so, to allow front line organisations greater flexibility in responding to the crisis.

- Young Barnet Foundation set up the Barnet Community Response Fund, which had delivered seven rounds of funding by August 2020, distributing £83,000, mainly in small grants of up to £500.
- Young Camden Foundation launched a mental health fund to support local community organisations with safeguarding the mental health and well-being of children, young people, and youth workers during the pandemic. It also launched a Digital Youth Work Fund sponsored by Google.

B2.3 SUPPORT FOR LOCAL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S ORGANISATIONS

Frontline organisations (many small and fragile) struggled to cope with the scale of demand, pressures on their own organisations, and the need to adapt. Our research showed that the Young People's Foundations were seen as and acted as a trusted source of local support and advice, for example:

- In a five week period in March and April Young Harrow Foundation supported 24 local children and youth projects to adapt services so that they could operate online.
- Before the March lockdown, Young Westminster Foundation with business partner Total Media had planned a programme of training in digital skills for members and others. After lockdown, given the urgent need for youth organisations to move their services online, the programme was rapidly rolled out in April, with delivery via webinars, and opportunity for bespoke 1-2-1 support where needed.
- Young Hammersmith & Fulham Foundation convened a series of online meetings for their members on subjects such as detached youth work and young people's safety.
- Young Kensington & Chelsea identified early in lockdown that supplementary schools were struggling with technology. Many are run by volunteers or teachers who work a small number of hours, using their own computers, most of which are quite old and out of date. The families that they work with were also struggling to access online activities and support. To date, with funds from John Lyon's Charity, 45 laptops and software have been distributed to 15 supplementary schools and 30 families.

Providing a listening ear and a space for reflection was especially valued by many. As one Young People's Foundation pointed out in response to our survey, 'I think that the senior staff at many VCS children and youth organisations are often very isolated and are having to make difficult decisions on their own. Sometimes they just needed to talk and we were able to listen and support. Listening was also beneficial to us as the listener - it was how we were able to learn and adapt our own response.'

B2.4 INFORMATION

Local organisations struggled to keep abreast of wave after wave of information, guidance, and offers of help from government, local agencies, funders, and many others.

The Young People's Foundations played a leading role, often in combination with the Council or other local agencies, assembling the information in a way that was accessible and useful. They asked their members and stakeholders about the format they preferred and adapted accordingly.³

- Young Camden Foundation provided members, supporters, and partners with up to date COVID-19 information. It launched a webpage dedicated to community resources and online advice and a bi-monthly newsletter and social media accounts: it also provided information about funding opportunities, training webinars and online resources.

- Young Harrow Foundation worked with Harrow Council and the Harrow Clinical Commissioning Group to produce a leaflet and web-based information which signposted to many sources of online support.
- Young Kensington & Chelsea organised three online meetings with about 40 participants at each meeting. Topics covered included, for example: transferring youth services online, coordinating detached youth activities, COVID action plans and risk assessments, and Black Lives Matter. Most importantly these were also an opportunity for the participants to share updates about their own activities and support each other.

“We particularly valued the ability to engage with other organisations working with young people and through online meetings and to glean information about existing facilities and support available, for example funding/grants.”

Youth organisation

³ For example Young Brent Foundation found that despite the popularity of social media for everyday communications, the preferred means of getting information during the COVID-19 period among their members was email (96%), phone (46%) and newsletter (29%).

B2.5 TACKLING INEQUALITY

As noted above the Black Lives Matter protests highlighted the deep underlying inequalities that many children and young people from BAME communities face. The Young People's Foundations arranged local and cross borough events on this topic, in an effort to listen and to understand, and also to take action. Young Brent Foundation for example has been working with local organisations to build intercultural dialogue, and address intersectionality for women, and complex trauma for refugees and migrants at home, in work, in school, and in other aspects of family life.

B2.6 WEBINAR SERIES

While the majority of the effort was locally focused, and needed to be tailored to local circumstances, the Young People's Foundations realised quickly that some common needs existed across all areas, and joined forces accordingly.

Led initially by the Young Harrow Foundation, the nine Young People's Foundations worked together to host a series of nine webinars for organisations working with children and young people. Each session was led by a panel of experts and included speakers involved in delivery at local level. Webinar topics included: cyber service offer for children and young people, safeguarding and cyber working, support from funders, education, furlough/HR/legal changes, mental health and domestic violence. Up to 170 people participated at each event.



B2.7 COLLABORATION AND CO-ORDINATION

In the COVID-19 crisis, the Young People's Foundations were able to play additional convening roles in their local area. The evidence indicates that this helped to promote collaboration and ensure that efforts for children and young people were co-ordinated as effectively as possible:

- The Young Barnet Foundation, working with Inclusion Barnet and Volunteering Barnet as 'Barnet Together', was instrumental in setting up a local COVID Response Taskforce. Working closely with Barnet Council, it provided a co-ordinated approach to supporting the work of food banks, meals delivery, and shopping collection services, helping isolated people, families and children at risk across the borough.
- The Young Westminster Forum ran cluster meetings for 8-10 youth workers in three parts of the borough. These regular, informal meetings provided a forum for hyper-local collaboration and learning.
- Young Manchester quickly brought together sector leads from across Manchester, creating a Creative Engagement Partnership for Young People. It was designed to address three core challenges for the sector during the COVID-19 pandemic: the safety of young people, business continuity, and business transformation. In practice, the approach included: advice and guidance for workers; digital youth work and online safeguarding; access to funding; and resources for children, young people & families. Backed by workstreams, a website, leadership programme and weekly meetings, it enabled youth organisations to learn from and support each other through the pandemic.

“In Manchester we have received leadership and support and a great platform to bring organisations together to work more collaboratively. We have been able to receive useful information swiftly and be able to work with peers to react.”

Local youth organisation

Many of the Young People's Foundations expressed the hope that the positive relationships which have flourished in the crisis will continue. As one said, 'The pandemic helped solidify the relationship with the local authority, and define clear roles and responsibilities - I'm keen this continues and can be built on.'

B2.8 RESHAPING PROGRAMMES

The advent of the pandemic did not mean that all existing programmes were stopped. Far from it, but they did have to be adapted. For example:

Young Hammersmith & Fulham Foundation worked with 29 local organisations including seven supplementary schools to redesign its Out of School Settings project (see B1.9 above). It is now using an online platform that is optimised for mobiles and tablet PCs, with full audio voiceover.

The topics include Advanced Safeguarding Children, Autism Awareness, Challenging Behaviour Training, Child Mental Health Training, Child Neglect, Disability Awareness for Employers, to give just a few examples.

The overheads costs saved from hiring training spaces and trainers allowed the training offer to be extended to cover 30 topics, and 120 sessions were due to be run by September.

“While being on furlough the training enabled me to hone new skills... The training was great, allowing me flexible working and was broken into small manageable chunks...It will help me immensely in having a better understanding, which in turn will help the charity as a whole, providing a better service to the trainees we work with.”

Local youth organisation

B2.9 DATA COLLECTION

Several Young People’s Foundations reported that the crisis acted as an incentive to improve the collection and use of local data.

Several have taken the opportunity to improve the on-line information available on their websites about their members. Some have also introduced local data capture systems with their members (for example Mentimeter in Brent, or Upshot in Barnet), so that over time they will be able to tell a much fuller collective story about local work with children and young people.

Much of the effort so far to improve data collection, as well as the related activities of developing a theory of change, evaluation methodologies, and impact indicators, has been undertaken individually by the different Young People’s Foundations, often with assistance from an expert organisation such as the Centre for Youth Impact.

It has become clear that a co-ordinated approach could be beneficial in future, so that a core range of consistent data can be collected, in a format that allows it to be shared in real time across the network, while still allowing for additional activities in response to local needs.

B2.10 CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUNG PEOPLE'S FOUNDATIONS IN RESPONDING TO COVID-19

As with every other organisation, Young People's Foundations faced a combination of challenges in the pandemic. Amongst those referenced in interviews were:

- The need to respond fast to multiple urgent demands from members and others.
- An imperative to manage a multiplicity of relationships ranging from frontline volunteers in small community associations through to senior people in the public and corporate sectors as well as funders.
- Interpreting and advising on a stream of often confusing guidance from government and elsewhere to enable their network of organisations.
- Exercising leadership within the sector, capturing learning, thinking and planning ahead, helping organisations to act collaboratively
- Think strategically about how they might adapt their activities to survive and remain effective in the longer term.

All of this greatly increased the workload, and stress for staff, some of whom are also facing difficulties in working at home and having to juggle time to accommodate childcare. These difficulties were exacerbated where staff were furloughed and where staff vacancies were not filled.

Despite this, our research surfaced a number of features of the Young People's Foundations model which seemed to enable productive responses to these challenges - in some cases viewed as better than some other organisations.

These attributes appear to be:

- They operate in small teams, which means they are able to make changes more quickly and decisively than other larger agencies.
- Their core funding enables a culture of doing whatever it takes to achieve what is needed. This is very different from the more formalised culture which may be target-driven and risk-averse, and can result from restricted project or programme funding.
- Their central emphasis on fostering collaboration meant that they had already built up a large number of trusted relationships, across all sectors. The value of this in a time of crisis became evident very quickly.
- The high level of connectedness between the nine Young People's Foundations meant that specialist skills anywhere within the network could be made available to all. One example was Salesforce expertise, held by a staff member in Harrow, and quickly shared across the network.
- They typically employ people who are passionate and energised by the work they do, and willing to go the extra mile.

B3

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE'S FOUNDATIONS MIGHT CONTRIBUTE IN THE FUTURE

B3.1 THE SUPPORT LANDSCAPE FOR ORGANISATIONS WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Young People's Foundations are not the only source of support for those delivering front-line work with children and young people. A variety of national and local organisations also offer support, of different types:

- At a national level, UK Youth operates a network of 5,500 local youth organisations as well as delivering programmes directly to young people. The Centre for Youth Impact offers support in evaluation, learning, and continuous improvement in youth work and services for young people. The National Youth Agency develops occupational standards and offers accreditation, as well as promoting good practice and managing delivery partnerships.
- In London, London Youth operates a network of over 450 community youth organisations, and convenes specialist networks on topics such as tackling youth violence, inclusion, well-being and mental health.
- There are national generalists such as NCVO, ACEVO, Small Charities Coalition, Association of Chairs, and specialists such as the School for Social Entrepreneurs and UnLtd, which offer a considerable variety of resources, although these are rarely designed expressly for organisations working with children and young people.

- At a more local level, Councils for Voluntary Service (where they exist) as well as some development trusts and settlements also offer support to organisations working with local children and young people, alongside the support they provide to others.
- The local authority was historically a major source of infrastructure support for the youth sector, but that has diminished in many areas in recent years.
- In some places regional or county-wide youth sector umbrella organisations such as Youth Focus NE or Surrey Youth Focus also exist. These sometimes have much in common with Young People's Foundations.

Within this wider support landscape, the advent of the Young People's Foundations has proved (not least in the pandemic) to be a welcome and timely development. Our research suggests that they have brought fresh energy, and provided a positive and energising example of social infrastructure.

To date, the introduction of a new Young People's Foundation has been handled with care, with significant investment of lead-in time by the John Lyon's Charity and others in explaining the model, demonstrating its capacity for local flexibility and building relationships and trust.

This has meant that, on the whole, relationships with other infrastructure and support organisations, including those operating locally, have been positive and productive, and where there were some initial tensions, these have usually reduced over time. The principle that the Young People's Foundations do not deliver front line services and do not compete with local children and young people's organisations is certainly helpful in this respect.

Indeed, the available evidence suggests that the model has been strongly welcomed by many local organisations working with children and young people, as illustrated by a sample of responses to surveys conducted by Young People's Foundations:

- A 2020 survey revealed that 80% of respondents rated brokering opportunities between members and other partners as 'extremely valued'.
- 87% of respondents said that Young People's Foundation helped them provide better services through support and training ('a great deal', said 30%).
- The services provided were rated as good or very good by 80% of members.
- 90% of members said that their organisation had benefited from membership.
- As one member said, "It's great to be a part of this local network and we're keen to be a part of its growth."

It is also notable that Young People's Foundations have been welcomed by statutory agencies, including local authorities. For example:

"They provide leadership for a disparate group of providers. They bring energy, and provide a development framework by building relationships with organisations that Councils often find hard to coordinate. They provide a united sector and raise the standards and quality of provision."

Jayne Vertkin, Head of Early Help, Family Services, City of Westminster.

Of course, there is always room for improvement. The surveys show that not all events arranged by Young People's Foundations have been uniformly successful, not all its members have directly benefited from capacity building support on offer, or not to the degree hoped for and there is, perhaps inevitably, demand for even more grant funding to be made available. But the Young People's Foundations have shown themselves (not least in the COVID-19 crisis) willing to listen to their members and learn by doing.

It should be noted that all the Young People's Foundations to date have operated within a metropolitan urban environment. Therefore we do not yet have evidence to assess how well the model can operate in other more dispersed geographies. The various common characteristics described above (section B1.1), and in particular their emphasis on collaboration, and on small local organisations, combined with a willingness to adapt to local circumstances, may however indicate that Young People's Foundations could be successful in a small town or rural context.

B3.2 CONTRIBUTING TO NATIONAL AND LOCAL POLICY PRIORITIES

There are likely to be a range of national policy priorities for work with children and young people over the coming period, not least developing skills and employment opportunities in an economy deeply disrupted by the pandemic.

Local children and youth sector agencies will potentially have a great deal to offer in contributing to the realisation of such public policy goals, especially for those in left behind areas, and in supporting the mental and physical health and well-being of children and young people.

These organisations also have the potential to make a contribution to many other priority areas as determined locally, especially if they can collaborate well with each other, with the statutory public services, and also engage the business sector in this work.

Young People's Foundations are well placed to enable such local organisations to survive, thrive and make a difference. They are themselves small, and their primary focus will remain the practical activities which can increase the resources available for front line work with children and young people and which can enhance the effectiveness of the local organisations delivering this work. However, the recognition and respect that they are earning will mean that they will also increasingly have opportunities to inform wider policy and systems change.

B3.3 YPF TRUST AND NATIONAL EXPANSION

There is already a pipeline of potential Young People's Foundations across England, with interest coming from local authorities, local children and youth sector agencies. Some are envisioning wholly new organisations, others see the possibility of reconfiguring or repositioning existing organisations.

To succeed, all new Young People's Foundations will require a reliable funding commitment for core costs as secure and longer-term 'pump-priming'. Experience to date suggests that this can be at a relatively modest level, in the region of £100-£200k annually in areas with a population of around 250,000 to 750,000, for example.

The return on investment is likely to be high. This can be quantified in terms of the additional income produced for front-line work (as we have seen, over £18m has been raised by the nine Young People's Foundations to date). Other returns on investment can be described, including a tested model of local management and delivery, stronger local partnerships, and a raised level of energy and ambition, all of which are likely to produce benefits for children and young people.

For those attempting to develop a Young People's Foundation elsewhere in the country it would be useful to make available a pack of materials to support local development.

There is no shortage of expertise for this within the current network. For example, the CEO of one Young People's Foundation suggested that guidance on undertaking an initial needs analysis could include appreciative inquiry methods, involving young people, others in the sector, and the local authority. YPF Trust could play a useful role in helping the network, as it grows, adopt some core common methods in areas such as this.

B3.4

OPPORTUNITIES TO ACCELERATE EXPANSION OF THE NETWORK

The Government has been considering a programme to support the creation of 65 local youth partnerships, in selected areas, as part of its commitment to introduce a Youth Investment Fund. The Young People's Foundation model offers a potential template for these.

If there are opportunities to accelerate network expansion, through a programme funded by government, or others, considerable care will need to be taken to ensure that the full potential benefit is realised:

- In some places there will be an existing children and youth sector infrastructure, or a well-established local authority youth service delivering a range of direct activities. It will be important to build on rather than displace what already exists, wherever possible.
 - Where previous practice has been problematic (or where there is a perception of this), or where local relationships have been fractious, between local voluntary agencies and the local authority for example, it may prove more difficult to move forward productively. In such cases, as when Young People's Foundations were being established in some parts of London, considerable determination, skill, and diplomacy is needed.
 - Ultimately it may be counterproductive to attempt to introduce the Young People's Foundation model into places where there is not, at the time, sufficient local support including from the local authority.
 - The model is not yet tested outside metropolitan areas, and will need to take account of the different operating circumstances in dispersed rural districts, for example, as noted above (B3.1).
- It is important to its effectiveness that any new Young People's Foundations are not seen to be simply a creature of local government, or central government for that matter, but rather that they quickly establish themselves as an independent platform. This means developing, from the outset, a strong shared sense of ownership among all those working with children and young people in an area. However, the evidence clearly shows that the local authorities will be critical to the success of the local youth partnerships. Without their support, not least at the most senior strategic levels, Young People's Foundations simply will not succeed.
 - If funding is focused too narrowly on specified activity areas as determined by central government (or indeed other funders), for example employment, youth violence and mental health, and does not leave room for other local priorities to come to the fore, that is likely to weaken engagement in and enthusiasm for Young People's Foundations and therefore to jeopardise their long term sustainability.

B3.5 THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF NETWORK GROWTH

It should be noted that growth of the network will bring its own challenges; there can be diseconomies of scale, especially where the quality of human interaction, relationships and trust matters so much.

There will however also be opportunities to build shared systems, for example for collecting core data, assessing impact, and supporting improvements in the quality of the work of front line organisations.

In addressing these challenges and opportunities, the work of YPF Trust and the partnerships it can build, will be critical. YPF Trust will need to develop its own operating model and principles, so that is firmly in the service of the Young People's Foundations and its other local and national partners. At the same time the Trust will need to demonstrate careful leadership in introducing quality assurance systems for Young People's Foundations capable of safeguarding but not stifling the best features of their practice. In addition, the Trust should retain its role as a critical friend, in the wider interests of raising the quality of work with children and young people.

Above all, YPF Trust will have a key role in ensuring that as the network expands and adapts to new circumstances, it does so in a way that enhances rather than diminishes its original driving spirit.

Our research indicates that for the coming period the following will be of particular importance:

A) HOLDING TO THE CORE FUNCTIONS OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S FOUNDATIONS

They are small organisations, and cannot do everything. In our view the two most critical areas of their work are:

- **Acting as honest brokers:** their co-ordinating/ convening function among children and young people's organisations, and with the local council, other public bodies, and with the private sector, encouraging collaboration, and a whole systems response.
- **Attracting funding** from the public sector, independent grant makers, and from corporates and high net worth individuals for small local 'hard to reach' organisations which are largely invisible, but undertaking important capacity building by reaching deeply into their local community.

Young People's Foundations, as we have seen, also undertake other activities, such as providing information, training, quality development, and other capacity building support for small local organisations, as well as data collection and analysis, and other forms of research. These are of course important, and are likely to play a significant part in the work of many Young People's Foundations. Sometimes, depending on local context, it will be possible to develop partnerships or alliances with others to deliver these functions, as indeed experience to date has shown, rather than attempting to do everything themselves.

B) RETAINING THE CORE OPERATING PRINCIPLES OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S FOUNDATIONS

Our research has shown that there are certain characteristics of Young People's Foundations which have been of great importance in helping them gain trust and acceptance. In our view the following are the most vital attributes, in order of importance:

- **The commitment not to deliver direct services** and not to compete with members.
- **A positive attitude towards the public and private sectors**, seeing them as allies rather than adversaries. The Young People's Foundations have demonstrated that most is achieved when the presumption is that they are engaged in a shared endeavour with those from other sectors, for a common cause.
- **Putting the interests of children and young people, and frontline organisations working with children and young people, before their own organisation's interests.** This means remaining small, lean and nimble, reducing the temptation to engage in activities outside of core mission, simply to generate income to sustain the organisation. This is most likely to be possible where long term core funding is available
- **A willingness to exchange skills, support and information** across the network. To date this willingness has been much in evidence, but will need to be actively fostered as the network expands, and easy-to-use platforms for this purpose will be required. Common data collection and analysis could be a priority and, as indicated above, YPF Trust will have an important role in encouraging this.

C) SHOWCASING POSITIVE MODELS OF LEADERSHIP

The expansion of the network is an opportunity to demonstrate a very positive model of collaborative infrastructure, not least in the types of leadership it promotes.

It is evident from our research that it is not simply a certain set of management skills, or professional qualifications, which are the hallmarks of effective Young People's Foundation leadership. Other attributes, including insight into difficulties children and young people can face, experience or working in and across different sectors, the ability to engage with people at every level, can be equally important, if not more so. As the network grows YPF Trust could play a valuable role by:

- **Creating a space for local leadership to flourish.** To date Young People's Foundations have shown that they are capable of foregrounding the strengths and assets available within local communities.
- Continuing to engage in leadership roles **a high proportion of women and people from BAME communities, as well as those from a lower socio-economic background.**
- Continuing to attract **leaders who are ambitious for a cause**, exceptionally good at listening and relationship building, and willing to embrace an innovative, inclusive approach.

C

CONTEXT
WHAT
THE DATA
INDICATES

As we have seen, Young People's Foundations exist for a purpose, that is, to improve the lives of children and young people, by supporting and strengthening the work of local agencies which contribute to that goal. We have also seen how their activities include raising funds, distributing the funds to the front-line, encouraging collaboration, and building capacity and capability.

However, the full significance of these activities cannot be understood without an appreciation of the challenges faced by children and young people, and also of the local organisations working with them.

In the following sections of the report we therefore outline the evidence about these challenges, before, during and beyond COVID-19.

As will be seen, the evidence suggests that the challenges for children and young people are manifold and widespread, and in some cases have become even greater during the pandemic.

Small local organisations are often best placed to win their trust, and because of this they have the potential to make a positive and even transformative impact on their lives. But, as the evidence shows, these organisations are often fragile, and acting alone they cannot hope to respond adequately to all the challenges children and young people face, to access sufficient resources, and to acquire the full range of knowledge and skills necessary for successful intervention.

Given this context, Young People's Foundations have a vital role in encouraging collaboration, in attracting funds and directing them to where they can best be used, and in driving up the quality of local action.

C1

THE CHALLENGES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

C1.1 BEFORE COVID-19

This section summarises evidence available on the pre-existing life difficulties faced by children and young people across the country.

Even before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of children and young people who faced significant challenges was extraordinarily high. It is estimated that:

- Over four million children were living in poverty.
- One million young people (age 8-19) had self-reported mental health issues.
- 360,000 young people from vulnerable families were receiving formal support and 448,000 more were known to youth workers.
- 700,000 young people were persistently absent from school.
- 380,000 were homeless or at risk of homelessness and 83,000 young people were living in temporary accommodation.⁴

The mental health of children and young people has never been higher on the public agenda. Mental health problems are now experienced by one in eight children and young people. Emotional disorders, including anxiety and depression, are the most common, and other mental health problems can for example include behavioural disorders with patterns of disruptive and violent behaviour, hyperactivity, and eating disorders.⁵

There have also been high levels of public concern about youth violence, and in 2018/19 4,500 knife and offensive weapon offences were committed by children aged 10 to 17.⁶ But young people are also more likely than older people to become victims of crime: 22% of young White people and 23% of young Black people, for example.⁷

The problems in some parts of the country were especially acute. For example, 830,000 children in England lived in homes where domestic abuse had taken place in the last year, but the level was twice as high in Hackney compared to Wokingham. Over 1.5 million children were living in families where one parent or carer has a severe mental health problem; however, in Buckinghamshire this applied to 10% of children, in Islington the figure was 18%.

⁴ National Youth Agency. (2020) Out of Sight: Vulnerable Young People, COVID-19 Response.

⁵ NHS Digital. (2018) Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2017.

⁶ Youth Justice Board and Ministry of Justice. (2020) Youth Justice Statistics 2018/19 England and Wales.

⁷ Crime Survey for England and Wales, year ending March 2019. Figures for 16-24 year olds, from 2014 to 2017.

The number of children eligible for free school meals was more than four times greater in Hartlepool than in Rutland.⁸ Young Manchester reports that poverty acts as the backdrop to the lives of many of Manchester's children and young people, with 45% of children living below the poverty line.⁹

The experience of children and young people was also likely to vary according to their ethnicity. For example between April 2018 and March 2019, Black children (aged 10-17) were four times more likely to be arrested than White children.¹⁰ Over 40% of children in the youth justice system in England and Wales are from BAME backgrounds, and more than one third of these have a diagnosed mental health problem.¹¹

This doesn't mean that BAME young people were alone in facing discrimination, direct or indirect. For example, of the young White people eligible for free schoolmeals who applied for university, only 22% were accepted for a place.¹²

It is very clear that even before COVID-19 struck, very large numbers of young people were already in difficult circumstances, with particularly high prevalence of problems for those in communities experiencing widespread poverty and/or discrimination.

8 Children's Commissioner. (2020) We're all in this together? Local area profiles of child vulnerability.

9 Whitham, G., and Acik, N. (2019) Data analysis of the youth and play needs of children and young people in Manchester.

10 Youth Justice Board and Ministry of Justice. (2020) Youth Justice Statistics 2018/19 England and Wales.

11 Taylor, C. (2016). Review of the youth justice system in England and Wales. Ministry of Justice.

12 National Education Opportunities Network. (2018) Working Class Heroes - Understanding access to higher education for white students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

13 UK Youth. (2020) The impact of COVID-19 on young people & the youth sector, 5.

C1.2 DURING COVID-19

"We are so worried for our young people. They are already a very marginalised and isolated group and now that has intensified greatly. Many exist in unhappy homes with little chance for escape or support. With the whole nation now being told to stay at home these young people are left trapped with the people they are desperate to escape from and even less able to be who they are."

Local youth charity¹³

While life under the pandemic has not been a difficult experience for all children and young people, and indeed for some has had positive aspects, for many others COVID-19 has served only to increase and intensify the challenges they face, as evidenced by a broad spectrum of organisations working in the field. This section illustrates some of the central and recurring themes.

The picture for young people in COVID-19, including for those in difficult circumstances, is by no means universally negative. Young people, given opportunity and encouragement to exercise their own agency, can be highly adaptive and resilient. In our survey we saw evidence of this, with 30% of organisations reporting that children and young people they work with were showing a preference for remote and digital services, while 28% reported that children and young people were engaging with groups or organisations where that hadn't happened before.

Indeed, it is clear that young people are reaching out to offer support, as well to access it for themselves:

‘Where a little extra support is needed, most young people are coping by reaching out to others via digital platforms, especially to friends. The data shows that not only are young people reaching out to others for support, they are also reaching out to offer or give support, including contributing more to the community than they usually would (such as helping elderly neighbours with shopping etc.), and that this is also contributing to positive wellbeing.’¹⁴

Evidence drawn from 140 surveys conducted by different organisations during the pandemic reveals that the experience has been a positive one for many young people who may have been finding life difficult before. For many fostered or adopted children, and for many young carers, there were significant improvements in the relationships within their households. For many young people social pressures that occurred primarily in school, such as bullying and social anxiety, were alleviated during lockdown.

Moreover, many young people have reported enjoying being more creative and learning new skills, with younger children favouring creative pastimes, and older young people dedicating more time to learning new skills including cooking.¹⁵

However, for those children and young people unable to benefit from positive experiences such as these, the isolation, anxiety and despair they feel can be especially acute.

Many of the existing difficulties experienced by children and young people persisted under COVID-19, and have increased. For example, where young people have existing mental health needs, they report feeling more concerned than usual about their own wellbeing.¹⁶

Evidence from UK Youth suggests that children and young people are experiencing a range of challenges. These are listed in order of perceived importance:

- Increased mental health or wellbeing concerns.
- Increased loneliness and isolation.
- Lack of safe space – including not being able to access their youth club/ service and lack of safe spaces at home.
- Challenging family relationships.
- Lack of trusted relationships or someone to turn to.
- Increased social media or online pressure.
- Higher risk for engaging in gangs, substance misuse, carrying weapons or other harmful practices.
- Higher risk for sexual exploitation or grooming.

The work of organisations working with children and young people in the areas served by a Young People’s Foundation highlighted several additional concerns about the impact on young people at this stage of the pandemic. In particular they cited the negative educational impact of school closures, and declining social engagement with peers. Moreover, many young people have suffered increased anxiety owing to the cancellation of the 2020 GCSE, AS and A’ Level examinations.

Research indicates that pupils from low socio-economic and BAME backgrounds are more likely to be subject to unconscious bias by teachers, resulting in underestimation of their grades in exams. This is not likely to be remedied by the option to re-sit exams or appeal grades due to associated financial implications.

¹⁴ Peel, Adam. (2020) Diving into COVID-19 survey data, part 1, Centre for Youth Impact and National Youth Agency, blog 7/7/2020.

¹⁵ Peel, Adam. (2020) Diving into COVID-19 survey data, part 2: The Positives of Lockdown, Centre for Youth Impact and National Youth Agency, blog 7/8/2020.

¹⁶ Peel, Adam. (2020) Diving into COVID-19 survey data, part 1, Centre for Youth Impact and National Youth Agency, blog 7/7/2020.

Young People's Foundations are also reporting increased risks to young people because they are at home. This includes witnessing and experiencing domestic violence, being exposed to substance misuse and alcohol abuse and increased levels of poverty as parents and carers' jobs are lost or become vulnerable.

'Safeguarding is a prime concern as members highlight their top three challenges in supporting young people in Brent over the next three months will stem from: mental health and wellbeing concerns, challenging family relationships, lack of safe space.'¹⁷

The additional strain and pressures on families in poverty have further reduced their ability to meet basic needs. Within two weeks, a central helpline in Manchester received over 1,000 calls for urgent food support with over 50% of them from households with children.

Particular groups of young people are finding life especially difficult under lockdown and during the pandemic. Young people with eating disorders expressed anxiety about food, amidst food shortages and restrictions on exercise.¹⁸ Mental health concerns are also more prominent among care-leavers and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).¹⁹

At the same time support services have been reduced – for example 7 out of 10 families surveyed in June and July 2020 reported that social care or professional support for people with a learning disability has been cut or reduced.²⁰

"Lockdown has exacerbated social and economic inequalities with some families not having enough food to eat, increased domestic abuse and vulnerable young people being exploited by county lines and at risk of online sexual exploitation."

Young Westminster Foundation.

There are furthermore serious concerns about inequality and the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 on communities in disadvantaged areas, among families of key workers, and people from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds.

In addition, it seems clear that support for those who are finding life difficult is not always available. Many young people have been separated from services that they had previously attended, as well as the social networks they had through school, youth clubs, and other community groups.²¹

Despite using a range of tools to engage with young people including social media and video conferencing, youth organisations working in areas served by Young People's Foundations estimate that only 30% of young people who would normally engage in face-to-face activities are being reached. Young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are among those losing out.

Finally, it is becoming clear that one factor which has played a significant part in the quality of life of children and young people under lockdown is the availability, or otherwise, of internet connectivity. Approximately one million children and young people, as well as their families, still do not have adequate access to a device or connectivity at home.²² In one survey 47% of youth workers said less than half of their young people had everything they needed to engage, particularly computers, appropriate spaces, and sufficient data or Wi-Fi.²³

¹⁷ Youth Brent Foundation. (2020) COVID-19 YBF Needs Survey: Key Findings and Results.

¹⁸ Young Minds. (2020) Coronavirus: Impact on young people with mental health needs.

¹⁹ Peel, Adam. (2020) Diving into COVID-19 survey data, part 1, Centre for Youth Impact and National Youth Agency, blog 7/7/2020. Public Health England, (2020) Covid-9 Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveillance Report 7: children and young people.

²⁰ Mencap (2020), Social Care Survey.

²¹ National Youth Agency. (2020) Out of Sight: Vulnerable Young People, COVID-19 Response, 11.

²² Nominet. (2019) Digital Access for All.

²³ London Youth. (2020) Running on Reserves: The impact of COVID-19 on London's youth sector, 8

C1.3 BEYOND COVID-19

“Mental health, drugs and violent crime, education - then impacting employment. This is an emergency for young people, it will have a massive impact on their futures, we need to act now to support them in the best way we can.”

Youth worker ²⁴

As we enter a period of very high unemployment, young people will be hit hardest. The pandemic has particularly impacted on the hospitality and retail sectors, the traditional routes into paid employment for many young people. And those able to access work face in-work poverty with low wages, zero hours contracts, and poorly rewarded self-employment.

Young people from BAME backgrounds, as well as young people in 'left-behind' working class White communities, were disadvantaged in the labour market before this crisis, and are likely to suffer the worst effects of the recession that follows it.²⁵

“Many people rely on jobs as an escape from my home life, especially me, and I have been so eager to go to work. Me myself, I have zero knowledge if my work will ever open again, it could be back to square one in the job hunt, which will be soul destroying for me.”

Young person ²⁶

A deep recession will have far reaching consequences for young people. Young Manchester's research and experience has shown that two of the biggest drivers for exploitation and engagement in gangs are poverty and violence in the home, both of which are on the rise.

“Due to our connections with young people living on Stonebridge Estate we discovered a noticeable rise in younger children becoming involved with gangs, carrying knives, dealing in drugs. Children as young as 10! This is seriously worrying.”

Local children's organisation

Adolescence is a critical time for emotional and physical development, affecting behaviour, mental health and life chances. As the Local Government Association has pointed out, the impact of the pandemic on some children and young people will be far-reaching, and it will be essential that the right services are there to support them.²⁷

²⁴ London Youth. (2020) Running on Reserves: The impact of COVID-19 on London's youth sector, 5

²⁵ London Youth. (2020) Running on Reserves: The impact of COVID-19 on London's youth sector, 8

²⁶ UK Youth. (2020) The impact of COVID-19 on young people & the youth sector

²⁷ Local Government Association. (2020) LGA responds to report on impact of COVID-19 on children and families.

C2

ORGANISATIONS WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

C2.1 BEFORE COVID

In England around over 97,000 charities work with children and young people in some way,²⁸ and an estimated 34,000 charities have children and young people as their primary beneficiaries. Of these, 91% are small, with income of £100,000 or less per year; and 94% operate entirely at the local level. They work in a wide range of areas, from social services to employment and training; from culture and recreation to housing, from tackling youth violence to supporting well-being and mental health.²⁹

Organisations working with children and young people can be a life-line for those in difficult circumstances. They offer children and young people a way to talk to a trusted adult or disclose a problem for help, without stigma. Youth workers engage young people in non-formal education, out-of-school activities, and are a source of information, advice and guidance. They also carry out targeted or specialist work with young people at risk, for example those on the edge of care, gangs or poor mental health.³⁰

C2.2 THE IMPACT OF AUSTERITY

Over the last decade, spending by local councils on youth services in England and Wales has been cut by 70%, with the loss of almost £1bn of investment and the loss of 750 youth centres and more than 4,500 youth workers.

At the same time, there has been significant disinvestment in many types of social infrastructure, either from closure, sales or poor maintenance. For example, a 2018 report noted that more than 350 children's centres have closed since 2010, with only 8 new centres opening; 214 children's playgrounds closed and a further 234 were expected to close; the amount of school playing field land earmarked for sell-off increased to a seven year high. These losses were significantly worse in low income communities. At the same time voluntary sector infrastructure suffered a crisis of confidence, and many local umbrella organisations, not least in the children and young people's sector, were forced to close.

At national level the National Citizens Service emerged from the Big Society project: this initiative was targeted at a relatively narrow group of 16-17 year olds, and was often poorly received by local agencies, which felt by-passed and undervalued. In 2016 the National Lottery Community Fund launched the Youth Investment Fund which provided £40m to youth organisations, but this only covered six regions of England.

²⁸ NCVO. (2020) UK Civil Society 2020 data tables.

²⁹ NCB. (2012) Beyond the Cuts Children's charities adapting to austerity.

³⁰ National Youth Agency. (2020) Out of Sight: Vulnerable Young People, COVID-19 Response, 19.

Local authority spending on early intervention services fell year-on-year from £3,484m in 2010/11 to £1,864m in 2018/19 – a decline of nearly half (46%).³¹ Early intervention spending covered Sure Start children's centres, family support services (including disability), and both universal and targeted services for young people. Grants and contracts for work by independent children and youth charities and community groups were especially vulnerable to cuts.

This has pushed the focus of publicly funded activity away from preventative work, which can build on the strengths and assets of children and young people, to a much narrower focus on those with the greatest and most urgent levels of problems, establishing in effect, a deficit model of service provision.

“Children's centres and youth services have been closed down for a few years so early intervention support is no longer available. The early help team now only does targeted work and high-end work for families already in crisis. We see more families reaching crisis point, whereas a few years ago support would have been offered much sooner to prevent situations reaching that point.”³²

³¹ Action for Children, NCB, NSPCC, Children's Society, Barnados (2019) Children and young people's services: Funding and spending 2010/11 to 2017/18

³² UNISON. (2018) Youth Services at Breaking Point.

³³ London Youth. (2020) Running on Reserves: The impact of COVID-19 on London's youth sector, 8.

³⁴ London Youth. (2020) Running on Reserves: The impact of COVID-19 on London's youth sector, 14.

³⁵ London Youth. (2020) Running on Reserves: The impact of COVID-19 on London's youth sector, 14.

C2.3 DURING COVID

C2.3.1 CHALLENGES FACED BY ORGANISATIONS WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Our survey sample of organisations working with children and young people indicates that the biggest difficulties they faced in delivering services, were the constraints of social distancing and of working from home. Other challenges were overstretched staff, with concerns about wellbeing and morale, and a fall in income from trading.

The financial challenges for organisations have been considerable. There was a widespread loss of income generating activities such as venue hire and delivery-based income, as well as income from corporate sponsors. In Manchester 59% lost fundraising opportunities e.g. through event cancellations. For many smaller organisations, these types of income have been a reliable supplement to other forms of funding.³³ Young Camden reports that 61% of their members had applied or intended to apply for emergency funding. Young Manchester reports that 80% of children and young people's organisations saw an immediate impact on their finances, with 49% reporting that they were under threat of closure.

Many organisations suffered a loss of staff, and although across London few have made redundancies to date, 47% have furloughed staff. This has not been compensated for by an increase in volunteers - indeed, 44% had to reduce the number of volunteers during COVID.³⁴

As a result 78% of youth sector organisations in London were regularly engaging with fewer young people.³⁵

C2.3.2 HOW FUNDERS RESPONDED

The immediate response by trusts and foundations (notably encouraged by London Funders) was rapid and effective. In London 66% of youth organisations received emergency funding by June 2020. 34% received unrestricted funding. Some have also started to attend more to the long-neglected funding needs of BAME organisations. However, a focus on the needs of current grantees has meant that many have closed the door to new applications, and many organisations are concerned that this will impact adversely on their future fundraising prospects.

At the same time, Cabinet Office guidelines permitted collaborative rather than competitive commissioning and procurement by public sector agencies. This was welcomed by many voluntary sector organisations, including those working with children and young people. However it is not clear whether this will persist beyond the crisis.

C2.3.3 ADAPTING IN THE CRISIS

However, Young People's Foundations report that many members have been able to adapt creatively and quickly in the crisis. In Camden for example, of those continuing to provide youth services during the lockdown period:

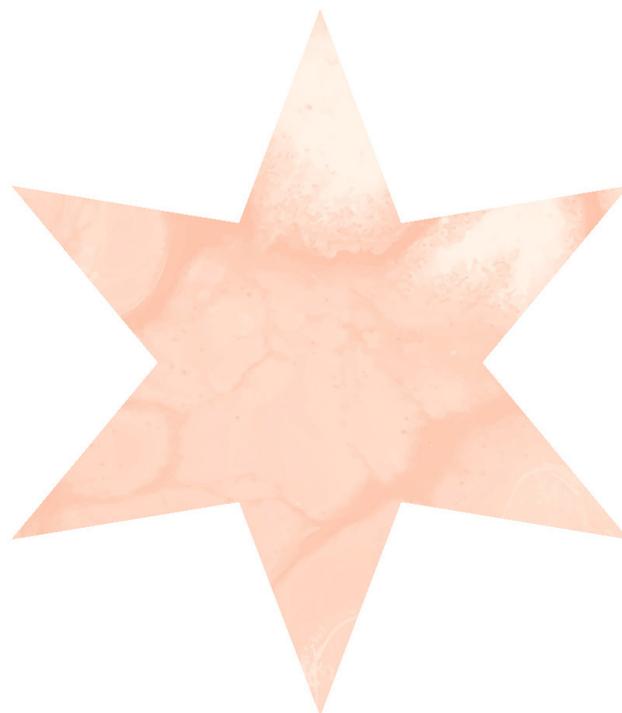
- 40% were offering telephone befriending.
- 35% were offering one-to-one mentoring or supervision.
- 30% were providing education support and food services.
- 25% made group mentoring or supervision available, alongside live youth work sessions, art online and sports or exercise coaching online.

Examples from Westminster³⁶ and Camden³⁷ included:

- Pre-recorded cookery sessions were streamed via Instagram by St Andrew's Youth Club.
- Marylebone Bangladesh Society facilitated FIFA competitions, online sewing and cookery.
- Outbreak's Messy Craft sessions moved online.
- Caxton Youth Organisation delivered weekly zoom sessions focussing on laughter and fun.
- Pan Intercultural Arts delivered their Friday evening session virtually.
- Fourth Feathers Youth Club ran junior and senior sessions on Zoom.
- Chance to Shine offered weekly training videos and online literacy lessons.
- Action Youth Boxing Intervention provided online mentoring sessions for boxing skills, circuit training and box fit.
- Calthorpe Community Garden partnered with the Felix Project to offer weekly food deliveries for self-isolating families who are struggling to make ends meet.
- The Free Space Project offered workout videos and online sing-along sessions.

“We are proud to have transferred our services to operate remotely, e.g. online/ telephone therapy - however this is not suitable for all of our service users, and completely inappropriate for adoption cases, children living in one bedroom flats with no safe space to engage in therapy, those living with family conflict and those who do not have access to the internet/ a laptop or smart phone.”

Youth organisation ³⁸



³⁶ Young Westminster Foundation. (2020) Coronavirus: How Is The YWF Community Responding?

³⁷ Young Camden Foundation. (2020) COVID-19 Impact & Response Report for the Children and Young People Sector in Camden.

³⁸ UK Youth. (2020) The impact of COVID-19 on young people & the youth sector, 6.

C2.3.4 LISTENING BETTER

Importantly, many youth organisations found they increased the quantity and quality of their listening to young people in the crisis. Frequency of contact was increased, and services adapted, based on the personal needs and preferences of young people for social connection, communication, and support. One study found that 70% of young people felt they had been able to influence their service. Where young people reported positive benefits on wellbeing they felt involved in influencing their service or stakeholders. And conversely, practitioners were also influenced and inspired by young people's compassion and optimism.³⁹

“The way the organisation listens to me makes me feel like I have someone on my side.”

Young person

C2.3.5 TRAINING NEEDS

Inevitably support and training needs of organisations working with children and young people have been affected by the crisis.

The Centre for Youth Impact reported in July 2020 that a significant majority need training directly related to meeting the increased needs of young people following lockdown, including for example trauma training and youth mental health first aid training. In addition to this there is high demand for training on specific practical issues related to working with young people, for example ‘creating safe spaces’, and there remains an ongoing demand for training in digital youth work.

As organisations continued to adapt their delivery in line with official guidelines, there has been a rise in detached or street-based youth work, with the concomitant increased demand for additional training.⁴⁰ Training needs are likely to continue to evolve, and remain high, for the foreseeable future.

C2.4 BEYOND COVID

“This is a critical time for the youth sector and particularly those who receive no core funding. If organisations close, it will be incredibly hard to pick up the pieces and vulnerable young people will not get the support they need and deserve. For those who have suffered trauma in their lives this could cause further trauma and lead them further into mental ill health, physical ill health and reduced life outcomes. The repercussions of this crisis are unthinkable.”

Youth organisation ⁴¹

C2.4.1 LIMITATIONS

When eventually the pandemic recedes, the challenges for organisations working with children and young people will be far from over. Those which are furloughing staff in order to receive temporary relief are reducing their capacity to respond to the crisis and its aftermath, thereby compromising their ability to reposition themselves post COVID-19.

Even if such organisations are able to survive, relationships with young people may need to be rebuilt, especially if they have had to close temporarily or if they are unable to maintain contact with young people. The task of rebuilding trading income is also likely to be long and arduous, especially in the face of a long term downturn to the economy.

³⁹ Falconer, C. (2020) Strength in Solidarity: How Listening Practices Helped Youth Organisations Respond to the Covid-19 Crisis. InspireChilli for The Listening Fund.

⁴⁰ Centre for Youth Impact (2020) What training would be most beneficial to you right now? (24/07/20 - 30/07/20).

⁴¹ UK Youth. (2020) The impact of COVID-19 on young people & the youth sector, 5.

C2.4.2 OPPORTUNITIES

There will of course be opportunities, not least the spirit of constructive collaboration that has flourished in many places, among children and youth organisations, with other charities, and with statutory agencies and business partners as well,

Children and young people's organisations are usually small. In recent years and especially during COVID-19 there has been widespread recognition that more can be achieved by working with others than by operating in isolation. For example a recent survey by Young Camden revealed 84% of local organisations had partnered with other charities to deliver youth services in the last 12 months. The desire to maintain and extend partnerships and collaboration is likely to be a continuing feature across the youth sector in the coming period.

Moreover, as most organisations working with children and young people know, many young people want to create positive change in their local neighbourhood and beyond, which suggests that social action is likely to be an important and positive element of youth provision in response to COVID-19.⁴²

C2.4.3 DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

But the ecology of support available to them will in part determine whether children and young people's organisations can survive the difficulties ahead, seize the initiative, develop better ways of working and also play their part in 'building back better'. Research by Young People's Foundations reveals that the organisations they work with already have and will therefore continue to have developmental challenges, not least of which are:

- Improving their communications including marketing of services to young people.
- Strengthening their financial sustainability, including diversification of income.

- Enhancing their management and governance.
- Increasing workforce diversity and inclusion of disabled children and young people in their operations.
- Improving coordination across local agencies and facilitating partnership working.

Over and above the delivery of individual projects or the success of individual organisations, in order to support children and young people in their area, local organisations will need to further develop creative and entrepreneurial flair, share insights, skills and learning, and collectively discover how to shape local systems for the better.

“We are seeing an increase of demand in mental health services, and we are expecting a mental health crisis once out of lockdown. Our employment programme has stopped, and we are worried about the job prospects of young people. We are trying to put together an exit strategy which will change the shape of our service for the medium term. We are finding the digital hubs really useful in engaging with young people that may not have engaged before, so we will more than likely keep this aspect of the service following lockdown.”

Youth Organisation ⁴³

⁴² Peel, Adam. (2020) Diving into COVID-19 survey data, part 2: The Positives of Lockdown, Centre for Youth Impact and National Youth Agency, blog 7/8/2020.

⁴³ Young Camden Foundation. (2020) COVID-19 Impact & Response Report for the Children and Young People Sector in Camden.

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CONCLUSION



Our study has concluded that Young People's Foundations offer a positive and welcome model of local collaboration, at a time when the challenges faced by children and young people, and by the local organisations that are often best placed to work with them, are substantial and in many respects increasing.

The nine Young People's Foundations which have been established to date have quickly demonstrated that they are capable of adding value in addressing these challenges.

Not least, they have been effective at increasing the supply of funding for front-line organisations, including from sources beyond the local area, and distributing the funds to where they can have the greatest reach and impact.

Furthermore, they have been able to provide practical assistance to small local charities and community groups and encourage greater collaboration among them, as well as with local authorities, businesses, funders, and larger charities.

This model has some strong common features. For example, they do not deliver direct services themselves, and do not compete with front-line organisations, and this has proved important in gaining trust at all levels.

At the same time the model is highly adaptive to local circumstances, and the Young People's Foundations place emphasis on gaining a detailed local understanding of needs and priorities, and involving young people themselves in research and co-design processes.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, they have proved themselves fast and adaptable. Our study found that they quickly became a go-to source of information, stepped up fundraising and grant distribution activities, and helped front-line agencies move on-line and remodel their services. They also exercised leadership within the sector during the crisis, enabling organisations to work well together, helping with local responses to inequalities and needs, and acting as 'honest brokers', proving adept at managing a multiplicity of relationships.

We believe that this model is potentially replicable across the country, and that any roll-out activity is likely to be most successful if it can build on what already exists, can be adaptive to local circumstances, can maintain independence, and can achieve high level support from the local authority.

We also believe that future success and resilience of Young People's Foundations will require a strong focus on core activities (acting as honest brokers, and raising and distributing funds for frontline work), retaining core principles (not competing with members, maintaining a positive attitude towards the public and private sectors, and continuing to put the interests of children and young people first), and continuing to showcase good leadership (recruiting leaders that reflect diversity of local communities, and attracting people ambitious for a cause).

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