



## Year 1 YIF Learning Project: Executive summary

### Introduction

The Youth Investment Fund (YIF) is a £40 million investment jointly funded by Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) and the Big Lottery Fund, providing investment in voluntary, community and social enterprises who provide front line open access youth services in targeted disadvantaged communities in England.

As part of the Youth Investment Fund, a £1m learning and impact contract was awarded to NPC, working in partnership with the Centre for Youth Impact. The contract aims to facilitate and deliver support across YIF grantee organisations, to optimise the learning from the investment and thus contribute to improvement within the sector more broadly. The learning project started in May 2017 and is due for completion in January 2021. Grantee organisations are organised into six cluster groups by their geographical region.

The learning project has two key objectives:

- Assess the impact of YIF open access services on young people, and to understand what works in engaging and retaining them in youth services.
- Process learning about what works well and contribution to wider sector improvement.

This document was produced by the YIF learning project team as a summary of our Annual Report Year 1 (up to April 2018), aiming to update grantees on our progress, as well as the challenges and key learning points. The full-length, more detailed report has been submitted to DCMS and the Big Lottery Fund as part of the learning contract.

This summary report highlights the activities delivered in Y1. A lot has been achieved, particularly the substantial co-design with grantees and the piloting of new approaches to evaluation with a small cohort of the grantees. The team would like to thank grantees for their high level of engagement with the YIF learning project so far.

### Key Successes and Achievements from Year 1

The table below summarises Y1 progress in line with the 7 work strands agreed by the YIF Steering Committee.

| Strand               | Progress/Success                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1: Co-Design         | A significant proportion of our Year 1 focus has been on Strand 1 – the co-design phase - as this is instrumental to all subsequent project phases. We have established good working relationships with the six regional cluster groups. There is a strong sense of ownership of both the shared evaluation framework approach and the YIF theory of change among grantees. Two sets of cluster workshop meetings were held (July & October), which combined both the co-design (strand 1) and capacity building (strand 2) objectives. Only 11/86 projects in July and 4/86 projects in October were unable to attend cluster group meetings. |
| 2: Capacity Building | Feedback from many YIF grantees who attended the capacity building events was that they found them to be informative, enjoyable and a valuable networking opportunity. There was high participation among the majority of the 86 grantees. Many of the networks have continued to meet and communicate outside the workshop meetings.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

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| 3: Impact Evaluation  | We have successfully undertaken the pilot testing phase of the data collection methods. Results of the pilots - including grantee feedback - will be published in a series of blogs in Q2/3 of Year 2.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 4: Process Evaluation | The key objective in Year 1 was to review existing evidence on open access youth provision and develop our research questions. This has been <b>deferred</b> to Q1 of Year 2, so as to allow the team to focus on completing the outcomes pilot and the development and implementation of our shared measurement data approach.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 5: Value for Money    | Scheduled to commence in Q1 of Year 2.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 6: Learning           | The YIF learning project website launched in February 2018, promoting the project more widely and providing grantees with a learning resource. The first learning insight paper scheduled for Q4 in Year 1, has been <b>deferred</b> to Q1-2 in Year 2 to enable us to complete the data collection pilots and finalise plans for the shared data collection roll-out. The learning project team plan to share the data collection pilot results, and the YIF shared evaluation framework approach, in a blog series in Q2 of Year 2. |
| 7: Digital Platform   | Reason Digital were commissioned in January 2018 to develop the digital platform (YIF Impact Tool) with the learning project team. A period of testing took place from April - May 2018 with seven grantee organisations to inform its further development, and the roll-out of the platform took place from June 2018.                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

## **Key Challenges During Year 1 and Implications for the Project**

### **Challenges with Strand 1 (Co-Design):**

- Due to the increased number of grantees (from 75 to 90), more staff time and resources were required than anticipated in co-design (strand 1) and capacity building (strand 2) phases. This impacted the learning project team, leading them to prioritise the involvement of grantees in the co-design phase over involvement of young people – as the latter has proved to be more challenging.
- Additionally, there were fewer young people’s user forums than expected among grantee organisations, resulting in fewer opportunities to involve young people in our shared evaluation framework approach. To compensate, young people were given feedback opportunities in footfall, feedback and outcome data pilots, which helped to refine our data collection approaches.
- We are mindful that some grantees are in the process of establishing user groups/forums. We will explore with them how we can continue involving young people in the review and development of our shared evaluation approach in Year 2-3.

### **Challenges with Strand 2 (Capacity Building):**

The learning project team underestimated the time required to support the grantee organisations that were involved in the data collection pilots. However, this process has been valuable for providing a clearer idea of the additional support that will be required for the wider roll-out of data collection. This influenced the decision to concentrate on capacity building in Year 2 and defer the introduction of action learning sets to Year 3.

### **Challenges with Strand 3 (Impact Evaluation):**

Yoti QR codes were trialled but faced a number of barriers for capturing footfall data. The main barriers included: low smartphone ownership, low passport ownership, under-13s not being able to sign up, lack of memory space, lack of wi-fi connection; a lengthy sign up process. The pilot generated substantial learning around digital footfall capture and there remains potential to develop this – including as Yoti becomes more widespread.

### **Learning**

The learning project team has spent considerable time learning about the provision and evaluation practice of YIF grantees:

- There is a huge diversity of provision among the grantees and their level of engagement with young people. As well as the type of activity, provision varies on a number of factors, including: group or individual, targeted or untargeted, open or more fixed, structured or unstructured.
- Most grantees collect basic attendance data, and some collect their own self-designed outcomes data. From our 1-2-1 calls we found that there is considerable variety in evaluation practice among grantees, including the amount and type of data collected, the methods of collection and how the data is used (specifically regarding the use of digital storage systems, or lack thereof).
- Some key challenges around evaluation amongst grantees include: capacity, buy-in and quality of collection across the staff team, measuring the outcomes of open access provision, not analysing the data they collect, and multiple demands of different funders.

### **The co-design and piloting has provided substantial learning for our planned shared data collection approach**

- Despite the wide variety of provision, when developing a theory of change we were able to identify shared features across all types, which we have described as the mechanisms of change.
- It is not feasible to collect detailed footfall data using smartphone technology with this group of young people. This is partly due to low smartphone ownership, but also difficulty of engagement.
- Regular, light-touch, systematic user feedback data is a feasible, proportionate, and actionable way of collecting data on young people's experiences (related to the mechanisms of change).
- Measuring service quality using systematic peer observation is valuable for both professional learning and development, as well as being a valid measure of quality for evaluation purposes.
- There is considerable wider interest in the YIF shared evaluation approach and specific tools among the youth sector and other sectors.
- Supporting the 36 pilot organisations to undertake data collection and analysis required considerable time and resources. Therefore, the learning project team will ensure that as part of their preparation for the wider YIF data collection roll-out training for all grantees in Year 2, that they produce written guidance and resources and offer support where needed for grantees.

This has been an exciting and productive first year for the YIF learning project, culminating in the development of the YIF shared theory of change and YIF shared measurement approach that were co- designed with grantees. Looking ahead to Year 2, we look forward to rolling out the YIF shared data collection approach to all grantees so that they can begin collecting and sharing data.