

# EMPOWHER

## Report from 2018 - 2021



EMPOWHER

Created by

UK YOUTH

In partnership with

BritishRedCross



Funded in partnership by





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**“The most amazing thing that I’ve seen through EmpowHER is that the young women don’t realise the significance of sisterhood until they’re in it, and then by the end, they do! And the love they have for each other at the end is phenomenal!”**

## Executive Summary

Launched to mark the centenary of women's suffrage, EmpowHER encouraged young women and girls (YW&G) to use their voices for positive change. Led by UK Youth, in partnership with the British Red Cross and Young Women's Trust, EmpowHER was a three-and-a-half year programme, addressing the worryingly low levels of wellbeing amongst YW&G in the UK, and supported them to give back to their local communities with inclusive, meaningful social action.

EmpowHER was funded by Spirit of 2012 and the #iwill Fund to a total value of £2.56m. The #iwill Fund is made possible thanks to £54million joint investment from The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) to support young people to access high quality social action opportunities. Spirit of 2012 is acting as a match funder and awarding grants on behalf of the #iwill Fund. Spirit of 2012 is the London 2012 legacy fund and was founded in 2013 with a £47million endowment from the National Lottery Community Fund to continue and recreate the spirit of pride, positivity and community that inspired people across the UK during the London 2012 Games.

### Key findings and conclusion:

Over 1,800 YW&G across England completed the EmpowHER programme across four cohorts, between 2018 and 2021. We found that:

- EmpowHER succeeded in engaging YW&G with low wellbeing and additional barriers
- The wellbeing of participants improved during EmpowHER
- YW&G were empowered to identify and lead change through EmpowHER
- EmpowHER participants' perceptions of social cohesion improved over the course of the programme
- EmpowHER participants saw their limiting perceptions of themselves and their gender reduced
- EmpowHER participants are on the way to developing long-term, meaningful social action habits

In addition to seeking to identify and evidence the impact of EmpowHER, including the nuance across different demographic characteristics, we also sought to understand and share what the enablers for that impact were. This report summarises and presents our learnings and recommendations to address the following question - "how do you design a programme to address low wellbeing through social action?" These recommendations came from three and a half years of testing and learning, open and frank conversations with partners and funders, steering group meetings and youth worker interviews and workshops.

## Programme Context and Need

### Low wellbeing of young women and girls (YW&G)

The poor wellbeing and general low self-esteem of young people is alarming. More than one in five young people report that they have experienced a high level of emotional problems and other emotional difficulties over the last year (Brooks et al. 2020).

YW&G, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are even more likely to experience poor wellbeing. A 2018 report by the Children's Society (2019) found that girls had lower wellbeing and higher depressive symptoms than boys and are more than twice as likely to self-harm as boys. Furthermore, young people from lower income households had a higher than average risk of self-harming, making YW&G from poorer families a high-risk group.

These findings corroborate those of the Millennium Cohort Study in 2015 (when participants were 14 years old), which showed that girls were significantly less happy than boys with their lives overall, and especially less happy with their appearance. Girls from homes with lower family income were more likely to report poorer mental health and lower wellbeing than their better-off peers (Centre for Longitudinal Studies, 2020).

Public Health England funded research into the wellbeing of adolescent girls in 2017, finding similar results, with girls scoring lower than boys in life satisfaction, and a direct link between life satisfaction and family affluence. The report also identified key mitigating measures, such as having a trusted support network (Brooks et al. 2020).

As well as a greater likelihood of dissatisfaction with their lives, the research shows differences between how dissatisfaction manifests among girls and boys, with girls being more prone to concerns about how they look, a much higher likelihood of self-harming, and a higher likelihood of having (or developing) an eating disorder. A survey carried out by Girlguiding in 2017 points to some potential causes of these discrepancies. Almost all the girls surveyed (95%) said that the advertising industry should show more positive, diverse representations of women. Many felt angry about gender stereotypes in the media and the products sold to them, but despite this awareness many girls internalise these negative messages. More than half of the girls surveyed (55%) said that prevalent gender stereotypes affect their ability to say what they think, and they feel that stepping outside the norm will result in bullying and teasing from their peers. In addition, girls who identify as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic, LGBTQ+ or disabled face additional barriers when it comes to feeling safe and confident to be themselves (Girlguiding, 2020).

This issue is not receding and indeed has been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Prior to the UK wide lockdown of March 2020, research released by Headstart in

February 2020 showed emotional difficulties affecting girls escalate as they move from early to mid-adolescence, on average increasing by 17% between the ages of 11 and 14 (Deighton, J., Yoon, Y. and Garland, L. (2020)). During April and May 2020, during the height of government restrictions on socialising, young people reported lower scores on average across personal wellbeing measures and higher scores on feeling lonely (ONS, 2020). Young people are also increasingly concerned about the effect Covid-19 is having on their life, education and work, as well their wellbeing (22%). Young Minds' Covid-19 survey further corroborates the government findings, reporting that for those who already had poor mental health, 80% of respondents said the pandemic had made their mental health worse and 87% had felt lonely or isolated (Young Minds, 2020).

The ample research into the wellbeing of YW&G paints a clear picture:

- Low wellbeing is prevalent among YW&G – especially those from a low socio-economic background.
- YW&G are especially impacted by negative gender stereotypes.
- A trusted support network is important.
- The transitional ages are a key moment for intervention.
- Covid-19 is having a detrimental impact on young people's wellbeing.

Having this foundation of evidence to stand upon, the next question is: **what can we do to overcome these challenges and provide opportunities for YW&G to feel happy, supported and valued members of their community?**

## **Evidence of the impact of youth social action, youth groups and role models on wellbeing**

Evidence suggests that inclusive and meaningful social action opportunities, including volunteering, and the influence of role models can improve the wellbeing of YW&G and inspire them to lead change in their communities. In addition, YW&G point to youth groups as places where they can be themselves, learn new things and build positive and supportive relationships (Girlguiding, 2020).

Volunteering opportunities, social action, and informal education expose girls to an environment in which they can be inspired by their own peers and challenge perceived norms. YW&G want to speak up, and they want to inform decisions that affect their lives (Girlguiding, 2020). They are also inspired by role models who challenge and overcome stereotypes, particularly women in sport, and are increasingly prepared, as they get older, to challenge sexism themselves (Girlguiding, 2017).

In a 2015 study into regular weekly volunteering sessions with 13 and 14-year-old girls, Youth United found that self-reported self-confidence and the ability to work in a team both

improved (Education Endowment Foundation, 2020). Similarly, a 2016 Cabinet Office report shows positive improvements in resilience, problem solving, empathy and community investment among YW&G who participated in social action (Kirkman et al., 2016). Finally, the National Youth Social Action survey (2018) (funded by DCMS) found that volunteering and social action was particularly helpful for YW&G since – once involved – girls are more likely to believe their actions can have an impact on their community (Knibbs et al., 2019).

## What was our response?

EmpowHER was created in this context and launched on the centenary of suffrage to address these worrying low levels of wellbeing in YW&G, through the mechanism of social action and delivered in the safe space of a youth group. Its importance has only been reinforced by the impact of Covid-19 on young people and their local communities. Through meaningful and inclusive social action opportunities, YW&G challenge limiting perceptions and are inspired to lead change in their local areas, building community cohesion and supporting their own wellbeing and confidence.

### Key Facts

Of 10,000 young people surveyed by NCVO in 2019:

- 77% agreed volunteering had improved their mental health.
- 53% said it had improved their physical health
- 74% said it gave them more confidence
- 84% of 18-24 year olds said it increased their confidence

## EmpowHER Programme Design

EmpowHER was designed to address low wellbeing amongst YW&G through supporting their involvement in inclusive, meaningful social action. Co-designed with young people, the programme supported YW&G through a journey of social learning. It provided activities and learning around individuals' rights, wellbeing, empowerment, and resilience, providing a foundation from which to partake in (and ultimately lead) social action opportunities.

The programme was targeted at "unusual suspects" – YW&G between the ages of 10 and 20, with low wellbeing, and who may have been excluded from social action opportunities due to lack of access or the necessary skills or confidence to engage. Four cohorts of YW&G took part in EmpowHER between 2018 and 2021.

UK Youth led the programme, in partnership with the British Red Cross (BRC), and Young Women's Trust (YWT). The three partners brought together their expertise in youth work,

social action, campaigning, national programmes, and gender specific advocacy, and worked closely on the planning and delivery of EmpowHER across the country.

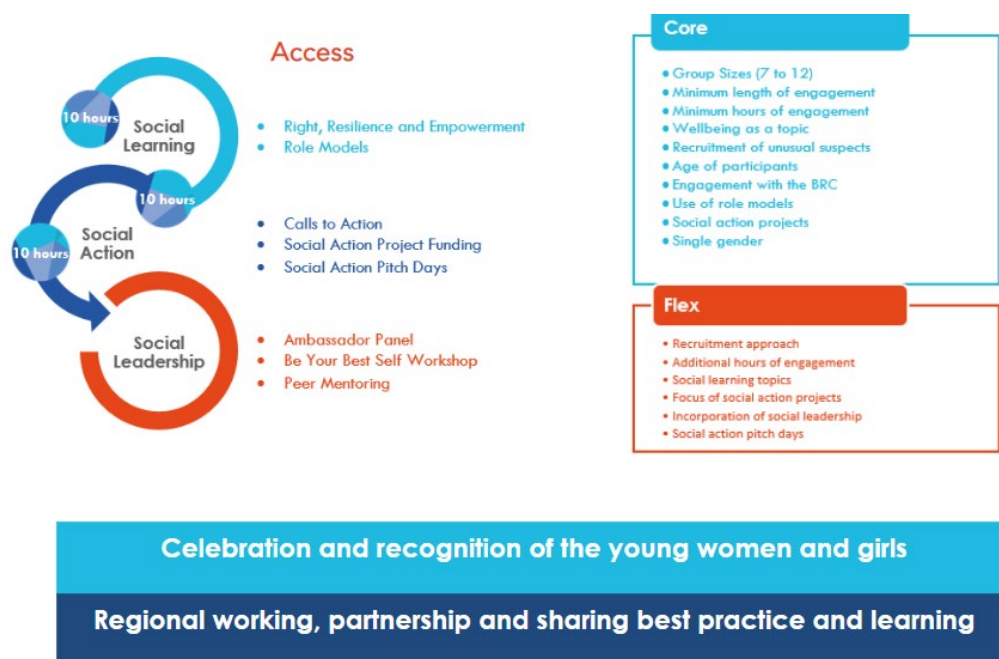
With an open network of over 7,000 youth organisations and nation partners, UK Youth is focused on unlocking youth work as the catalyst of change that is needed now more than ever. From across UK Youth's network, 21 delivery partners were recruited and trained on the aims, structure and delivery requirements of EmpowHER, and worked closely with UK Youth to flexibly adapt elements of the programme to their local context. The youth organisations and youth workers brought incredible value to the programme through their knowledge and expertise in their local context, including in engaging 'unusual suspects' and adapting the programme to meet the different needs of young people.

Over the six months of each cohort, the YW&G met with a youth worker in small groups across the South West, West Midlands, North West and East of England for at least 12 weeks, completing a minimum of 30 hours.

## EmpowHER model

The programme has three key elements: social learning, facilitated by a youth worker; social action, led by the YW&G; and social leadership, with opportunities for the YW&G to further develop their confidence and lead change. Underpinning these elements are regional working, sharing of best practice and celebrating and recognising YW&G achievements.

**Figure 1. The EmpowHER model**



# EMPOWHER



From 2018 - 2021 delivery and reach

2088

young women and girls engaged

North West

21

Delivery Partners

West Midlands

1880

young women and girls completed the programme

East of England

91%

completion rate

14

EmpowHER Ambassadors

South West

1175

days of social action

Inspiring young women and girls to lead change

## Social Action

240+

Social action projects

£8,879

raised

20,009

people in communities reached



"It makes you excited, like you're making a change and the world will one day be better because you're doing something about it."

— Young Person



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Department for Digital, Culture Media & Sport



# EMPOWHER



## Legacy



YW&G reported an increase in confidence



YW&G feel a greater sense of trust in their local community



YW&G say they are "quite likely or very likely" to take part in volunteering in the next 12 months



of youth workers expressed that the programme improved links with local organisations



"I learnt the importance of getting involved in the community and that if you're passionate about something, the impact you can have on other people is huge. I've never had the opportunity to do something for my community and EmpowHER gave me that."

— Young Person



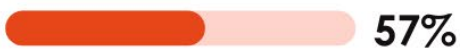
## Wellbeing



of young women and girls reported increased levels of happiness



of young women and girls reported increased levels of life satisfaction



of young women and girls felt an increased sense that things in their life are worthwhile



## EmpowHER Journey

### Sadia's EmpowHER Journey

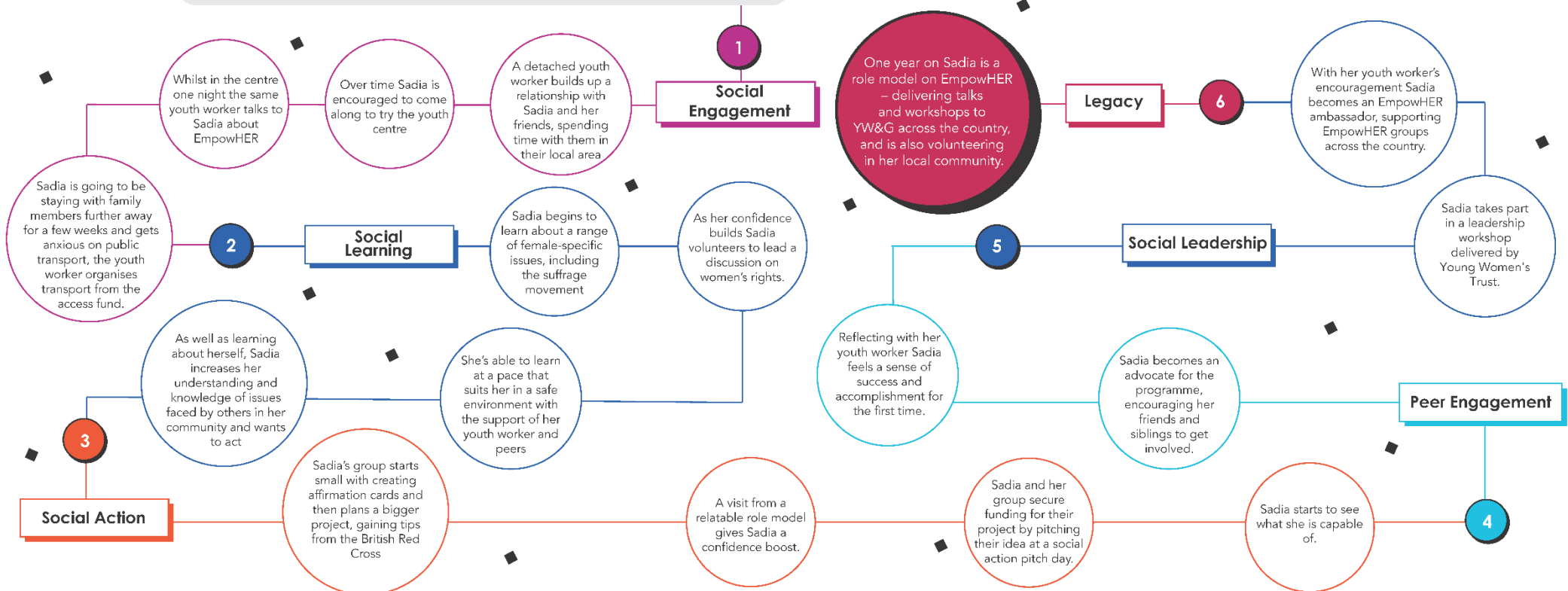


Sadia lives in one of the most deprived areas in the UK.

Sadia has a difficult home life and faces a range of personal barriers to progression

Sadia has never taken part in social action

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## Programme Evaluation

### Methodology

This report explores the combined findings from across all four cohorts of EmpowHER, as well as looks at comparisons by cohort and whether the effects of the programme were consistent across different demographics and participation levels.

In order to do this, we amalgamated quantitative reach data from all four cohorts, and outcomes data from across Cohorts 1, 2 and 4 (Cohort 3 was excluded due to pre/post outcomes data not being collected as a result of the pandemic). This has been supplemented by a thematic analysis of qualitative findings collected via interviews, focus groups and case studies throughout the programme, to unpack the key enablers that allowed these changes to take place.

More details on our methodology can be found in the Appendix.

### Reach and engagement

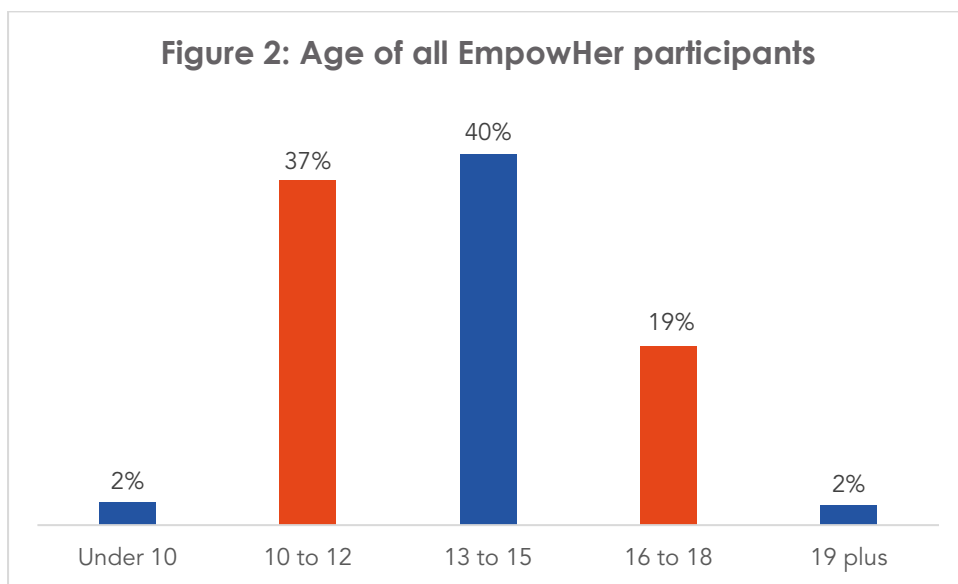
Between 2018 and 2021, four cohorts of YW&G participated in EmpowHER. Out of the 2,088 YW&G engaged, 1,880 completed<sup>1</sup> the programme – a retention rate of 91%. This section explores the demographic characteristics and backgrounds of the YW&G engaged through the programme<sup>2</sup>.

### Almost half of the YW&G that engaged in EmpowHER were in a transitional age range

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<sup>1</sup> Completion was defined as engaging in 30 hours of sessions over a minimum of 12 weeks, with a minimum of 10 hours of social learning and 10 hours of social action.

<sup>2</sup> Reach findings are based on YW&G engaged in the programme, rather than just those that completed it, and have been weighted according to the size of the cohort so that the overall figures are not skewed by non-response.



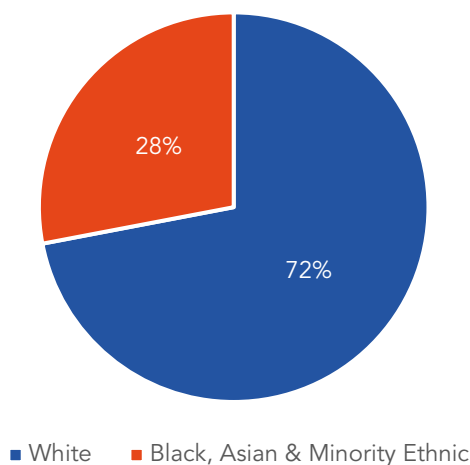
Just under half (46%) of EmpowHER participants overall were in the transitional age groups of 10-12 and 16-18 years<sup>3</sup>. Although being in a transitional age group is an important identifier of need, delivery partners communicated that there is also significant need for support amongst girls aged 13-15 and those aged 19 and above.<sup>4</sup>

### **The proportion of EmpowHER participants from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds was above the national level**

Meanwhile, the proportion of EmpowHER participants from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds was 28%. This is well above the national proportion recorded in the 2011 census of 19% for young people between the ages of 8-24 in the UK (ONS, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Transitional age refers to those moving from primary to secondary and secondary to sixth form, college or work.

<sup>4</sup> Due to changes in programme focus, the number of younger girls (aged 10 – 12) on the programme increased from under a third in Cohort 1 to almost half in Cohort 4.

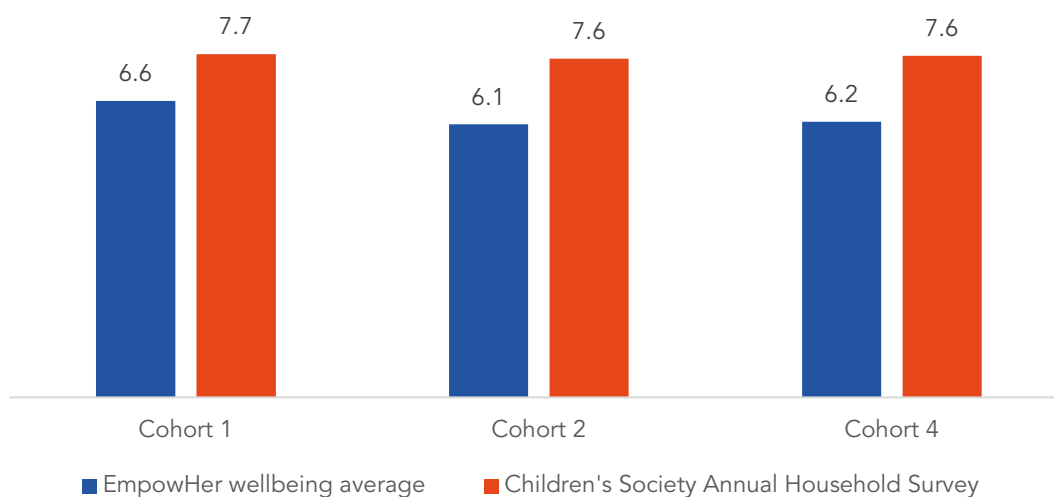
**Figure 3: Ethnicity of all EmpowHER participants**

### **EmpowHER succeeded in engaging those with low wellbeing and additional barriers**

As part of efforts to engage 'unusual suspects', a key intention of EmpowHER's recruitment was to reach YW&G with a sense of wellbeing below the national average for young people generally. The figure below demonstrates that this was the case across Cohorts 1, 2 and 4<sup>5</sup>. However, it should be noted that this comparison is limited due to the national data being from those aged between 10 and 17, a different age range to EmpowHER, as well as coming from both genders rather than just YW&G.

<sup>5</sup> Cohort 3 was not included in this analysis because wellbeing was not measured upon entry to the programme as a result of the pandemic.

**Figure 4: Average EmpowHER participant ONS wellbeing scores on entry by cohort compared to national data**

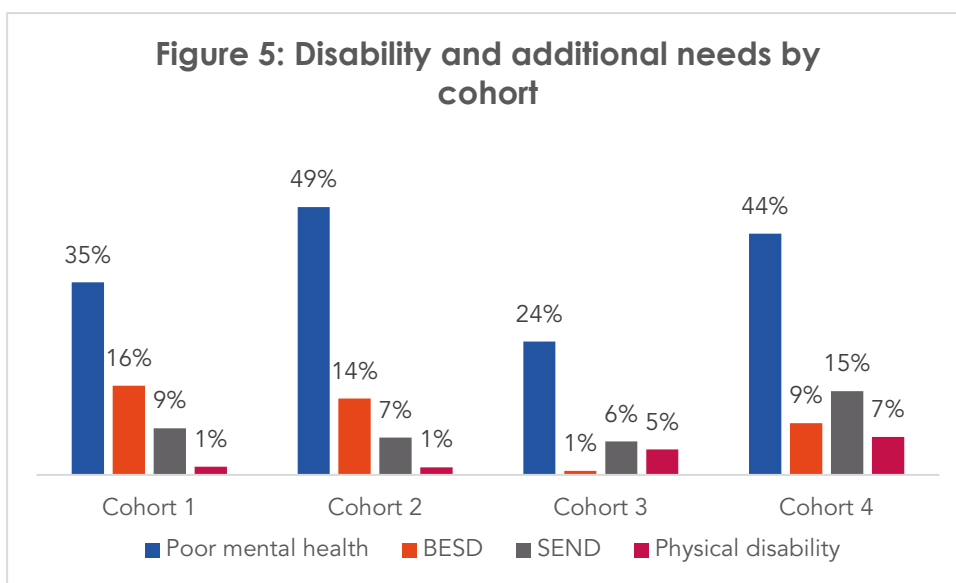


83% of YW&G came to the programme with at least one personal barrier<sup>6</sup>. In particular, EmpowHER intended to engage YW&G with disabilities and poor mental health. The proportion of YW&G with poor mental health engaging in the programme was 42%. Meanwhile, 11% of YW&G had Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD), 10% had Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and 4% had a physical disability<sup>7</sup>. The figure below shows that the proportion of participants with physical disabilities increased in Cohorts 3 and 4. UK Youth committed to recruiting a greater proportion of young people with disabilities at the end of Cohort 2, which was achieved through working with *Autism and ADHD*, a delivery partner specifically engaging young people with disabilities, as well as promoting an Access Fund<sup>8</sup> to reduce the barriers associated with certain groups participating.

<sup>6</sup> Personal barriers are measured across UK Youth's programmes and include homelessness, low income, ESOL, SEND, BESD, NEET, refugee/asylum seeker, young carer, poor mental health, physical disability and low educational attainment.

<sup>7</sup> In the context of this report, 'disability' has been defined as the presence of one of these three barriers.

<sup>8</sup> The Access Fund was a crucial enabler for many YW&G in accessing, and meaningfully engaging, in the programme. Examples of funding use include; transport for YW&G with high anxiety, replacement care for young carers and additional support staff. In Cohort 3, a Digital Inclusion Fund was also created as a response to the pandemic.



Meanwhile, the proportion of young people with poor mental health was lowest in Cohort 3. This could have been due to a range of different reasons, but one hypothesis is that the shift to online delivery made it difficult for some with mental health issues to engage. The following quote illustrates the additional anxiety felt by some young people around having to engage online, and how, for those that overcame this initial barrier, the feelings were mitigated over time.

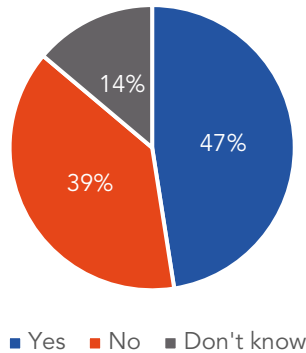
“At the start, they were texting [their youth worker] saying they felt anxious and wanted to leave, but by the end, they were messaging saying the anxiety had gone and they were loving it” (Youth worker, Young People Cornwall)

As a whole, the proportion of EmpowHER participants from the 30% most deprived areas was 55%, while 23% came from social mobility ‘cold spots’ (or the 30% least socially mobile areas in the country). Research has shown that those in deprived areas or coming from less affluent families are less likely to volunteer (Ipsos Mori, 2016), meaning they can be defined as ‘unusual suspects’.

## Under half of EmpowHER participants had taken part in social action in the last year

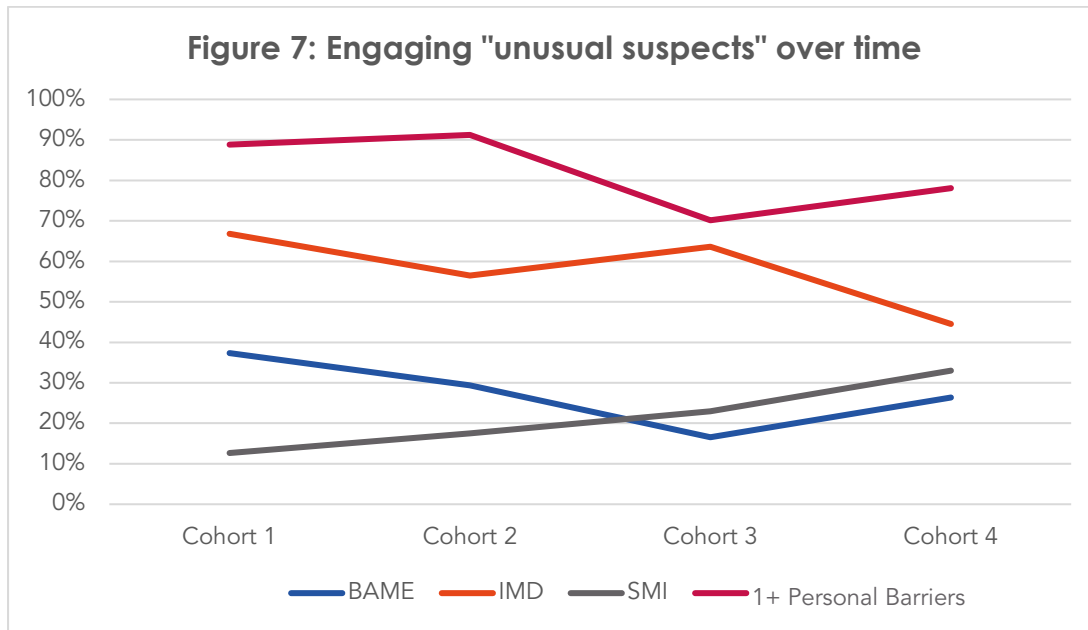
EmpowHER also intended to engage young people who had not previously participated in social action or volunteering. As the figure below shows, less than half of YW&G engaged responded ‘Yes’ to a survey question asking if they had taken part in volunteering, fundraising or campaigning in the last year.

**Figure 6: Proportion of all EmpowHER participants that have taken part in volunteering, fundraising or campaigning in the last year**



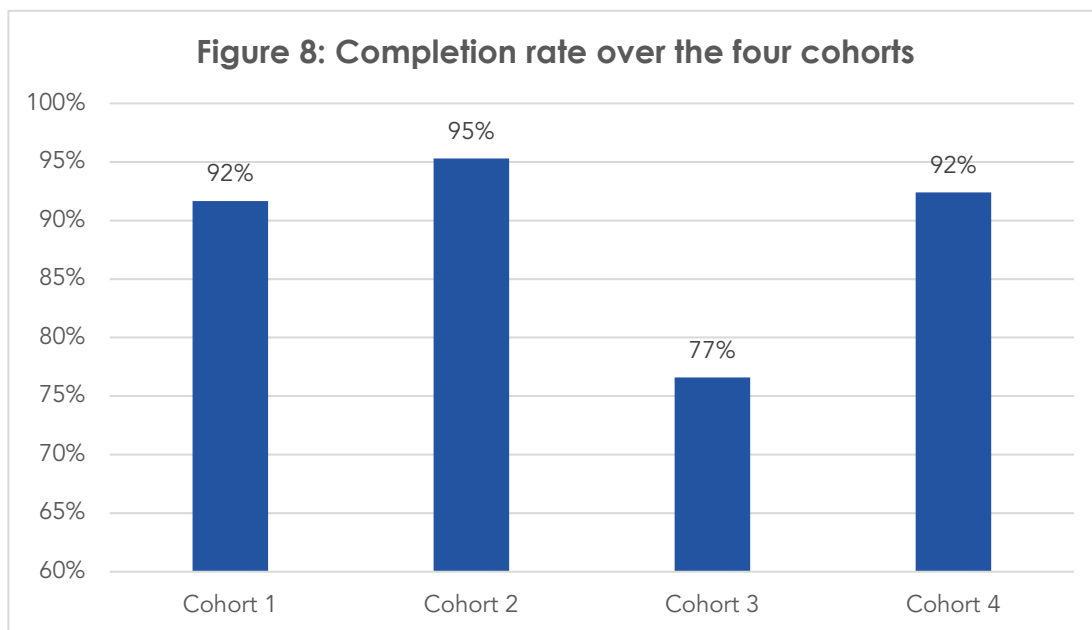
**Engagement of YW&G from key demographic groups fluctuated over the cohorts, due primarily to pandemic related disruptions. Steps to address this were successful.**

Figure 7 below explores the success EmpowHER had in recruiting key demographic groups over the different cohorts. The picture is quite mixed: one positive is that recruitment of those from social mobility cold spots increased consistently over time. Meanwhile, Cohort 3 saw a dip in recruitment of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people and those with personal barriers. That said, the proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people increased again in Cohort 4. This may have been as a result of UK Youth working with the delivery partners to support better recruitment from ethnic minority groups, making this a focus at Train the Trainer sessions. Some of the methods of engagement included: wider marketing in the local community and in schools; creating stronger and/ or new links with local agencies and youth services; understanding the cultural factors and barriers preventing engagement; and ensuring the topics covered in the sessions were relatable and appropriate for the group.



## Completion rate

Figure 8 also points to a higher dropout rate in Cohort 3 than previous cohorts, suggesting that online delivery impacted participation. However, the retention rate was impacted by the timing of when a participant started the programme. In Cohort 3, 67% started the programme before lockdown (18th March 2020) and of those, 75% completed the programme. While of those who started after lockdown (33%), 81% completed the programme. This suggests that maintaining engagement through the transition from face-to-face delivery to online delivery



was challenging for delivery partners, which is further supported by the qualitative data from the youth worker interviews at the close of the programme.

*"It was a bit difficult getting them engaged for the first few weeks, YW&G found it hard to build relationships as quickly online" (Youth worker, Henderson Trust)*

However, after a challenging Cohort 3 that was interrupted by Covid-19 and the subsequent government lockdowns, in Cohort 4, youth workers spoke about being more prepared to adjust and tailor delivery as Covid-19 restrictions changed, using interactive games and creative sessions to keep YW&G motivated, as well as working closely with families in the home environment. This is reflected in the retention rate, which once again rose to pre-Covid-19 levels.

### Social Action hours

More broadly, the Covid-19 pandemic undoubtedly caused disruptions to programme delivery, which led to a number of challenges and opportunities for EmpowHER. Youth workers reported that planning and setting up worked well online, but actual delivery of social action activities was more challenging. As a result, some delivery partners waited for restrictions to be eased before completing the social action. Remarkably, despite the pandemic making it more difficult to volunteer and reach communities in person, the table below shows that Cohorts 3 and 4 completed a greater proportion of social action compared to overall hours spent on the programme than pre-pandemic levels.

**Table 1: Proportion of social action completed in hours, compared to total hours on programme, by cohort**

Cohort	% of social action (to total hours)	p-value
3 and 4	45%	p<.001 ***
2	40%	

### Conclusion

In summary, across the four cohorts of the programme, EmpowHER succeeded in engaging and retaining those less likely to volunteer, whether that was those who had not participated in social action before, those from ethnic minorities or those from less advantaged backgrounds. It also engaged those with below average wellbeing, who were believed to benefit more from the programme. There were some interesting fluctuations across cohorts, although these can probably be explained predominantly by the pandemic.

## Outcomes

Key to evaluating the impact of the programme is to be able to understand, not just who the programme managed to recruit, but the wider benefit and impact of the programme. The following section aims to answer the following two research questions:

- o To what extent has the programme as a whole met its desired outcomes?<sup>9</sup>
  - Increasing wellbeing
  - Increasing ability to identify and lead change
  - Reducing limiting perceptions
  - Increasing perceptions of social cohesions
  - Encouraging long term social action habits
- o What are the enablers to achieving these outcomes?
  - Increasing wellbeing
  - Increasing ability to identify and lead change
  - Reducing limiting perceptions
  - Increasing perceptions of social cohesions
  - Encouraging long term social action habits

Across these outcome areas, we looked at the changes experienced by all EmpowHER participants, as well as breaking them down based on different demographic and hours of engagement to interrogate whether there are important differences. All outcome change statistics reported have been tested for statistical significance at the 95% confidence interval, unless otherwise stated<sup>10</sup>.

We will also outline outcomes for youth workers and youth organisations, before looking ahead to the legacy of EmpowHER.

## The wellbeing of YW&G improved during EmpowHER

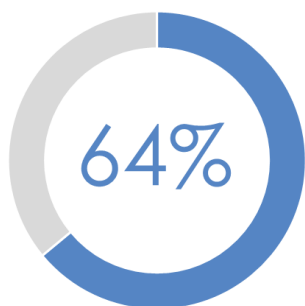
When comparing data collected through pre and post surveys completed by EmpowHER participants, it is clear that wellbeing improves upon completion of the programme. Figure 9 shows that across the ONS wellbeing indicators, EmpowHER participants shifted closer to the national average. We have also included an additional indicator: "I feel happy when thinking

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<sup>9</sup> The five key outcome areas for YW&G are linked to the EmpowHER Theory of Change in Appendix on page 50.

<sup>10</sup> Figures reported here may differ slightly from the summary report due to a matched data set (including demographic and outcomes data) being used in order to make cross-tabulation possible. As no cross-tabulation was performed for the summary report, demographic and outcomes data was analysed separately, in keeping with the approach used in previous reports throughout the delivery of EmpowHER.

about the future”, which increased by 18%, as this links closely to mental health, despite not being an ONS indicator. Meanwhile, we have not included anxiety because the change was not statistically significant so we cannot confidently say there was an observable effect<sup>11</sup>.



Of the YW&G who saw an improvement in wellbeing

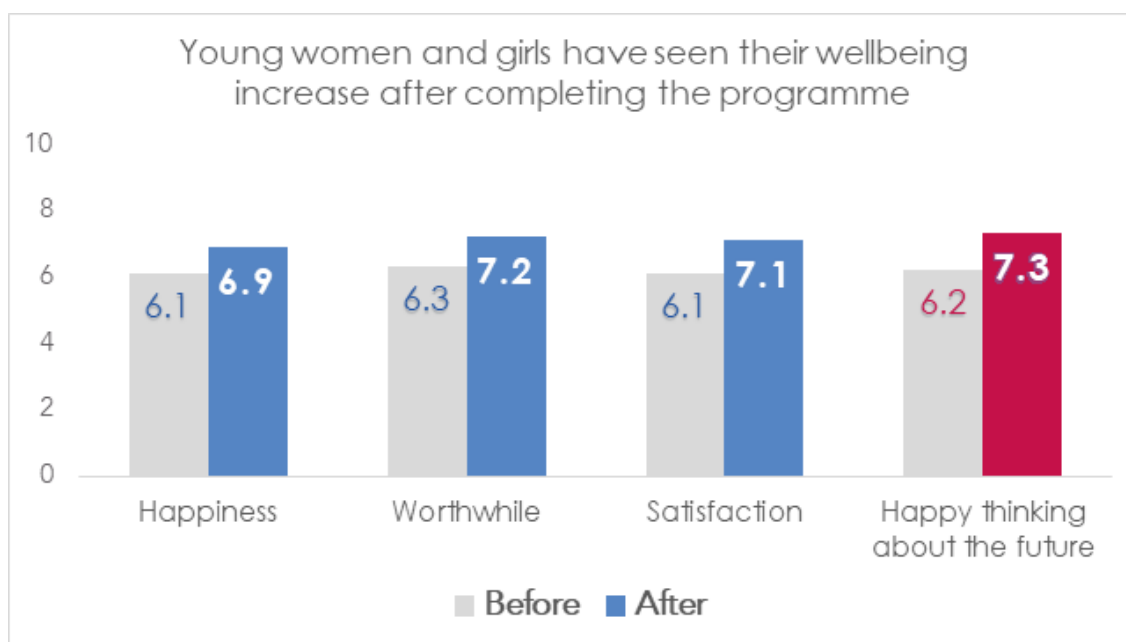


Figure 9

We have also broken down the changes in wellbeing by demographic and engagement levels, and have conducted statistical tests to explore whether there is a 'real' difference between groups. The table below shows that deprivation, social mobility, ethnicity, number of barriers and number of hours had a statistically significant difference on the change in wellbeing.

Table 2: Did participant characteristics and extent of engagement make a difference to the level of change observed in wellbeing over the course of the programme?

<sup>11</sup> A potential reason for this is that anxiety had a much smaller base size than the other metrics due to the question only being posed to those over the age of 16. The different age range also means it is not comparable with the other data.

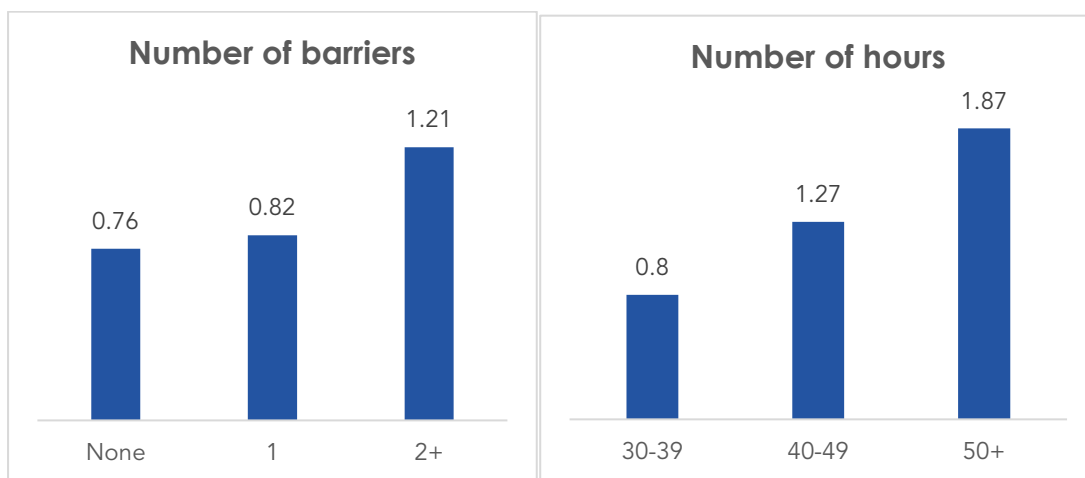
Characteristic	Did it make a significant difference to the change in wellbeing?	p-value <sup>12</sup>
Living in the top 30% most deprived areas	Yes – those in the most deprived areas saw a significantly <b>larger</b> change	p=0.006 (t-test; two tailed)
Living in a social mobility 'cold spot'	Yes – those in social mobility cold spots saw a significantly <b>larger</b> change	p=0.03 (t-test; two tailed)
Being Black, Asian or another ethnic minority	Yes – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people are significantly more likely to have experienced <b>greater</b> increases in their wellbeing	p=0.02 (t-test; two tailed)
Having a disability	No – there was no observable difference between disabled and non-disabled participants when it came to the change in wellbeing	p=0.13 (t-test; two-tailed)
Age	No – there was no observable difference between older and younger participants when it came to the change in wellbeing	p=0.85 (one-way ANOVA)
Number of barriers	Yes – those who came to the programme with more barriers had a significantly <b>higher</b> increase in wellbeing	p=0.017 (one-way ANOVA)
Number of hours	Yes – those who completed more hours saw a significantly <b>higher</b> increase in wellbeing	p<0.001 (one-way ANOVA)

### Impact of number of barriers and numbers of hours on level of positive change in wellbeing

The figure below shows mean change in wellbeing by number of barriers and number of hours in more detail. While the programme as a whole increased average wellbeing, this is much higher for those who completed over 50 hours – seeing over two times the benefit to their wellbeing. However, fewer than 1 in 10 (7%) young people dedicated this amount of time to the programme. Meanwhile, those who had two or more barriers represented 39% of programme participants and had a benefit to their wellbeing of almost 60% greater than their counterparts with no barriers.

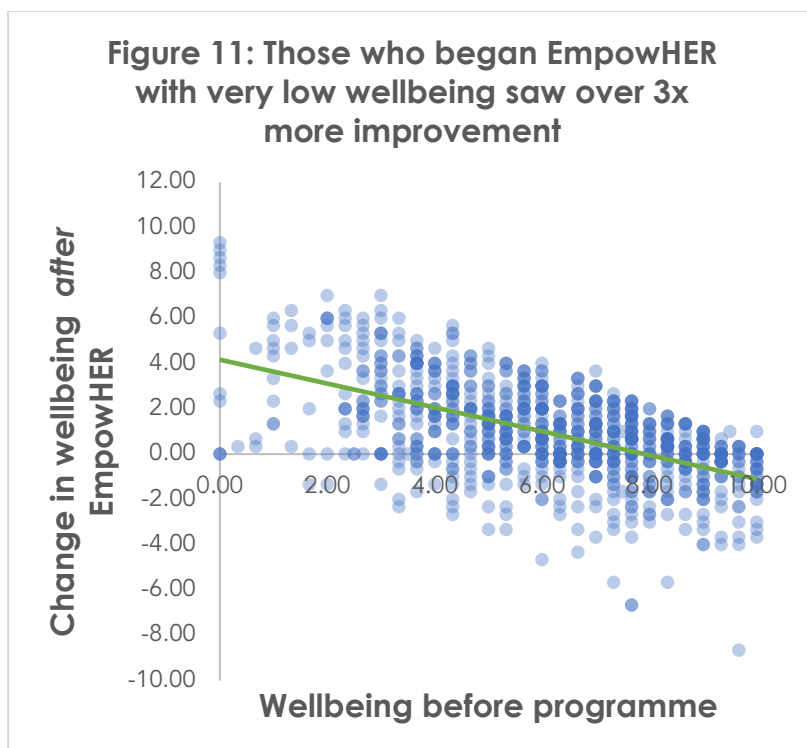
<sup>12</sup> More explanation of this column in the tables can be found in the Appendix.

Figure 10: Mean distance of positive change among EmpowHER participants in wellbeing by number of barriers and number of hours (across a 10 point scale)



### Those who began EmpowHER with very low wellbeing saw over 3x more improvement

Those who began EmpowHER with extremely low wellbeing also saw a greater amount of positive change than those who entered the programme with higher wellbeing. On average, those who scored themselves 0 at the beginning of the programme across the wellbeing areas increased by 4 points, whereas those entering EmpowHER with an average wellbeing score of 6 only increased on average by 1.5 points. The figure below shows this trend in more depth.



## What enabled the increase in wellbeing?

Through consistent evaluation and the iterative development of the programme over four cohorts, we have been able to identify a set of key factors that enabled the programme to achieve the improvements to wellbeing that it did. These included:

- **Safe spaces and trusted adults:** Within the context of EmpowHER, a 'safe space' can be defined as a small, same gender group with a relaxed atmosphere and embedded flexibility. The final necessary component is the presence of a trusted adult, with whom the YW&G have built a long-standing relationship. YW&G used the safe space provided by EmpowHER to discuss issues relating to mental health and wellbeing openly.

**"Our youth worker spoke really frankly with us about all the topics. She didn't sugar coat anything and [she] treated us like adults. It made taking part a lot easier"**

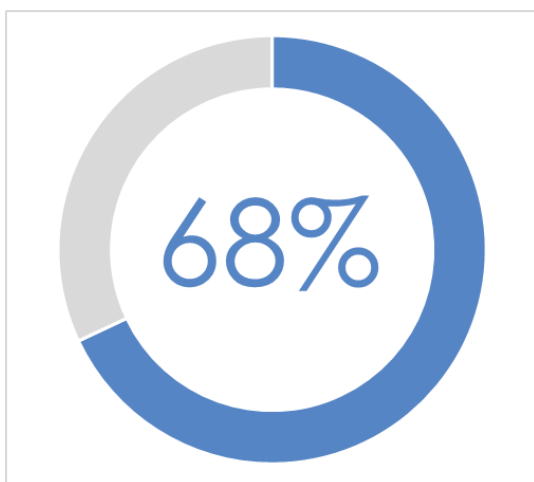
In one example from Cohort 3, an EmpowHER group from Bolton Lads and Girls were on the verge of finishing primary school before the lockdown and used the safe space of their group to discuss the impact of Covid-19 and the lockdown on their mental health, wellbeing, nerves and self-esteem. Talking to other young people going through a similar experience helped them open up about their feelings of facing the unknown.

**'I learnt about myself too – that the feelings and problems that I have are normal and that I am not alone. I have been able to connect with others and talk about it.'**

- **Social learning:** The content of the programme meant that YW&G learnt strategies for managing their own wellbeing, as one example in this quotation from a young person in Cohort 1 demonstrates. "We learnt about if you're mentally stressed it can also affect your physical health and can lead to self-harm, so it's always good to speak up about it if you're going through something mentally"
- **Fun and enjoyment:** The above factors have been discussed in previous reports, but an additional aspect of the programme that boosted wellbeing and seems important to note was the sense of fun and enjoyment YW&G got through taking part. 88% enjoyed the social action they did as part of EmpowHER. As one participant from Cohort 1 explained, "I come home from college and then I'm at home. But on Friday I run home from college because I've got EmpowHER. Some Asian girls don't have the ability to socialise. Sitting at home all day, you just get depressed and it makes you feel sad, going out it makes you feel happy."

### Through EmpowHER, YW&G were empowered to identify and lead change

A key intention of the EmpowHER programme was to empower YW&G to be able to identify and lead social change. We measured this outcome across the programme as a whole, through looking at change in four key metrics (which participants were asked to grade themselves out of ten on) in pre/post surveys.

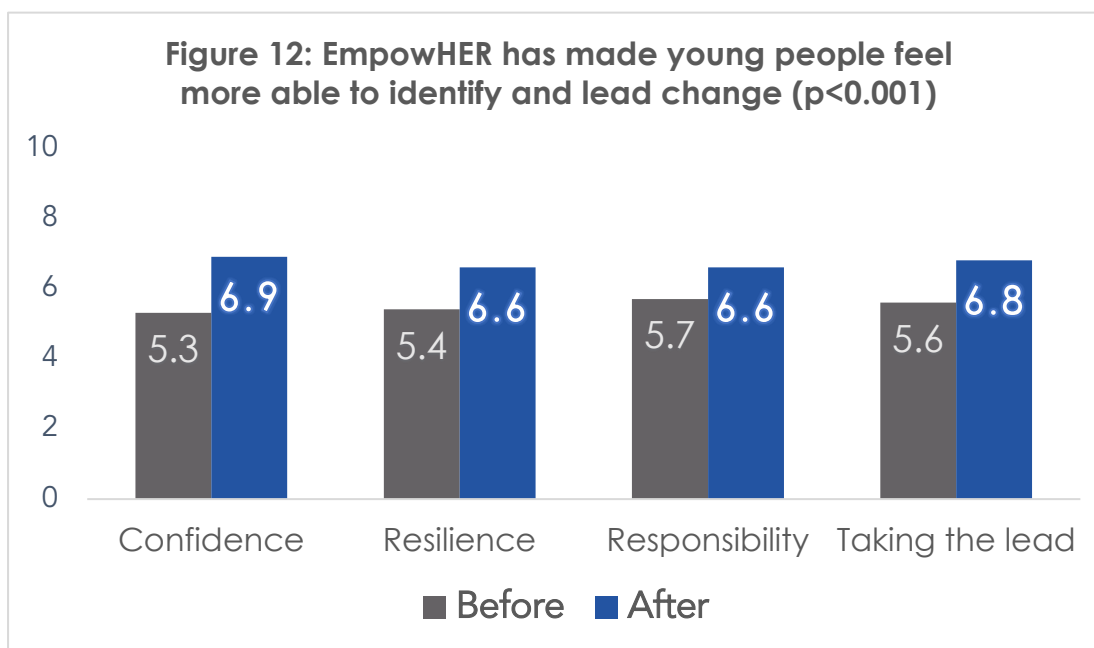


#### Of the YW&G who felt more empowered to identify and lead social change

- **Confidence:** "I have confidence in myself"
- **Resilience:** "When what I'm doing gets hard, I don't give up"
- **Responsibility:** "I am someone who makes plans and follows through with them"
- **Taking the lead:** "I feel comfortable taking the lead"

Combining these metrics, overall 68% of EmpowHER participants saw an increase in their

ability to identify and lead change. Figure 12 below shows the change in mean scores across the four metrics before and after the programme. We can confirm that there is a statistically significant positive difference for EmpowHER participants in the areas of confidence, resilience, responsibility and taking the lead, all of which should hopefully help them feel more empowered to identify and lead change.



Again, we have broken down the changes in ability to identify and lead change by demographic and engagement levels and have conducted statistical tests to explore whether there is a 'real' difference between groups. The table below shows that deprivation, social mobility, number of barriers and number of hours had a statistically significant difference on the change in this outcome.

**Table 3: Did participant characteristics and extent of engagement make a difference to the level of change observed in the ability to identify and lead over the course of the programme?**

Characteristic	Did it make a significant difference to the change in identifying and leading change?	p-value
Living in the top 30% most deprived areas	Yes – those in the most deprived areas saw a significantly <b>larger</b> change	p=0.003 (t-test; two tailed)
Living in a social mobility 'cold spot'	Yes – those in social mobility cold spots saw a significantly <b>larger</b> change	p=0.04 (t-test; two tailed)
Being Black, Asian or another ethnic minority	No – there was no observable difference between those of different ethnicities when it came to the change in identifying and leading change	p=0.15 (t-test; two tailed)

Having a disability	Yes – those with disabilities saw <b>less</b> improvement in identifying and leading change	p=0.03 (t-test; two-tailed)
Age	No – there was no observable difference between those of different ages when it came to the change in identifying and leading change	p=0.61 (one-way ANOVA)
Number of barriers	Yes – those who came to the programme with more barriers had a significantly <b>higher</b> increase in identifying and leading change	p=0.013 (one-way ANOVA)
Number of hours	Yes – those who committed more hours saw a significantly <b>higher</b> increase in identifying and leading change	p<0.001(one-way ANOVA)

Ethnicity and age have no observable impact on the extent to which the programme changed a young person's ability to identify and lead change. However, the more barriers the young person has – and the more hours the person puts into the programme – both have a substantial effect in increasing the level of positive change.

Key factors that enabled the programme to improve YW&G ability to identify and lead change included:

YW&Gs with West Essex Youth Service learned about homelessness and the issues people face when they are homeless, especially with the pandemic. One of the girls opened up about her personal experience of her dad being homeless for a time, how difficult it was for her dad to access basic necessities, and the impact on her family. The group were passionate about supporting the homeless community with personal care and hygiene and decided to partner with a local homeless shelter. They created over 50 parcels to help support the homeless community during the pandemic, providing toiletries such as bath soaps, toothbrushes, anti-bacterial hand sanitizers, face masks and wipes.

**Opportunities to lead:** Providing YW&G with genuine opportunities to lead activities was crucial to building their confidence in this area. Importantly, youth workers gave YW&G the freedom to decide what their social action would focus on: 79% of young people agreed that they had control over what their social action involved. Qualitative evidence from across the cohorts suggested that YW&G working on change that mattered to them, and having the opportunity to test things out in a safe, non-judgemental environment, boosted confidence to lead further projects in the future.

Supporting youth leadership: providing young people with opportunities to lead and make key decisions needs to be balanced with support from youth workers. In Cohort 2, youth workers highlighted the importance of giving young people the power to take ownership of the project, while also emphasising teaching young people how to get from idea to action, through a step-by-step approach.

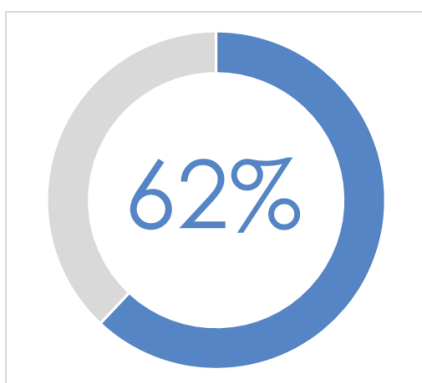
Following the murder of Sarah Everard, the young women at InUnity wanted to address negative behaviours of the young men in their year group. They created posters containing tips about how their male peers can support the women in their year group to feel safe. They also organised an expert to facilitate a workshop to address negative language towards young women and young LGBTQI+ people, encouraging discussion and exploring questions such as 'why do you think you can comment on our bodies?' The young women have been working alongside their senior leadership team to address their school P.E uniform.

## Perceptions of social cohesion improved over the course of the programme

Encouraging social cohesion is a crucial aspect of the EmpowHER model, linked closely to the intention of youth social action to bring about a 'double benefit' for both young people and their communities (Dartington Service Design Lab, 2019). We measured perceptions of social cohesion among EmpowHER participants through three metrics, which young people graded themselves on out of ten before and after the programme:

- Acceptance: "I am accepted by people that I spend my time with"
- Trust: "I can trust people that live near me"
- Meeting people: "I often meet people that are different to me"

Combining these metrics, 62% of EmpowHER participants saw an increase in their perceptions of social cohesion.



### Of the YW&G who saw an increase in their perception of social cohesion

The figure below shows that YW&G reported statistically significant improvements in their perceptions of acceptance by those they spend time with, trust for others around them, and interacting with people different from them.

Once more, we have broken down the changes in perceptions of social cohesion by demographic and engagement levels, and have conducted statistical tests to explore whether there is a 'real' difference between groups. The table below shows that

deprivation, ethnicity, disability, age, number of barriers and number of hours had a statistically significant difference on the change in this outcome.

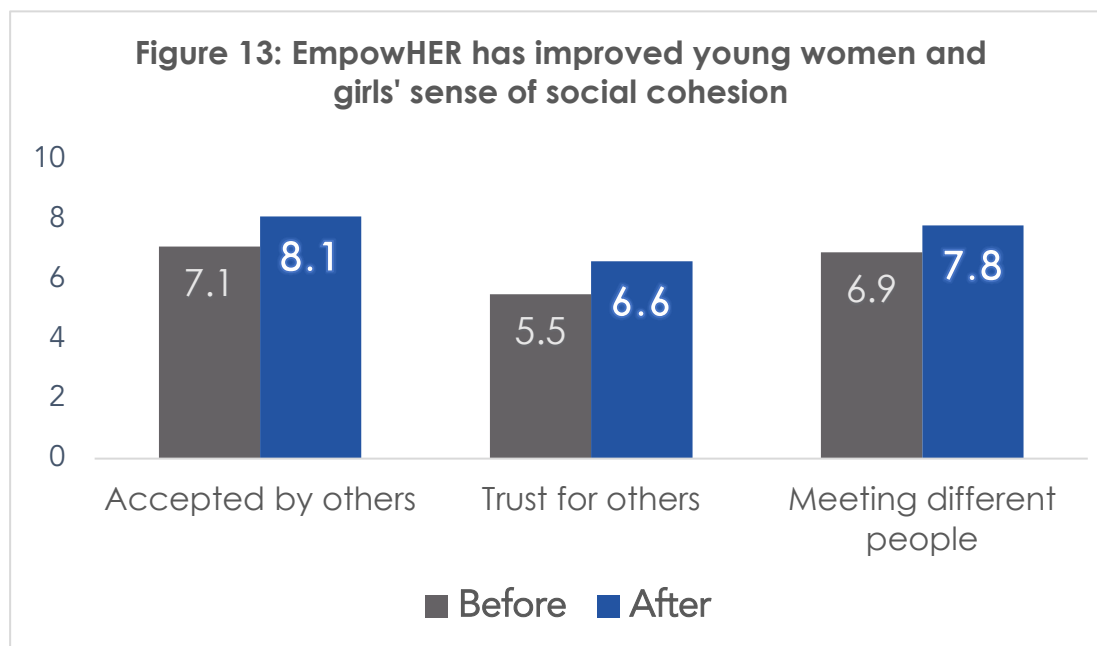
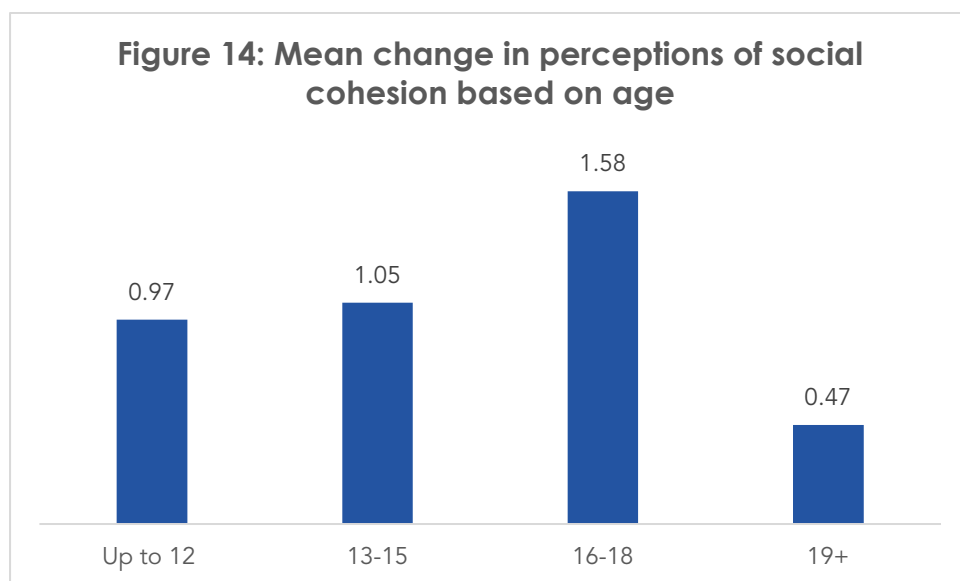


Table 4: Did participant characteristics and extent of engagement make a difference to the level of change observed in social cohesion over the course of the programme?

Characteristic	Did it make a significant difference to the change in perceptions of social cohesion?	p-value
Living in the top 30% most deprived areas	Yes – those in the most deprived areas saw a significantly <b>larger</b> change	$P < 0.001$ (t-test; two tailed)
Living in a social mobility 'cold spot'	No – there was no difference between those living in social mobility cold spots and those living elsewhere when it came to changes in social cohesion	$p = 0.39$ (t-test; two tailed)
Being Black, Asian or another ethnic minority	Yes – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people perceived a significantly <b>larger</b> change in social cohesion	$P < 0.001$ (t-test; two tailed)
Having a disability	Yes – young people with disabilities perceived a significantly <b>smaller</b> change in social cohesion	$p = 0.012$ (t-test; two-tailed)

Age	Yes – age had a statistically significant effect on perceptions of social cohesion (see chart below)	p=0.035 (one-way ANOVA)
Number of barriers	Yes – those who came to the programme with more barriers had a significantly <b>higher</b> increase in perceptions of social cohesion	P<0.001 (one-way ANOVA)
Number of hours	Yes – those who committed more hours saw a significantly <b>higher</b> increase in perceptions of social cohesion	p<0.001(one-way ANOVA)

The figure below shows that those aged 16-18 were far more likely than participants of other ages to feel an increased sense of social cohesion. These statistical tests only confirm correlation rather than causation, so we cannot confirm that being older increased social cohesion directly. However, a possible hypothesis for why there was a difference here comes from the qualitative evidence; that older age groups tended to do more within their communities when completing their social action.



Meanwhile, disabled young people saw around half the improvement compared to their peers. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic participants saw greater improvement, as did those with two or more personal barriers. Again, the number of hours dedicated to the programme was a key driver of social cohesion, with those contributing 50 hours and above seeing more than twice the improvement.

Although outcomes experienced by communities were not the immediate focus of the evaluation, the following statistics give some indication of the benefits they may have felt<sup>13</sup>, hopefully solidifying the sense of social cohesion further.

- 66% of youth workers stated that the programme enhanced and improved relationships between the young person and the local community.
- 75% of YW&G agreed that their social action helped people in their community.
- 240+ social action projects completed
- £8,879 raised through fundraising activities
- 20,009 people reached in communities

The fact that a majority of EmpowHER participants come from the 30% most deprived communities, where alongside higher deprivation young people are also less likely to volunteer, may mean that communities see a more pronounced impact than if the young people were all based in more affluent communities. However, more investigation would need to be done into the specific influences upon community outcomes to test this hypothesis.

**Key factors that enabled the programme to improve YW&G perception of social cohesion included:**

- **Bringing together YW&G from different backgrounds:** it is clear that the way delivery organisations set up the groups for EmpowHER brought together a range of young people, and as a result broadened young people's horizon. "The biggest thing I've noticed is that it's brought the white and the Asian girls together. They don't usually mix; they live in different areas, go to different schools and a lot of the Muslim girls don't do anything outside of school. They thought they wouldn't get on but once they tried, they were fine." (Youth Worker, Cohort 1). Working together on projects with those different to oneself is crucial for a sense of social cohesion to emerge.
- **Social action and social learning:** the EmpowHER model starts with social learning in order to deepen young people's understanding of their communities, identify areas they feel passionate about, alongside building confidence and challenging limiting perceptions. This provides a strong foundation from which to lead social action. This blended approach offers young people opportunities to both learn about and support their community and meant that they got out into them and spent time with others that they may not have encountered otherwise. The new sense of social cohesion that resulted from the social action was also felt by those outside of the programme, with

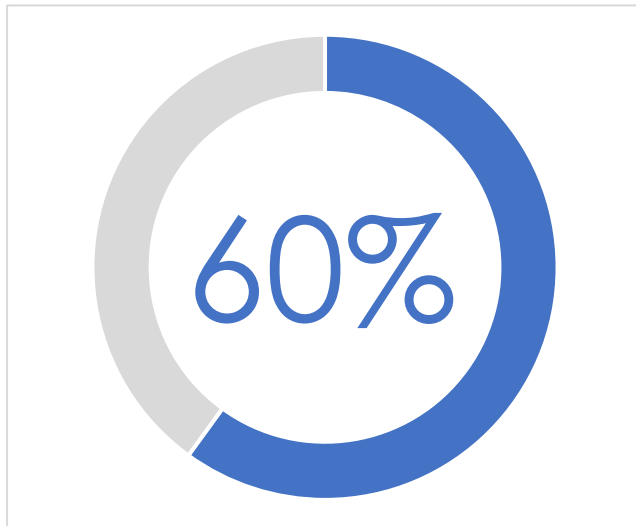
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<sup>13</sup> Also known as the 'double benefit' of social action.

Cornwall Council reporting: "Wow! This is just incredible that at a time like this young people are leading by example" (Cohort 3).

## EmpowHER participants saw their limiting perceptions of themselves and their gender reduced

Reducing limiting perceptions is another important aspect of the EmpowHER model. We measured limiting perceptions among EmpowHER participants through two metrics, which young people graded themselves on out of ten, before and after the programme:



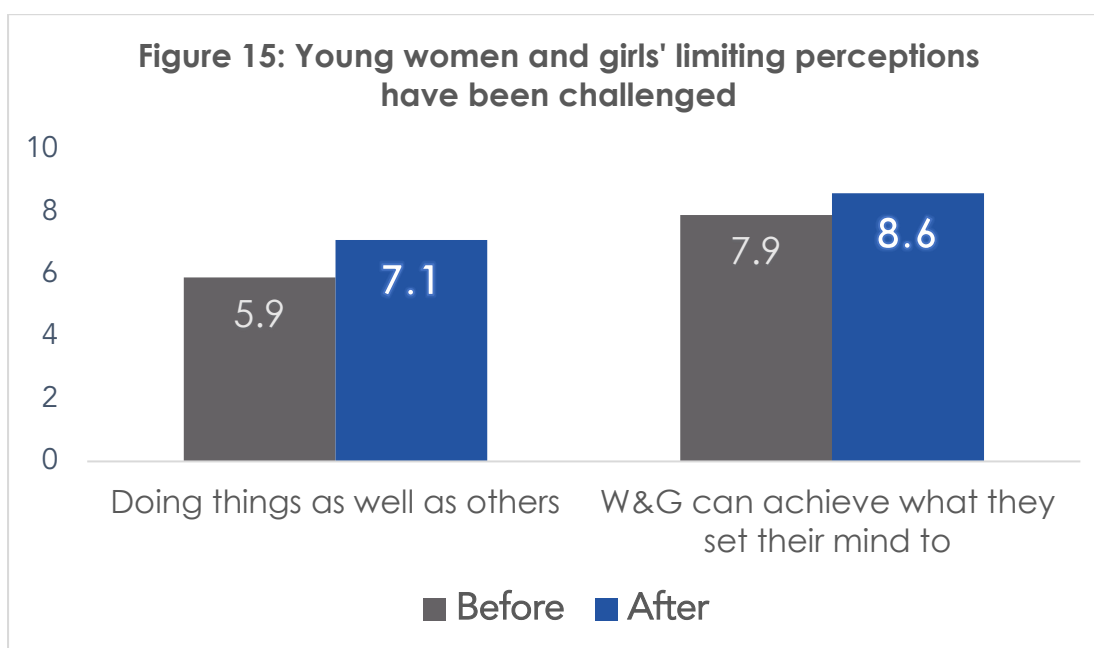
Of the YW&G who saw a decrease in their limiting perceptions

- Perceptions relating to gender: "Young women and girls can do anything they set their minds to"
- Perceptions relating to own self-efficacy: "I can do things as well as most other people"

Overall, our analysis shows that 60% of participants in Cohorts 1, 2 and 4 saw a net reduction in their limiting perceptions, when combining both

gender and self-efficacy.

The figure below shows the change in mean score for participants across the two areas, before and after the programme. Self-efficacy saw a much larger increase of 20%, while perceptions of gender limitations reduced by 9% on average (that said, both changes were statistically significant).



We have broken down the changes in limiting perceptions by demographic and engagement levels, and have conducted statistical tests to explore whether there is a 'real' difference between groups. The table below shows that deprivation, ethnicity, having a disability, number of barriers and number of hours of engagement had a statistically significant difference on the change in this outcome.

**Table 5: Did participant characteristics and extent of engagement make a difference to the level of change observed in limiting perceptions over the course of the programme?**

Characteristic	Did it make a significant difference to the change in limiting perceptions?	p-value
Living in the top 30% most deprived areas	Yes – those in the most deprived areas saw a significantly <b>larger</b> change	p=0.003 (t-test; two tailed)
Living in a social mobility 'cold spot'	No – there was no difference between those living in social mobility cold spots and those living elsewhere when it came to changes in limiting perceptions	p=0.08 (t-test; two tailed)
Being Black, Asian or another ethnic minority	Yes – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people perceived a significantly <b>larger</b> reduction in limiting perceptions	P=0.004 (t-test; two tailed)

Having a disability	Yes – young people with disabilities perceived a significantly <b>smaller</b> reduction in limiting perceptions	p=0.005 (t-test; two-tailed)
Age	No – there was no observable difference between those of different ages when it came to changes in limiting perceptions	p=0.62 (one-way ANOVA)
Number of barriers	Yes – those who came to the programme with more barriers had a significantly <b>larger</b> reduction in limiting perceptions	P<0.001 (one-way ANOVA)
Number of hours	Yes – those who committed more hours saw a significantly <b>larger</b> reduction in limiting perceptions	p<0.001(one-way ANOVA)

Interestingly, participants with disabilities saw a lower reduction in limiting perceptions than non-disabled participants. The barriers to a higher sense of self-efficacy for those with disabilities may be harder to overcome than simply taking part in a relatively short-term programme, as they may be down to structural, as opposed to individual, issues<sup>14</sup>. That said, this is an important learning for EmpowHER as there may be more that can be done to ensure those with additional needs thrive in the same way as their non-disabled counterparts.

On the other hand, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals saw a larger reduction in limiting perceptions than their white peers. Those with more personal barriers also saw a much greater reduction, but those who put in 50+ hours were the key group of change, seeing a three times greater reduction in limiting perceptions than those who completed 30-39 hours.

**Key factors that enabled the programme to reduce YW&G's limiting perceptions of themselves and their gender included:**

- **Long term programme with specific activities to build confidence:** at 12 weeks, EmpowHER is a longer structured intervention than some others that youth organisations typically deliver, and this enables a more gradual shifting of attitudes among the YW&G that participate. The activities are also specifically designed to reverse a more entrenched lack of confidence among participants. *"I have overcome anxiety when talking to other people. I feel more able to open up to other people... I can inspire others"*

<sup>14</sup> This idea follows the 'social model of disability', which frames disability as something that is socially constructed, created by physical, organisational and attitudinal barriers. It takes us away from the position of "blaming" the individual for their shortcoming (Inclusion London, 2015)

- **Role models:** exposure to relatable role models that tied into session content was key to the reduction in limiting perceptions associated with gender. One EmpowHER participant in Cohort 2 spoke about the impact meeting a role model had had upon them in feedback they gave directly to her: *“Your authenticity and honesty was beautiful to witness. Placing emphasis in our limiting thoughts and our ability to transform them into something positive was great!”*

## EmpowHER participants are on the way to developing long-term, meaningful social action habits

*“I learnt the importance of getting involved in the community and that if you’re passionate about something, the impact you can have on other people is huge. I’ve never had the opportunity to do something for my community and EmpowHER gave me that”*

Among EmpowHER participants in Cohorts 1, 2 and 4, 57% strongly agreed<sup>15</sup> they would take part in social action (volunteering, fundraising or campaigning) in the next 12 months, and 36% strongly agreed that they would volunteer with the British Red Cross in the next 12 months (only 6% had previously volunteered or fundraised for the British Red Cross upon entry). These statistics suggests that there is some likelihood that longer term social action habits have been

formed over the course of the programme. Longitudinal research outside of the scope of this evaluation would need to be carried out in order to confirm whether YW&G followed up with their plans to complete social action. However, some corroborating evidence comes from a survey completed with youth workers at the end of Cohort 4, in which 61% of respondents stated that the programme led to further social action.

We have broken down the likelihood of doing social action in the next 12 months by demographic and engagement levels, and have conducted statistical tests to explore whether there is a ‘real’ difference between groups. The table below shows that ethnicity, number of barriers and number of hours had a statistically significant difference on the change in this outcome.

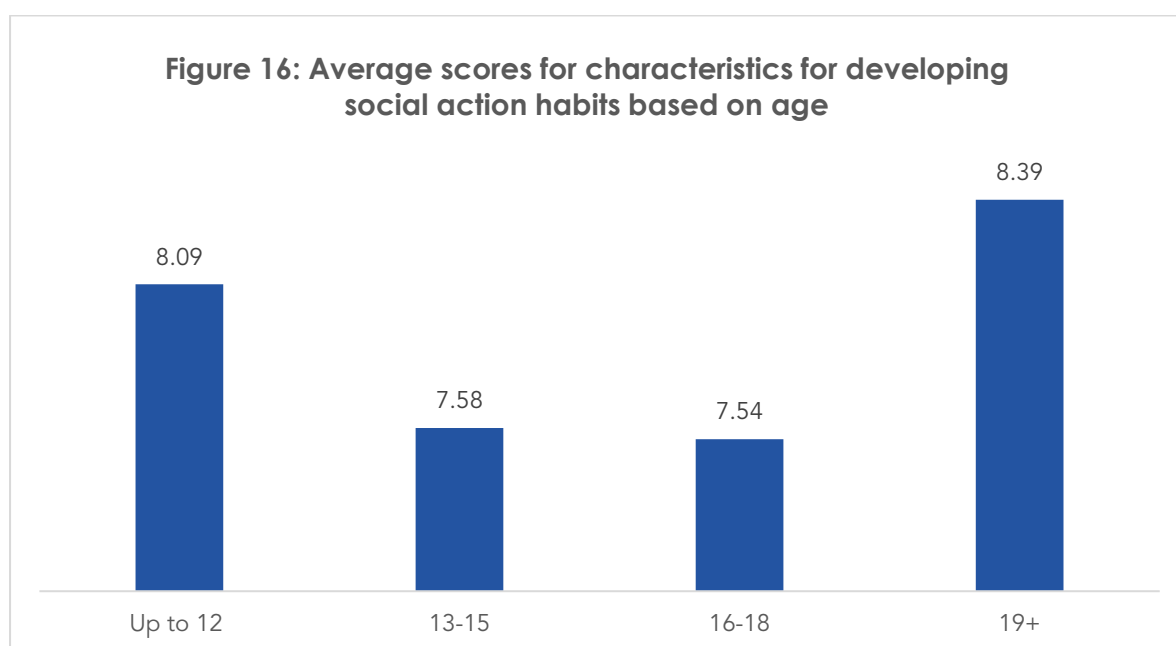
Table 6: Did participant characteristics and extent of engagement make a difference to the likelihood doing social action in the next 12 months?

<sup>15</sup> ‘Strongly agreed’ means graded themselves 7 or above out of 10.

Characteristic	Did it make a significant difference to the change in developing social action habits?	p-value
Living in the top 30% most deprived areas	No – there was no difference between those living in the most deprived areas and those living elsewhere when it came to the development of social action habits	P=0.96 (t-test; two tailed)
Living in a social mobility 'cold spot'	No – there was no difference between those living in social mobility cold spots and those living elsewhere when it came to the development of social action habits	p=0.07 (t-test; two tailed)
Being Black, Asian or another ethnic minority	Yes – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people were significantly <b>more</b> likely to develop social action habits	P=0.012 (t-test; two tailed)
Having a disability	No – there was no difference between disabled and non-disabled participants when it came to the development of social action habits	p=0.23 (t-test; two-tailed)
Age	No – there was no difference between those of different ages when it came to the development of social action habits	p=0.35 (one-way ANOVA)
Number of barriers	Yes – as the number of barriers increased, the <b>more</b> likely a young person was to develop social action habits	p=0.041 (one-way ANOVA)
Number of hours	Yes – the number of hours committed had a significant difference upon the development of social action habits, with those committing more time being <b>more</b> likely to develop long term habits	p<0.001(one-way ANOVA)

We have also carried out analysis based on the extent to which young people agreed with a range of variables that reportedly motivate future social action participation: enjoyment, encouragement to reflect, having control, being challenged and feeling as though they have benefited (DCMS, 2021). When breaking down EmpowHER participants by group to understand any differences in their responses regarding the social action they had participated in, it is notable that age had a statistically significant impact on these variables when amalgamated.

Figure xx below shows that the youngest and oldest participants tended to score highly in the variables that encourage the development of long-term social action habits (enjoyment, encouragement to reflect, having control, being challenged and feeling as though they have benefited). The idea of reaching people while they are still young, as this increases the likelihood of them developing social action habits, has been established previously: research from the Jubilee Centre claims long term social action is more likely the younger people are when they first get involved (Jubilee Centre, 2017). However, it is interesting to discover that in the case of EmpowHER, those in the oldest age group participating were actually the most likely groups to demonstrate these characteristics.



In programme exit surveys, YW&G reported multiple motivations for engaging in social action. The word cloud below provides a visual summary of the most common reasons young people had for engaging (the larger the word, the more people included it in their response). Evidently, the words 'help', 'people' and 'community' came up a lot, suggesting that overall the most important reason young people had for participating was to give something back to those around them. A range of issue areas, such as 'LGBTQ', 'homeless', and 'poverty' were also mentioned by respondents, suggesting that it helped to tie their social action to an area of interest – potentially one that was meaningful to them personally<sup>16</sup>. This links to one of the key enablers that EmpowHER offers to support this outcome: social learning sessions that support YW&G to explore and identify topics they feel passionate about. We

<sup>16</sup> The #iwill campaign's 'six principles' for high quality social action suggest that opportunities should be youth-led and be embedded in a young person's life to be the most impactful (#iwill campaign, n.d.)

heard how the topics covered in social learning sessions had motivated YW&G to complete social action in those specific areas.

Other enablers included encouraging YW&G to be creative and engage in more creative types of social action, as well as instilling positive feelings early on by sourcing quick, accessible social action opportunities.

Inspired by their own social learning the one group at Integrate focused their social action on supporting young women and girls in their school; leading a day of PSHE sessions for year 7 students, covering period poverty, mental health, social media usage and body image. The group gave students mental health badges to help destigmatise mental health in their school as well as care packages. The group also started a mentoring programme – each pairing with one student - to help the young people build healthy coping mechanisms.

EmpowHER Group, Integrate UK

Word cloud of responses for the survey question: "Why did you want to do your social action project?"



In summary, this section has shown that across the cohorts, EmpowHER had a statistically significant impact on the outcomes it set out to change. We have used statistical techniques to explore the ways in which the extent of the outcomes differ for the many groups that participate in EmpowHER, which has presented some interesting learning that should be incorporated into future versions or adaptations of the programme. The table below summarises the results of the statistical tests applied across the five outcome areas and seven “characteristics” of YW&G.

Table 7: Summary of results of statistical tests across outcome areas and characteristics

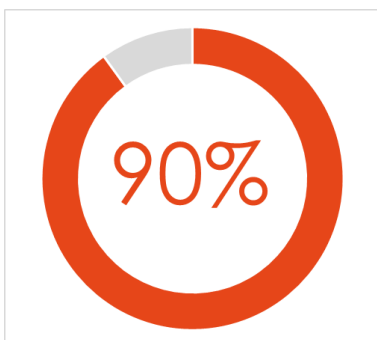
Characteristic	Outcome 1: Wellbeing	Outcome 2: Ability to identify and lead change	Outcome 3: Perceptions of social cohesion	Outcome 4: Limiting perceptions	Outcome 5: Development of long term meaningful social action habits
Living in the top 30% most deprived areas	Significantly larger change	Significantly larger change	Significantly larger change	Significantly larger change	No significant difference
Living in a social mobility ‘cold spot’	Significantly larger change	Significantly larger change	No significant difference	No significant difference	No significant difference
Being Black, Asian or another ethnic minority	Significantly larger change	No significant difference	Significantly larger change	Significantly larger change	Significantly larger change
Having a disability	No significant difference	Significantly smaller change	Significantly smaller change	Significantly smaller change	No significant difference
Age	No significant difference	No significant difference	Statistically significant difference	No significant difference	No significant difference
Number of barriers	More barriers equals significantly	More barriers equals significantly	More barriers equals significantly	More barriers equals significantly	More barriers equals significantly larger change

	larger change	larger change	larger change	larger change	
<b>Number of hours</b>	More hours equals significantly larger change	More hours equals significantly larger change	More hours equals significantly larger change	More hours equals significantly larger change	More hours equals significantly larger change

Although Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people tended to improve across the outcome areas to a greater extent than their white peers, participants with disabilities tended to experience a less pronounced change than their counterparts without disabilities. Whilst we have shared insights where possible, a further recommendation for organisations delivering similar programmes in the future, and indeed a commitment of UK Youth as we look to EmpowHER legacy (below), is to gain further insight here and test and learn approaches on how to make the opportunities not only accessible but also as impactful as possible, so that all groups can feel the breadth of the important impacts the programme has to offer.

Although we have attempted to understand the ways in which the programme fell short for some participants, it is important to emphasise that the programme was nonetheless a resounding success. Furthermore, despite the many adaptations due to Covid-19, the data shows that EmpowHER online delivery, in the middle of a pandemic, still achieved the desired outcomes of increasing wellbeing, challenging limiting perceptions, empowering YW&G to identify and lead change, fostering social cohesion, and supporting long term social action habits.

9 in 10 (89.6%) young people taking part in EmpowHER left the programme with some kind of personal improvement – whether to their wellbeing, ability to lead change, social cohesion, or having their limiting perceptions challenged. Furthermore, on average, each young person completed 15 hours of social action. **With a reach of 1,880 people, that's: 28,200 hours, or 1,175 days, or 3 and a half years' worth of social action.**



Finally, 90% of participants agreed that they would recommend EmpowHER to other YW&G their age.

## Recommendations

Throughout EmpowHER, we have sought to identify, and evidence, the impact, including the nuance across different demographic characteristics, but moreover we have sought to understand what the enablers were for that impact. Based on the robust evaluation of this programme, we are now in a position to present the following recommendations to address the question:

“How do you design a programme to address low wellbeing through social action?”

- Ensure safe spaces are created, by encouraging a relaxed atmosphere and hosting single gender groups that are limited in size.
- Provide a high quality, flexible social learning curriculum, which deepens YW&G understanding of their community, ignites passion in social action causes and reduces limiting perceptions.
- Bring in appropriate and diverse role models that inspire YW&G.
- Let YW&Gs decide upon social action activities addressing causes they feel passionate about and lead the execution, with support from youth workers if issues arise.
- Bring together YW&G from different backgrounds to partake in social action together in their communities to foster ‘double’ social cohesion.
- Include elements of fun in activities so YW&G find them enjoyable and continue to engage over time.
- Consider using online or blended delivery approaches in creative ways to connect young people regionally.

## Sustainability

As discussed above, the primary outcomes of the programme were for YW&G, however, EmpowHER's Theory of Change (Appendix x) also expects outcomes for youth workers, youth organisations and communities. From the launch of the programme, there was a specific focus on sustainability and embedding the lessons learnt to ensure the impact of the programme continued beyond the three and a half years. This section presents the sustainability projects tested and their impact on the young people, youth workers, youth organisation and nation partners that took part.

### Progression routes for YW&G

We have explored the impact on the YW&G who participated in EmpowHER, and in turn the legacy this will leave on their communities through social action. The pilot Ambassador programme established to elevate voices of young people and create meaningful progression pathways for YW&Gs exemplifies this 'ripple effect'.

Following selection in October 2020, 14 YW&G became EmpowHER Ambassadors, spending the next 12 months developing their own confidence and skills whilst providing support to both EmpowHER participants and youth workers - meaningfully contributing to the direction, delivery and promotion of the EmpowHER programme. From leading social learning sessions, to judging at pitch days and from becoming role models, to creating EmpowHER toolkit resources, Ambassadors were at the heart of every element of EmpowHER, as well as building the foundations for the EmpowHER Legacy programme (below).

Providing this structured and accessible progression route allowed Ambassadors more time (a key learning from the programme) to build their social action habits and confidence, as well provided role models to younger EmpowHER YW&G nervous about starting their projects and Ambassadors are now actively involved in their communities; from campaigning work, to introducing workshops for students in their college on women's rights and safety.

This learning has been incorporated into the EmpowHER toolkit. Drawing together the learning and resources from 3 and a half years of EmpowHER, and involving extensive consultation with Ambassadors and youth workers, the toolkit blends ready to go resources, along with theory and best practice for a youth worker audience. This toolkit is available to all youth workers and youth organisations. For our 52 EmpowHER Legacy partners (below), it will form an integral part of their support package on their EmpowHER journey.

Drawing on the learnings from EmpowHER combined with their expertise of social action the British Red Cross have created a resource for young people to form part of this toolkit. Providing practical guidance and ideas this resource is designed to help young people think through their social action.

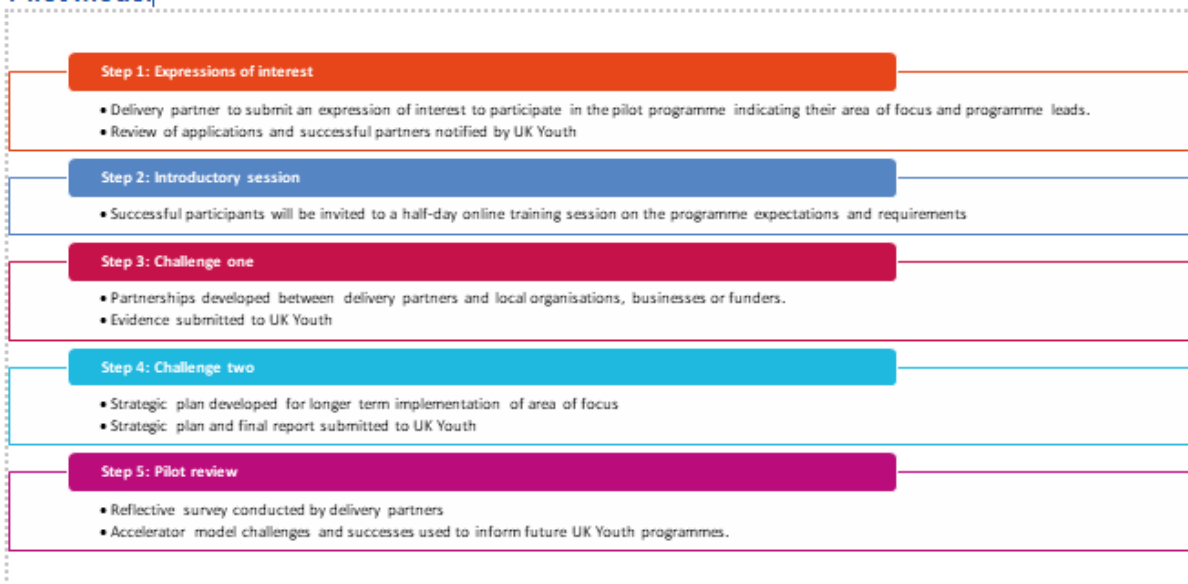
## Fay's story

Through EmpowHER, Fay discovered a passion for empowering and motivating young women, girls and non-binary young people to speak out about issues affecting them. Finishing EmpowHER confident and inspired, Fay decided to volunteer as a peer mentor for the next cohort at her youth club - Preston Impact - supporting the group to get as much out of EmpowHER as she had. Fay went on to become an EmpowHER Ambassador, providing encouragement to EmpowHER participants across the country. Fay has now helped groups prepare for social action pitch days, supported partners with campaigns on wellbeing and women's rights, been an EmpowHER role model, a pitch day judge, given a keynote speech at a national EmpowHER celebration event and much more. With her drive for change Fay has now successfully secured an internship with the British Red Cross, where she will be supporting an exciting new EmpowHER Climate Change pilot.

## Sustainable impact for delivery partners; Accelerator pilot

The Accelerator pilot project set out to understand models for embedding sustainability through working with a smaller group of partners and funding time and training to reflect on their learnings from EmpowHER, build and nurture lasting partnerships within their local community, and create a long-term implementation plan for their area of focus. The pilot took delivery partners through two "challenges" to provide structure to their learning.

### Pilot model



Seven delivery partners completed the Accelerator pilot programme from March to September 2021. With each partner setting unique goals and challenges, we saw intentional breadth, with partnerships highly tailored to hyper local need and having impact across the community.

“The EmpowHER project has opened a door for us to see how we are able to have a global impact with the young people in our community, increasing knowledge about Autism & ADHD, improving their confidence in their identify and the power they have to change their community and their future, as well as the future for other young people coming behind them. It has been amazing.” – (Youth worker, Autism and ADHD).

Some partners utilised the Accelerator to identify new referral pathways, whilst others strengthened existing relationships to develop exciting new work: “We have strengthened partnerships within Coventry at 3 Family Hubs and we are trialling a new programme called ‘emotional intelligence and Covid Response. With this programme we have specific sessions that deal with coping and responding positively to anxiety, responding to challenges emerging from Covid-19, transitioning into further education/employment, identifying support networks and developing capacity to make positive choices.” – (Youth worker, YMCA).

“Through EmpowHER, we have developed a team of young volunteers who want to help and support and grow as youth workers and we are looking to put a training programme in place to help support these young women be the future staff of UCO” United Communities Organisation.

### EmpowHER Accelerator in action: Inspire Youth Zone

Though conversation with the youth council and members of the youth zone, Inspire Youth Zone saw the need for a version of EmpowHER for young men and boys.

As part of the EmpowHER Accelerator pilot programme, Inspire Youth Zone created HIMpact. Designed to support positive mental health in young men and boys, whilst contributing towards breaking the stigma, HIMpact created safe spaces for young men and boys for social learning and supported participation in meaningful social action that benefits both the young people and the community. Inspire Youth Zone partnered with several local partners to help support and fund HIMpact to ensure quality wellbeing, sexual health, and employment and volunteering pathways, resources and support is provided to the young boys and men.

“The programme is running really well and the boys all enjoy the sessions. They are all proud of the achievements they have made in the sessions” Inspire Youth Zone

The primary enablers for the organisations were; having ‘funded time’ for strategic planning and partnership building, receiving training on partnership working, grant applications and pitching alongside having the programme knowledge (from experience of delivery) and evidence (from UK Youth reporting). Finally, the opportunity to come together as a “collective force” - with other partners and UK Youth – throughout the pilot, to share ideas, opportunities and support), was cited as a key enabler. These enablers will be explored further in the EmpowHER Legacy programme (2021-2023), where research will focus on impact on youth organisations.

## **Sustainable impact for national partners: British Red Cross and UK Youth**

When the partnership began in 2018, a key aim for BRC and UK Youth was to learn from each other. For UK Youth this meant understanding how the youth sector could partner with other charity experts, for BRC, deepening their understanding of engaging young people.

Both partners have achieved these goals, with UK Youth embedding learnings from EmpowHER (from programmatic structure, to core and flex models, to design principles, digital innovation, and access funding) in our wider programmatic offer and launching exciting new programme partnerships with Centre for Mental Health and the Diana Award.

Our partnership has led to extraordinary outcomes for young women – which is why we are so passionate about connecting young people to an array of wonderful experiences and cross sector influences. As an organisation; this work has sharpened our skills around innovative design and programme delivery and our hope is that more organisations will see the benefits of national collaborations.” Ndidie Okezie, CEO, UK Youth.

At BRC, EmpowHER is widely known across the organisation and is regularly referenced as a great example of working in partnership and with YW&G.

“We have a proud history of supporting volunteers and promoting the power of social action. It's been our goal to make our opportunities more accessible for young people, particularly those facing disadvantage or who might not normally consider volunteering. EmpowHER allows us to continue to learn how best to reach these audiences and maximise the unique value they can bring in supporting others.” Michael Adamson, CEO, BRC.

To support this continuing beyond the programme, the EmpowHER team are compiling their learnings from the last 3.5 years into a how-to-handbook for other internal Red Cross teams to work with young people, alongside the aforementioned social action resource. Resources will be shared across the organisation to encourage others to involve young people in their programmes. They have also recruited EmpowHER Ambassadors to work as BRC interns, sharing EmpowHER stories and collating an EmpowHER quilt to live in the online BRC archives and sit in the Red Cross Museum.

Finally, the BRC has piloted two projects to further explore approaches to engaging young people in their work; the Red Cross on Campus Model programme and Youth Act on Climate online programme for YW&G.

The multi-year funding, combined with pauses to embed learning and funding 'thinking time', all served to create an environment where all delivery partners could grow and embed the work and there is evidence that EmpowHER will leave a sustainable benefit to youth workers and youth organisations including:

- **Increased partnership working:** 73% of youth workers expressed that the programme improved links with local organisations, and social action projects were perceived as a key part of building these links. 61% also expressed that it is likely that they will continue to work with BRC and YWT beyond EmpowHER. "As I am a new youth worker, I did not have much experience in working with organisations in the community. After this programme, my organisation links in the community have developed significantly." (Youth worker, Cohort 4)
- **Improved ability to take a blended approach to delivery:** Several of the delivery partners reported that they were better equipped and organised for digital delivery, having embedded learning from Cohort 3 and through UK Youth support. Key to successful online sessions was interactivity and fun: "We added a new dimension to our work, we found new ways to engage with girls. Last week we had an illustrator teach us how to express our emotions with drawings."
- **Improved profile and greater reach:** Youth workers in early cohorts in particular reported that EmpowHER had increased their reach to different types of young people from those they usually worked with: "It's definitely helped us engage with younger girls. We used to meet them at 13 but this has highlighted the need to do work with younger girls. Otherwise we never would have gone that low in age." Furthermore, by working more with schools and other community institutions, many felt it had boosted their organisational profile and made them more well known within communities.
- **Increased youth worker skills and ambitions:** Through the experiences gained delivering the programme, youth workers told us they had developed skills and changed their perspectives around what was possible for their organisations and the young people they worked with to achieve. Networking events, skills workshops and activities served to shift attitudes, as the following quote from a youth worker in Cohort 4 illustrates: "I really enjoyed the community organising workshop, I have never campaigned before but taking part in EmpowHER has left me wanting to create positive change, and I now have an idea where to start".

## Sector Legacy: Sharing the learning

As we intentionally thought about sustainability and legacy from the beginning of the project, we have also been intentional in our work to capture and share our learning running two national cross-sector events in partnership with BRC, Spirit of 2012, youth workers and young people. Our first 'How to have Powerful Partnerships', shared learnings in harnessing the power of both cross-sector partnerships and young people and youth worker voice in advocating for national causes. A 72 strong audience heard from 26 speakers across nine organisations.

Our second, 'Building thriving communities : why youth work is part of the solution' attracted an audience of 214 sector leaders, funders, academics and cross-sector professionals, and drew on learnings from EmpowHER to examine the unique power of youth work in transforming lives of young people and communities. With a focus on achieving 'change that lasts', highlights of the event included utilising the learnings from EmpowHER to take a youth sector audience through a design thinking approach to programme creation. Meanwhile, a funder audience gained insights into the enablers of Spirit of 2012 and UK Youth's partnership in funding lasting change. Culminating in a panel which explored 'what do you really want?', the event challenged funders and grantees to reflect on how they could improve their working relationships and practices. EmpowHER Ambassadors were at the heart of the day, from sharing stories, to chairing panels. Much of the material and content created for the event has been integrated into the EmpowHER Toolkit for a wider audience.

The latter event also saw the launch of our sector report – distilling 3.5 years of EmpowHER into a digestible, engaging and usable piece. Focusing on why the work worked, this report presents powerful succinct evidence, before honing in on the enablers. To expand on the latter, the EmpowHER Toolkit was launched simultaneously – as both a digital and offline product.

## Sector Legacy: Growing the learning: EmpowHER Legacy 2021-2023

Thanks to Spirit of 2012's EmpowHER Legacy funding, we now have an exciting opportunity to test the question "once you have established best practice, how do you invest in organisations to embed sustainable projects?" over a multi-strand two-year programme, with programme launch in November 2021.

Cohorts of delivery partners will go on a defined range of EmpowHER journeys, from light touch 'training and toolkit', to more intensive journeys with higher levels of input and multiple touch points, exploring optimum packages of support. As well as supporting YW&G, and youth organisations, across the country to benefit from EmpowHER, this will enable our research focus to hone in on sustainability. This work will inform future developments for UK Youth and the youth sector on maximising resource to embed sustainability at scale.

## Recommendations

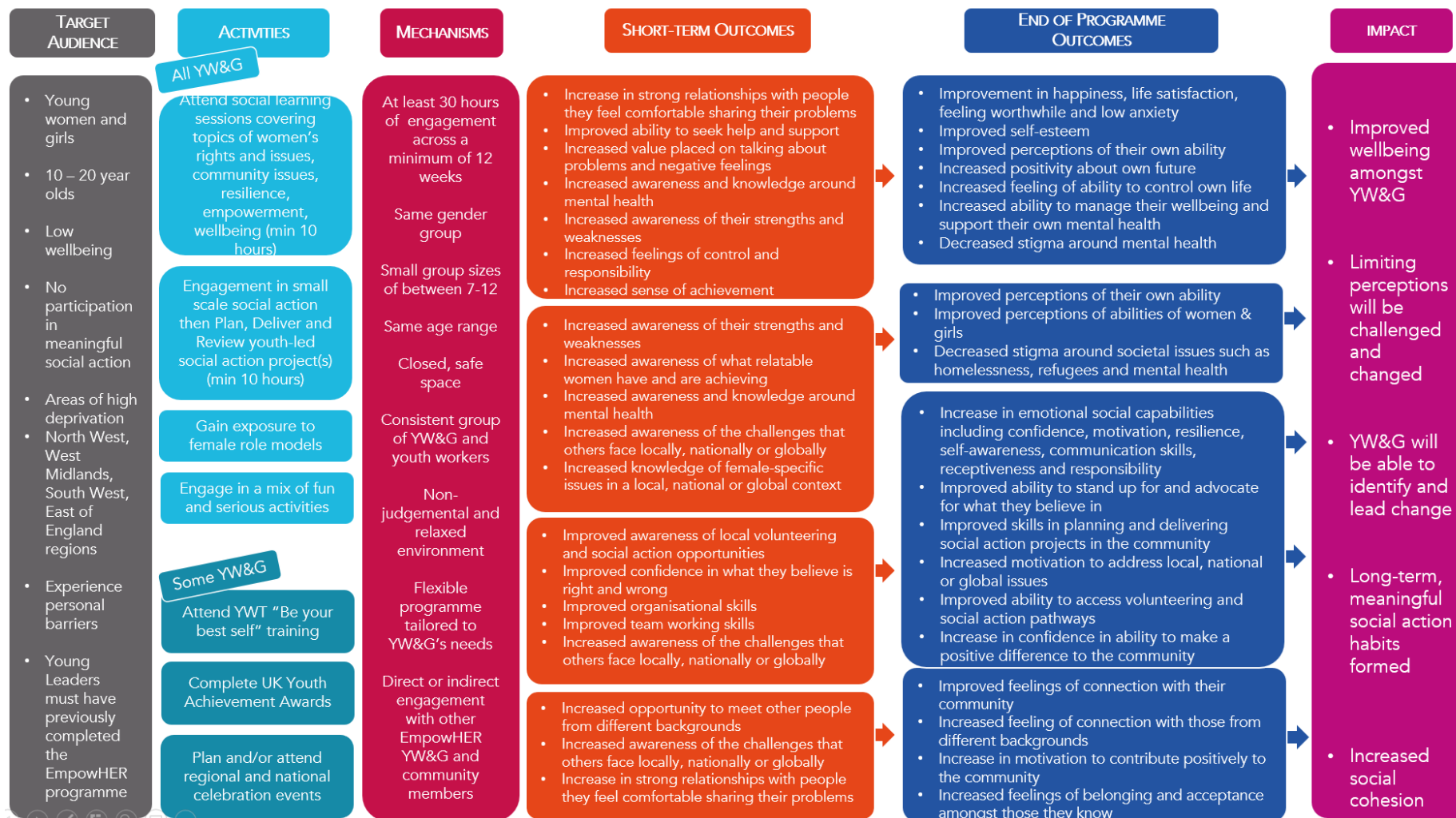
Our final recommendations come from 3.5 years of testing and learning, countless open and frank conversations with partners and funders, steering group meetings and youth worker interviews and workshops. We have shown above what you need to create a programme that addresses low wellbeing through social action, and now we look to the mechanics behind programmatic work to address the question:

How do you work in partnership with the youth sector to fund change that lasts?

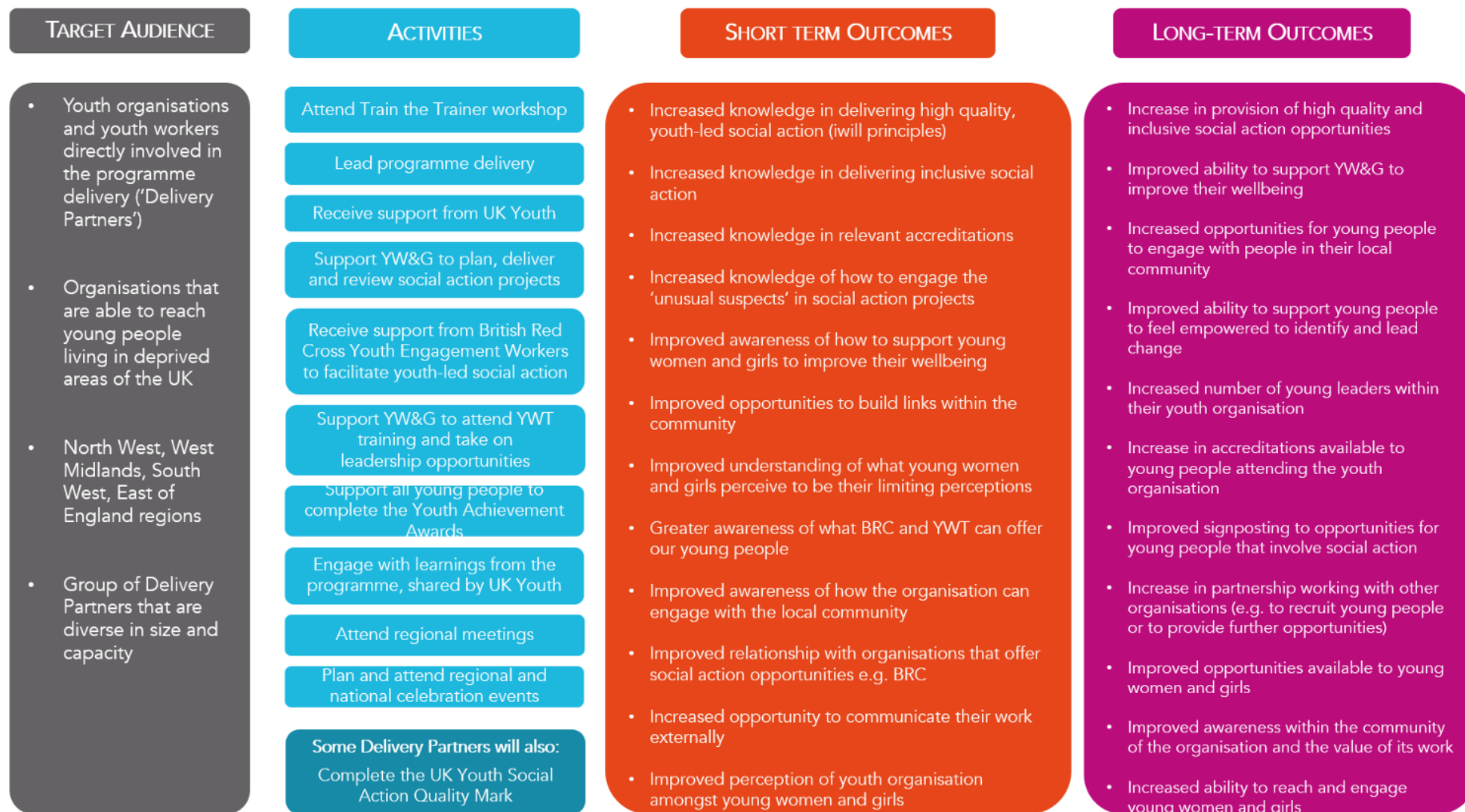
- An open honest funder/fundee relationship and opportunities to test and learn – to allow things to work, or not work, and to be upfront about that!
- A willingness to do things differently, to allow things to be done better.
- Multi-year funding with pauses to embed learning within the programme.
- Fund thinking and learning time – not just delivery. This proved a huge enabler in allowing youth organisations to build sustainability.
- Make sure that you have strategic internal buy-in as well as operational
- Build in growth to partnership agreements to accommodate learnings and changes
- Talk about values and mission as well as practicalities
- Talk about the end from the beginning and think about the tiny things that build sustainability.
- Give space to build the evidence of the intervention to create a powerful case for funding and commissioning.

## Appendix

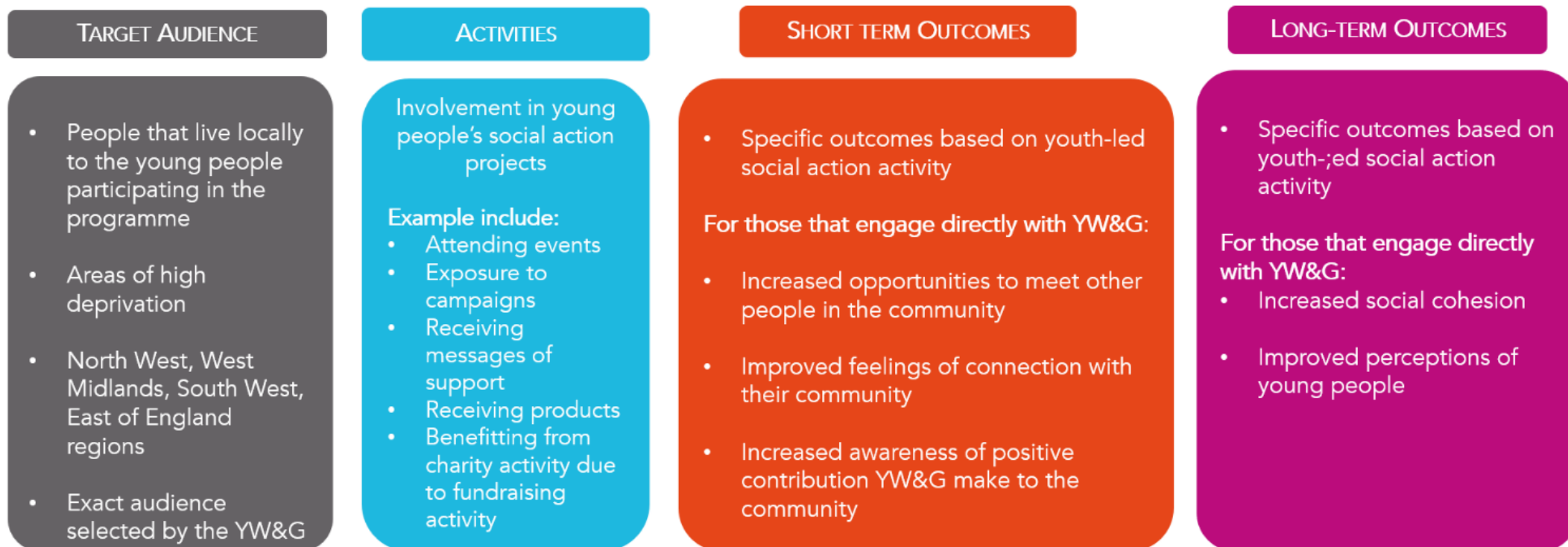
### Theory of Change - Young women and girls



## Youth workers/Youth organisations



## Local communities



## Extended methodology

This report explores the combined findings from across all four cohorts of EmpowHER, as well as looking at comparisons by cohort and whether the effects of the programme were consistent across different demographics and participation levels. In order to do this, we amalgamated quantitative reach data from all four cohorts, and outcomes data from across Cohorts 1, 2 and 4 (Cohort 3 was excluded due to pre/post outcomes data not being collected as a result of the pandemic).

## Demographic data

Reach data was collected by youth workers, using profiling records that documented participant demographics, barriers and levels of engagement. Delivery partners were supported with GDPR compliance and data management by UK Youth. Despite this support, there were gaps in the records submitted for some young people, so the base numbers for each question are highlighted in the table below. The final reach statistics in the main report have been weighted according to size of cohort to avoid bias due to non-response.

Demographic question	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4
Total engaged	319	681	312	776
Completion	300	681	312	776
Age	306	672	288	766
Ethnicity	300	681	284	755
Personal barriers	269	570	278	644
IMD/SMI	244	556	275	667

## Outcomes data

Pre/post surveys were used to collect outcomes data from participants, as well as other details, such as previous social action experience. In order to be able to carry out cross-tabulation analysis (to understand the outcome changes between different groups of YW&G that participated), outcomes data from surveys was matched with demographic data from profiling records. For ease of understanding, we have therefore used this matched data set as the basis for all figures reported in the Outcomes section of the report. Therefore, statistics may differ slightly from the summary report - as no cross-tabulation was performed for the summary report, demographic and outcomes data was analysed separately, in keeping with the approach used in previous reports throughout the delivery of EmpowHER.

The total sample for the outcomes questions and cross-tabs was 911. These respondents came from across Cohorts 1, 2 and 4 – Cohort 3 was excluded as pre/post outcomes questions were not asked due to the pandemic. A small number of respondents had missing data due to missing some survey questions. For technical reasons, missing data was recoded to reflect the mean, cross-cohort average for each outcome area.

To test for significance, a two sample t-test was used for variables consisting of no more than two categories (e.g. gender), with the one-way ANOVA test being used for variables with three or more categories (e.g. age). Validity assumptions of the statistical techniques were adhered to by ensuring that: the sample data was collected randomly; the data is approximately normally distributed; and measurement scales were consistent across the analysed variables. Unequal variances were assumed for all t-tests.

A p-value has been provided for each statistical test. The p-value measures how certain we can be that any differences in values between demographic groups in our sample are also true of the wider EmpowHER reach. For instance, a p-value of 0.05 means we can be 95% sure that any correlations we find are not just due to random sample fluctuations. This 95% confidence interval is a minimum threshold of statistical significance.

## Other data reported

We also used some additional data in the report collected in the pre and post surveys that was unrelated to outcomes. The base numbers for these questions are reported below:

Question	Base size
Wellbeing upon entry	C1 – 106; C2 – 443; C4 – 339
Previous social action experience	773
Had previously volunteered or fundraised for the BRC	607
Recommend EmpowHER to others	862
Will do more social action in the next 12 months	849
Will volunteer with the BRC in the next 12 months	857

The final quantitative method we have drawn upon in this report was a survey conducted with youth workers at the end of Cohort 4. The question “has the programme led to further social action?” had a base number of 41.

## Qualitative data

The quantitative findings were supplemented with qualitative data. Methods to collect qualitative data included:

- Interviews with youth workers
- Interviews with YW&G
- Focus groups with partner organisations
- Focus groups with YW&G
- Delivery partner reports

Further details regarding the methodology used for the evaluation of each cohort can be found in the individual cohort reports. For this report, the qualitative data was analysed using a thematic approach, in order to explore the key enablers that were common across all the cohorts.

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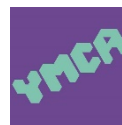
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**“Keep at it. Things might go wrong along the way but you have the power to change the world”**

- Macie, 16 EmpowHER Ambassador

**Thank You**



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