
CASE STUDY CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions drawn from the analysis of 13 Our Bright Future case study projects identify a number of approaches that have worked well in achieving outcomes for young people and project delivery.

What has worked: Outcomes for young people

Engaging young people in environmental tasks with clear tangible outcomes appears to be beneficial both in terms of awareness of environmental issues and motivation to take environmental action.

Bringing young people together with other young people and external stakeholders has been a powerful motivator.

Allowing young people to have autonomy and a sense of ownership over a task or part of a project appears to lead to greater confidence and empowerment.

What has worked: Delivery approaches

Partnership working;

In-depth understanding of the target group;

Flexibility in project design;

Tasks or activities structured with a clear beginning, middle and end;

Satisfying fundamental needs (e.g. food and shelter) and making the outdoors comfortable.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document acts as an annex to the mid-term independent evaluation report of the Our Bright Future Programme which is operating 2016-2021. Our Bright Future is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund comprising a portfolio of 31 projects across the UK that bring together the environmental and youth sectors. Each of the 31 projects in the portfolio will run for up to five years and has been allocated around £1m in order to scale up or replicate existing activity to reach new beneficiaries or new locations. Ranging in scale, from local to national, projects focus on activities such as practical environmental conservation, campaigning, leadership and influencing, developing sustainable enterprises and vocational training. A key objective of this five-year programme is for 60,000 young people to be engaged in these projects in some way.
- 1.2 This document examines and analyses the case study reports produced for 13 of the programme's projects as part of the mid-term Evaluation of the programme. Case studies represent a sample of the portfolio and were chosen to demonstrate the breadth of projects, rather than be illustrative of best practice. The case studies are used to draw conclusions about whether key assumptions underlying the programme's outcomes are being realised, and what is working well in terms of achieving these outcomes. The programme's Theory of Change included several theoretical 'assumptions' about how the projects and activities would lead to the Programme outcomes. Each of the 13 case study reports was focused on these Programme assumptions. A full list of the assumptions and outcomes examined are provided in Annex A. In short, the focus of the case study projects was on four themes:
- Physical environmental improvements and pro-environmental behaviours;
 - Involving young people in project design and delivery;
 - Improvements in young people's well-being and mental health;
 - New skills, improved educational attainment and employability for young people.
- 1.3 These four themes are used to structure the reporting in this document, and each case study assigned to the theme is listed in Table 1.

Table 1 Case study projects and themes	
Themes	Case study projects relevant to theme
Physical environmental improvements and pro-environmental behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Our Wild Coast, <i>North Wales Wildlife Trust</i> ▪ Bright Green Future, <i>Centre for Sustainable Energy</i> ▪ From Farm to Fork, <i>Global Feedback Limited</i> ▪ One Planet Pioneers, <i>Middlesbrough Environment City Trust</i>
Involving young people in project design and delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Grassroots Challenge, <i>Ulster Wildlife Trust</i> ▪ My World My Home, <i>Friends of the Earth</i> ▪ Environmental Leadership Programme, <i>UpRising</i>
Improvements in young people's well-being and mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Milestones, <i>Wiltshire Wildlife Trust</i> ▪ Putting Down Roots for Young People, <i>St Mungo's</i> ▪ Vision England, <i>Action for Blind People</i>
New skills, improved educational attainment and employability for young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Next Generation of Fife's Environmental Champions and Workforce, <i>Falkland Stewardship Trust on behalf of the Fife Rural Skills Partnership</i> ▪ Welcome to the Green Economy, <i>Groundwork London</i> ▪ The Environment Now, <i>The National Youth Agency</i>

2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The case studies were developed by the evaluation team drawing on primary evidence collected by the evaluation team during visits to projects, semi-structured interviews with project managers and staff, and analysis of secondary data collected by the project and reported through regular project quarterly and annual reporting. The data on which the case studies are based was collected between May and November 2018.
- 2.2 Primary evidence was gathered in different ways reflecting the varied nature of each project. Where possible, members of the evaluation team visited projects to observe and participate in project delivery activities, including consulting with members of the delivery team and beneficiaries (with varying levels of formality e.g. ad-hoc conversations during an activity, interviews, focus groups). Where it was not possible to observe delivery, members of the evaluation team attended other project events and undertook more in-depth consultation with the delivery team and partners.
- 2.3 The following sections analyse the case studies covering each theme, pulling out any learning to draw some initial conclusions about the kinds of approaches that have worked well in terms of outcomes for young people and project delivery. The pool of projects from which the conclusions are taken are small (approximately three under each theme) but they identify some emerging findings which will be discussed further in the main mid-term report, particularly whether these patterns occur more widely amongst the portfolio of 31 projects.

3. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIOURS

Assumption: Activities undertaken as part of Our Bright Future projects result in direct environmental improvements through physical interventions to enhance the environment, and indirect and longer-term environmental improvements through promoting pro-environmental behaviours.

CASE STUDIES

Our Wild Coast, North Wales Wildlife Trust

Bright Green Future, Centre for Sustainable Energy

From Farm to Fork, Global Feedback Limited

One Planet Pioneers, Middlesbrough Environment City Trust

- 3.1 There have been clear environmental improvements achieved through the activities of these four Our Bright Future projects. Specific examples from the four case studies include:
- One Planet Pioneers has improved 2ha of land in Middlesbrough. The project reports that this has also led to an increased sense of pride in the local area and young people are now keen to keep it well maintained.
 - From Farm to Fork has saved 206,881kg of food through gleaning and 287,744 kg¹ of food waste through the FoodCycle kitchens. It is estimated that this has saved approximately 9,299 tonnes of CO₂-e emissions.
 - Over 2017 and 2018 the Our Wild Coast project improved and replanted habitats totalling 24.5 acres across the North Coast and Anglesey.
- 3.2 Three of the case studies have demonstrated that engaging young people in practical tasks, such as gathering food otherwise destined to be wasted, beach cleans or removal of invasive species, is powerful for two reasons. Firstly, such activities instil confidence and pride because young people can see the immediate physical impact of their work. Secondly, it is an effective way of raising awareness of environmental issues; the scale of food waste or the reality of environmental problems within a community. Witnessing and tackling a problem first-hand appears to be an effective motivator, especially when many environmental problems can seem insurmountable and abstract. One project has found that fostering links between young people and their local environment can help them understand their immediate environment better – one particular example is foraging for food and cooking it on a campfire.
- 3.3 Another common theme is the importance of bringing young people together to discuss and tackle environmental issues. This has helped young people to feel less isolated and part of a wider movement, which seems to lead to greater motivation for young people to tackle environmental issues. All four projects observed that group work and making new social connections tends to lead to greater commitment from young people.
- 3.4 In terms of attitudes and behaviour change, the case studies indicate that it is likely to be more pronounced if young people have some autonomy and a sense of ownership e.g., they have been part of the design and planning process. For example, when CSE's participants designed their local project as opposed to the project team asking them to complete certain activities, they reported feeling a

¹ It must be noted that these figures apply to the project, only part of which is funded by Our Bright Future and therefore it is not clear how much can be attributed to Our Bright Future.

greater sense of ownership. However, it is important to get the balance right between freedom for young people to pursue their own ideas, and guidance from adults to ensure that they are not overwhelmed. Supporting young people to determine the aim and goals of a project or activity has proved an effective way to give young people control over what they do.

- 3.5 Overall, based on evidence from these three case studies alone, it is less clear whether the projects will have long-lasting impacts on behaviour change, yet they do suggest that longer-term engagement in the project can help young people become advocates.

4. INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE IN PROJECT DESIGN AND DELIVERY

Assumption: Actively involving young people in the design and delivery of project activities undertaken as part of the Our Bright Future Programme leads to better outcomes than if young people are not involved.

CASE STUDIES

Grassroots Challenge, Ulster Wildlife Trust

My World My Home, Friends of the Earth

Environmental Leadership Programme, UpRising

- 4.1 Although the case study evidence in this regard is relatively limited at the mid-term stage, there are indications that involving young people in the design and delivery of project activities:
- Has developed young people's skills, particularly problem solving. Project staff also report that it has led to young people taking greater initiative and having increased confidence in their own abilities.
 - Supports young people to feel more empowered which has led to young people feeling more confident to speak out and develop their own projects.
- 4.2 Of the three case studies, from the evidence it is apparent that only a small number of participants had, in actual fact 'led' activities. Having said this, all case studies are working towards developing more opportunities and ways of facilitating youth leadership. All three projects were putting building blocks in place to facilitate youth-led projects, and have acknowledged that it is not something that happens immediately. Despite the challenges of facilitating youth-led projects, case studies indicate that even small amounts of autonomy can improve young people's motivation to succeed. However, depending on the young people, project managers stress the importance of striking the right balance between adequate support and autonomy.
- 4.3 All three case studies mentioned the importance of the social aspect of projects, i.e. young people meeting new people, making contacts with people in positions of power and other young people. This has been observed as particularly important to achieving outcomes in terms of empowerment and confidence. A powerful experience in terms of inspiring and empowering young people on two projects has been allowing young people opportunities to meet with external stakeholders, particularly politicians and people in power. As well as benefitting young people by helping them to understand how to influence decision makers, these activities appear to have raised awareness amongst politicians of the importance of involving young people in environmental discussions.
- 4.4 One successful strategy for involving young people in project delivery has been to use alumni to help deliver the project for the following cohort. This way, the young people feel confident to be able to give advice and guidance to other young people having gone through the process themselves. In two of the case studies have set up ways in which young people can be involved formally in project delivery and decisions. For example, Grassroots Challenge has set up a Youth Forum which gives participants a role and responsibility to inform project design and development. In addition to facilitating youth leadership at a project level, two projects have found that equipping others such as DoE leaders, teachers and organisations with guidance to support youth-led activities has worked well. UpRising has been approached by other organisations keen to incorporate a "youth voice" within their own operations, indicating an appetite for strategies to help support more youth-led activities.

5. WELL-BEING AND MENTAL HEALTH

Assumption: Experiences in the natural environment and with other young people through participation in activities undertaken as part of Our Bright Future projects result in measurable improvements in confidence, well-being and mental health.

CASE STUDIES

Milestones, *Wiltshire Wildlife Trust*
Putting Down Roots for Young People, *St Mungo's*
Vision England, *Action for Blind People*

5.1 Although all projects have found engaging with vulnerable young people to have unique challenges, there is evidence that being in the natural environment with other young people is having a positive impact on the well-being and mental health of participants.

- On the Milestones project, in last academic year, five NEET participants were supported back into full time education and three who were in part-time education were supported back to full time education.
- Putting Down Roots for Young People has observed that engaging with the natural environment appears to make young people become happier and calmer, which is particularly important when leading unstable and insecure lives.
- Milestones has observed and measured evidence of improvement in learning, social skills, mental health and well-being. The ongoing participation of young people, who voluntarily attend Milestones in place of mainstream education, further suggests that the project is doing well to meet the needs of those for whom school environments may be challenging.
- Support staff on the Milestones project have observed improvements in behaviour both on and off the project.

5.2 All three case studies mentioned the importance of engaging young people in **tasks with clear tangible outcomes** so that they can feel they have made an immediate difference. Young people enjoyed most the conservation activities that have a clear beginning and end point. This allows participants to observe the difference they have made; providing a sense of achievement and has been particularly beneficial for those lacking motivation or confidence. Examples include, coppicing or building bird boxes, and offering initial qualifications that are engaging and quicker to complete, as opposed to activities with less immediate visible outcomes such as planting seeds.

5.3 Projects working with NEET young people or those at risk of becoming NEET have found that it is important to **distance the project spaces and tasks from the school environment** as much as possible, for example by allowing choice, control and flexibility over what the young people do. Providing an alternative learning environment for those who are not enjoying or succeeding in school has had a positive impact on their enjoyment of learning and overall well-being.

“The outdoor learning space gives them a sense of freedom, and sense of ability, these are things they can do and they enjoy doing. Building things, making things, working with people that they wouldn't necessarily work with, it's giving them greater opportunities rather than being confined to a classroom if they're not overly academic.” (Support Worker)

5.4 The social aspect of group projects appears to be particularly important in terms of outcomes for young people. **Meeting and getting to know other young people** has been key to young people's



enjoyment, engagement and commitment. Young people on one project reported feeling much more relaxed and happy spending time in small groups compared to large classes. On another project they reported decreased feelings of isolation due to the social nature of the projects, and increased motivation and confidence. One project has found that this outcome is achieved most effectively when engagement of young people is sustained over a longer period. Vision England has found that the opportunity to socialise with other young people with a vision impairment who share similar experiences and face similar challenges has been one of the key benefits of the project. Team based activities help with **fostering informal support networks** and indicate to participants what can be achieved by working together. The informal peer support networks created on the Vision England residential had a key impact on well-being by increasing self-confidence and allowing young people with a vision impairment to learn about support, and opportunities available for others in a similar situation.

- 5.5 Being outdoors and undertaking practical activities has been beneficial for participants in all projects. Young people say that they **feel more relaxed in nature** and on the project. Participants contrasted feeling good and “free” in the natural environment with feeling uncomfortable in a classroom and surrounded by electronics. Participants **value the opportunity and freedom to explore ‘hands on’ environmental activities** using a range of tools including saws, axes, loppers, spades and shovels. Young people responded well to being able to use tools and power tools because this was a completely new experience. For the participants of Vision England this was particularly impactful because they believed that these types of activities were beyond their capabilities. Vision England noted that participants responded best to the John Muir award activities rather than the adventure-based activities, because many of the conservation tasks were completely new to the young people. Project staff also noted that explaining the environmental issues and benefits whilst doing practical conservation activities was an effective way of raising environmental awareness and keeping participants engaged.

6. SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY

Assumption: Volunteering and learning in the natural environment through participation in Our Bright Future projects results in young people gaining new skills and have a measurable effect on young people's educational attainment and employability?

CASE STUDIES

Next Generation of Fife's Environmental Champions and Workforce, Falkland Stewardship Trust on behalf of the Fife Rural Skills Partnership

Welcome to the Green Economy, Groundwork London

The Environment Now, The National Youth Agency

- 6.1 There is some evidence that individual projects have had an effect on young people's educational attainment and employability. One specific example, the Next Generation of Fife's Environmental Champions and Workforce project has shown clear achievements in terms of employability and educational attainment. Of the 2017-2018 cohort of 12 apprentices: nine went on to secure further employment of which all but one was in the rural sector and one went into further education and set up his own business in the sector. In addition, the project has so far supported 138 young people who were disengaged with school to either re-engage with school or engage better.
- 6.2 The Environment Now, which aimed to support young people to develop their own environmental business ideas has reported that of the 36 young people supported to develop new businesses and 4 who were supported to develop social enterprises, 14 young people have been able to take full-time paid positions within the businesses they created. Some others have continued on a voluntary basis. A further 19 participants have undertaken internships, work placements or work experience as a result of the project.
- 6.3 Project managers on all three projects report that skills have been gained by participants. However, it appears that in many cases the projects have been seen as an opportunity to gain transferable skills rather than specific 'green economy' skills. Project managers observe that participants have gained skills such as team working, timekeeping, general office etiquette and learning how to communicate in a professional context. Yet, the evidence around skills gained is not as strong as the destinations of young people and tend to be observed/ anecdotal. There is also evidence lacking on whether these outcomes (e.g. jobs secured/businesses started) were sustained over the medium to longer term.
- 6.4 From the evidence available it is hard to draw conclusions about what has worked in terms of supporting employability and educational attainment. Each project in the selection of case studies has worked with very different target groups, each with specific needs, and young people have responded well to different approaches. The Next Generation of Fife's Environmental Champions and Workforce's staged approach to participation has proved effective in terms of working with disengaged young people. Yet, The Environment Now's approach has also proved effective for young people who have an idea and the drive to set up a business. It will be important to follow up on these achievements to understand if they have been sustained over the longer term.

Table 2: Lessons learnt about delivery

Delivery lessons from the 13 case studies include:	
All projects: working with young people	<p>Referrals and recruitment</p> <p>Partnership working with organisations than can refer young people e.g. schools, youth workers, or using peer to peer recruitment (young people encouraging other young people to engage) have been successful. Relying on open advertising and voluntary participation has not worked as well in the 13 case studies.</p>
	<p>1:1 support</p> <p>Almost all the projects, and particularly those working with vulnerable young people emphasise the importance of consistent 1:1 or small group support, recognising that the issues individuals face are context specific and reflect a unique set of barriers and enablers.</p>
	<p>Flexibility</p> <p>A recurring theme across the case studies is the need to have flexibility when engaging with young people, in order to respond to diverse and changing needs or interests.</p>
	<p>Building trust</p> <p>Projects acknowledge that it takes time to build trust with vulnerable young people. Consistency in staff who can build positive relationships with the young people is important, as is a project which supports long-term and regular sessions through which the young people can build positive relationships.</p>
	<p>Structure of activities</p> <p>Young people have responded well to a project/task with a clear start, middle and an end with clear impact from their work. Providing some form of structure to the day and explaining to young people in advance what they will be doing has been helpful.</p>
	<p>Youth involvement</p> <p>Enabling young people to have a sense of ownership of the project by taking control of certain elements has been particularly effective in terms of developing skills and confidence.</p>
	<p>Engaging young people</p> <p>The case studies also show the value of activities that are outside and/or informal, fun and engaging – not like a traditional classroom lesson – and how effective such activities are in encouraging young people to participate.</p>
	<p>Understanding the target group</p> <p>Projects describe setting time aside or doing outreach work to find out about what motivates/interests the young people. They have then been able to appeal to the different motivations by tailoring activities. An understanding of the characteristics, behaviours and backgrounds of young people can be gained in advance from parents/schools or through ‘check-ins’ when young people arrive.</p>
Environmental improvements	<p>Youth/environment partnerships</p> <p>Partnerships between local youth and environmental organisations bring the skills and experience of working with young people together with an organisation than can identify appropriate sites and activities for environmental improvement.</p>
	<p>Types of environmental activity</p> <p>Activities which engage young people in practical activities with visible outcomes (such as gleaning wasted food, removing invasive species, beach cleans) produce effective results for environment and are appropriate for young people because they don’t require specialist equipment or technical competency.</p>
	<p>Problem solving</p> <p>Most projects have found that problem solving can be an effective way of getting young people to engage with environmental issues. Projects that have challenged young people to use their own initiative and make decisions have observed good results in terms of developing the confidence and knowledge of young people to tackle environmental issues.</p>
	<p>Comfort</p> <p>Providing warmth and food has helped young people to feel comfortable outdoors and encouraged a better appreciation and relationship with the natural environment. Satisfying fundamental needs (e.g. food and shelter) is important, particularly for young people who may not have slept or eaten well prior to attending.</p>

7. SUMMARY

- 7.1 One key thing that the case studies demonstrate is the sheer diversity of projects within the Our Bright Future portfolio. Although there are projects which are seeking to deliver similar outcomes, the diversity of objectives, approaches used and beneficiaries represents a significant challenge in evaluating across projects, as the evidence base is inevitably quite heterogeneous. However, some common themes have emerged from the case studies relating to **what has worked for outcomes for young people**, and in terms of **what has worked for delivery** of these types of projects.

Outcomes for young people: what has worked?

- 7.2 **Engaging young people in environmental tasks with clear tangible outcomes** has been a key success factor for a variety of reasons, in terms of:

- Instilling confidence and pride, because young people can observe the immediate impact of their work;
- Raising awareness of environmental issues by witnessing the scale of a problem first hand;
- Equipping young people with the motivation, understanding and skills to tackle environmental problems, by tackling the problem first-hand.

Illustrative examples of successful tasks include: coppicing; beach cleaning; clearing invasive species; building bird boxes; and collecting food destined to be wasted.

- 7.3 **Bringing young people together with other young people and external stakeholders** has been a key success factor, in terms of:

- Improving young people's enjoyment, engagement and commitment to the project;
- Helping young people to feel less isolated by building informal networks, and self-confidence;
- Inspiring young people by giving them opportunities to meet decision makers and people outside of their established networks;
- Showing young people that they are part of 'something bigger' or a wider movement which motivates them to take environmental action.

- 7.4 **Allowing young people to have autonomy and a sense of ownership** over a task or part of a project has also been a key success factor. But case studies emphasise the importance of striking the right balance between autonomy and guidance. It has been particularly successful in terms of:

- Improve young people's motivation to succeed;
- Developing young people's skills and confidence;
- Pro-environmental attitude and behaviour change.

Delivery: what has worked?

- 7.5 In terms of project delivery and design, key success factors across the case studies have been:

- **Developing partnerships.** This has been successful in terms of sharing skills (e.g. environmental and youth organisation partnerships), establishing effective referral routes, better understanding the young people, and recruitment of hard to reach groups.
- **The importance of understanding the target group** to know what interests them, or to ascertain the needs of the group.
- The need for **flexibility in project design.** This means that projects are able to tailor activities and respond to the motivations or needs of different young people.



- Tasks or activities structured with a **clear beginning, middle and end**, clearly communicated with participants from the start.
- **Satisfying fundamental needs** (e.g. food and shelter), particularly making the outdoors comfortable which has helped to foster positive relationships with the natural environment.



ANNEX A: PROGRAMME OUTCOMES AND ASSUMPTIONS

Due to the focus of the assumptions only assumptions 1a, 1b, 2b and 4a (shaded in green below) were specifically assigned to case study projects for in-depth examination.

Outcome 1: Participation in the Our Bright Future programme has had positive impacts on young people equipping them with the skills, experience and confidence to lead environmental change.

1a. Experiences in the natural environment and with other young people through participation in activities undertaken as part of Our Bright Future projects result in measurable improvements in well-being and mental health.

1.b Volunteering and learning in the natural environment through participation in Our Bright Future projects results in young people gaining new skills and has a measurable effect on young people's educational attainment and employability.

Outcome 2: The Our Bright Future programme has had positive impacts on the environment and local communities.

2a. Activities undertaken as part of Our Bright Future projects have led to wider benefits for the communities in which these activities occur e.g. improved increased use of community spaces.

2b. Activities undertaken as part of Our Bright Future projects result in direct environmental improvements through physical interventions to enhance the environment, and indirect and longer-term environmental improvements through promoting pro-environmental behaviours.

Outcome 3: The Our Bright Future programme has influenced change and created a legacy.

3a. Our Bright Future projects take targeted action related to agreed policy priorities and lead to material changes in policy and practice (from local to national).

3b. Programme activities support targeted actions related to agreed policy priorities and this leads to material changes in policy and practice (from local to national).

Outcome 4: The Our Bright Future programme utilises an effective partnership working and a youth-led approach, leading to stronger outcomes for young people and the environment.

4a. Actively involving young people in the design and delivery of project activities undertaken as part of the Our Bright Future Programme leads to better outcomes than if young people are not involved.

4b. Projects working in partnership in delivering activities undertaken as part of Our Bright Future leads to better outcomes (e.g. due to sharing of best practice and lessons learned).