
Interim Evaluation of the Youth Discovery Project

(Year 2)

*A report by Tiller Research Ltd on behalf of
Rural Refugee Network*

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Section 1 – Introduction

1.1 Background

The Rural Refugee Network (RRN) helps refugees and asylum seekers in East Hampshire, Havant and Portsmouth to integrate and flourish in the local community, and build a new life in the UK.

RRN ran a 12-month pilot project supporting young people aged 16-19 who came to the UK alone and are therefore in the care of the local authority. The pilot project focussed on helping participants experience and understand the local environment, with the aim of enabling them to feel more confident, empowered and settled.

Learning from the pilot was used to develop a model for the Youth Discovery Project. A weekly support drop-in service in Portsmouth is complemented by regular day trips into the South Downs countryside and local places of interest. Both the weekly sessions and the day trips give the young people a chance to socialise, improve their English language skills, learn about British culture, learn vital life skills, and explore their new environment. It also provides them with an opportunity to have some fun together in a relaxed atmosphere.

Funding was secured from the National Lottery Community Fund to run the project for three years starting in September 2024.

1.2 Evaluation Overview

RRN commissioned Tiller Research Ltd to support evaluation of the Youth Discovery Project for the three years of the current funding. The aims of the evaluation are to:

- **Identify outcomes for participants.** A Theory of Change has been developed that identified three key outcome areas that will be examined:
 - *Empowerment*- young people's wellbeing improves, linked to having a strong personal support network and feeling safe and settled;
 - *Skills and Knowledge*- young people have improved English language skills and understanding of British culture;
 - *Connections*- young people feel connected with the local community, participating in local activities and opportunities such as a volunteering.
- **Develop a strong qualitative understanding of the project's impact.** This includes understanding what participants value about their experience, what this means for them, and how the project has benefited project stakeholders.
- **Identify key learning points** to inform plans for future work.

An evaluation framework has been developed that sets out data collection measures, responsibilities and timelines. This ensures that the evaluation is embedded within project delivery, with the whole team aware of and involved in the evaluation. The evaluation provides evidence to support the project's ongoing cycle of learning and development.

1.3 This Report

This second interim evaluation report reviews data from the first two years of the Youth Discovery Project. Qualitative data collection for this report focussed primarily on the volunteering and personal development opportunities offered to participants.

Section 2 – Evaluation Methodology

2.1 Evaluation Overview

The Youth Discovery Project's Evaluation Framework identifies four key data sources:

- **Project Monitoring Records**- referrals, attendance and participation records that show the numbers of participants in the core project and its associated activities;
- **Young People's Self-Reflection Measure**- a bespoke measure of young people's self-reflection on their current situation to track progress and identify impact. This provides a quantitative measure of impact related to the intended outcomes;
- **Case Notes and Training Records**- detailed records of the young person's involvement with the project. Primarily used for project delivery and support planning, the information recorded provides additional outcome data;
- **Interviews and Focus Groups**- periodic exercises to collect in-depth qualitative feedback from participants, volunteers and stakeholders. This provides a deeper understanding of the impact of the project, and the processes and enabling factors that the project has used to successfully deliver that impact.

These data sources are used to identify:

- **Short-term Outcomes**- the change experienced by young people that is directly created by participation in the Youth Discovery Project;
- **Longer-term Impact**- sustained change that results from the outcomes of participating in the Youth Discovery Project;
- **Learning**- understanding what has (and hasn't) worked, and identifying enabling factors and barriers to success to inform the ongoing development of the project and other future work.

The evaluation of the Youth Discovery Project is designed as a yearly cycle of learning and development. The ongoing evaluation will enable the project team to review progress and make changes in response to emerging evidence.

2.2 Self-Reflection Measure

The Youth Discovery Project uses a bespoke measure of young people's self-reflection on their current situation to track progress and identify outcomes. This measure considers eleven areas of importance identified within the project's Theory of Change.

The measure is completed with participants when they first attend the Youth Discovery Project in order to understand their baseline position. Follow-ups are undertaken every 6-8 weeks to understand how the young person's situation is developing. The eleven items have been grouped into three areas of impact:

- **Connections**- the extent to which they feel settled and connected to the community;
- **Participation**- attendance at college and participation in community activities;
- **Knowledge**- confidence with English language and understanding British culture.

For each area, a participant's self-reflection responses are interpreted as a percentage of the total possible score for that group of items.

2.3 Focus Groups

The external evaluator periodically undertakes focus groups with young people who participate in the Youth Discovery Project. These focus groups are intended to add qualitative depth to the evaluation through understanding the outcomes and impact of the project from the point of view of participants.

2.4 Stakeholder Feedback

Feedback is periodically sought from community partners who assist with the delivery of the Youth Discovery Project, and other project stakeholders such as foster carers. This feedback is used to help identify the project's strengths and areas for development. Stakeholder feedback is also used to undertake process evaluation, and to further develop the project's Theory of Change.

2.5 Staff Team Reflections

Semi-structured interviews are periodically undertaken with members of the Youth Discovery Project staff team, including volunteers. These focus on identifying staff and volunteer views on the strengths of the project, learning points, and areas for future development.

Section 3 – Self-Reflection Measure

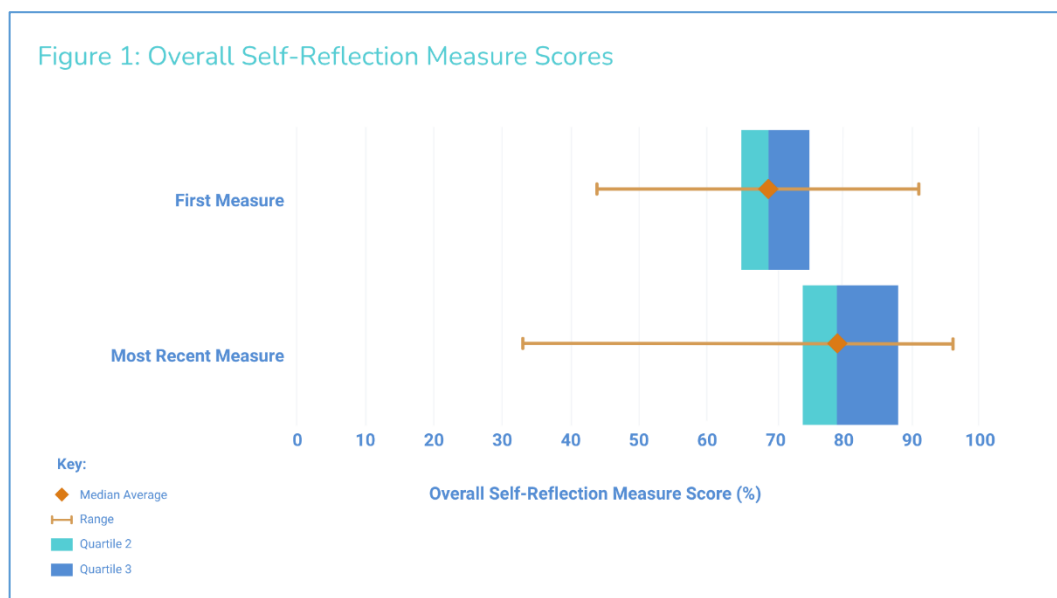
3.1 Self-Reflection Measure Analysis

The self-reflection measure has been designed to evaluate the impact of the Youth Discovery Project across eleven areas of importance identified within the Theory of Change (see section 2.2). As of September 2026, 28 participants had completed the measure on two or more occasions. Analysis was undertaken of the change between a participant's first self-reflection measure, typically undertaken when they first engage with the Youth Discovery project, and their most recent self-reflection measure.

The median average gap between a participant's first measure and their most recent measure was 224 days, with a range from 42 days to 644 days. Responses for each component were found to have a non-normal distribution, and so were examined using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for paired samples.

3.2 Change in Self-Reflection Scores

The change in overall self-reflection measure scores is shown in figure 1. The median average overall score increased from 69% at the first measure to 79% at the most recent measure. **This increase in overall self-reflection measure scores was found to be statistically significant and of a large effect size ($Z^1 = -2.95$, $p^2 < .002$, $r^3 = .57$).** There is a wide range of responses at both timepoints, indicating a complex picture of individual needs and experiences. However, the data shows that the cohort as a whole experienced positive change during their engagement with the Youth Discovery Project.



¹ Z = Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test result

² p = significance value. $p < 0.01$ means that there is a greater than 99% probability that the observed result is not due to chance, $p < 0.001$ means that there is a greater than 99.9% probability that the observed result is not due to chance

³ r = effect size. $r = 0.1$ is considered a low effect size, $r = 0.3$ is considered a medium effect size, $r = 0.5$ is considered to be a large effect size.

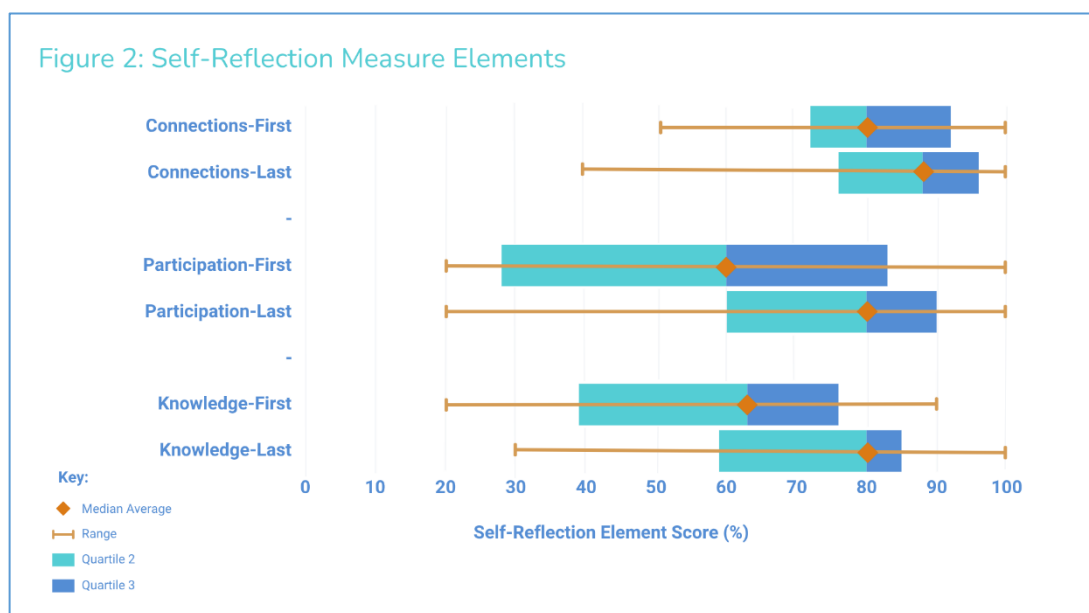
3.3 Change in Component Scores

The change in scores for each of the three elements of the self-reflection measure is shown in figure 2. The greatest change was observed in the 'Knowledge' component, which increased from a median average of 63% at the first measure to 80% at the most recent measure. **This increase in Knowledge scores was found to be statistically significant and of a large effect size ($Z = -3.19, p < .001, r = -.63$).**

The median average score for the 'Participation' component increased from 60% for the first measure to 80% for the most recent measure. **This increase in Participation scores was found to be statistically significant and of a medium effect size ($Z = -2.40, p < .01, r = -.48$).**

The median average score for the 'Connections' component increased from 80% to 88%. This increase was not statistically significant ($Z = -1.37, \text{not significant}$). However, this component was notable for having some very high baseline scores, indicating a sub-group of participants with strong connections before they engaged with the Youth Discovery Project. If we remove from the analysis those participants with a 'Connections' score of over 90% at baseline (7 of 28), the median average 'Connections' score for the remaining three-quarters of the cohort is shown to have increased from 76% to 86%. This is a statistically significant change and of a large effect size ($Z = -2.79, p < .005, r = -.67$).

As with the overall measure scores, a wide range of individual needs and circumstances are observed at both timepoints for all components. Nevertheless, the data shows that the cohort of Youth Discovery Project participants has experienced positive change in each of the project's three focus areas.



Section 4 – Participant Reflections

4.1 Focus Group Overview

A key priority for Year 2 of the Youth Discovery Project was to support the personal development of project participants through offering community volunteering opportunities and delivering Youth Ambassador skills workshops. These opportunities were made possible through partnerships with other locally based organisations.

The external evaluator undertook focus groups in March 2026 with young people who were planning to participate in community volunteering or personal development opportunities offered by the Youth Discovery Project. These explore motivations to participate and their expectations of the opportunities offered. A second set of focus groups was undertaken in July 2026 to explore the experiences of the young people who took part. Focus groups were undertaken face-to-face as part of the regular Tuesday night project session. A total of 11 young people took part in at least one focus group.

The external evaluator conducted focus groups in English. The young people were supported by professional translators. Participants made their own decision whether to communicate in their first language, to communicate in English, or to utilise translation support to check their understanding. Group discussions were recorded with permission and transcribed. Where a young person spoke through a translator, only the English translation was transcribed. Transcripts were analysed and coded to identify key themes.

4.2 Motivations to Participate

Young people who took part in a focus group prior to their participation in community volunteering or skills workshops expressed a mix of excitement and nervousness. Most identified multiple motivations, typically reflecting the often cited ‘double benefit’ of volunteering, whereby community volunteering activities are seen to deliver value to both the community and to the individual volunteer. Four motivation themes were identified. Together, these illustrate that the opportunities were viewed to be a holistic opportunity offering a depth and breadth of potential benefits.

- **Helping the community and giving back**

Most of the young people identified a desire to help the community as a key motivation to participate, typically alongside a desire to develop skills and gain experience. Some individuals who were intending to participate in Youth Ambassador skills sessions but not community volunteering also expressed a motivation to help the community, but felt they needed to develop their skills and confidence before undertaking community-based roles. Some young people expressed the view that volunteering would give them an opportunity to acknowledge the support that they had received from others:

“The reason I would like to join in the volunteering work, because when I first came here I received a lot of help from the volunteer people. So I would like to do so to help out the people who have similar difficult situations like I used to.”

“I’m passionate about helping people, giving back to the community. It is my passion, and this is what I want to do.”

“In my life I have a basic principle of my life, I like helping people, I need to help communities. I want to be part of communities in the place that I live in, and I want to get support especially for elders. And in addition I want to get experience and information from the same communities and be part of them.”

- **Developing English language skills**

The Year 1 evaluation identified how Youth Discovery Project participants prioritise English language development, viewing it as the foundation for being able to engage with the wider community. The majority of young people anticipated that community volunteering opportunities would help them to develop their English language skills, and so this was a key motivation to participate:

"The first thing for me is to improve my English language, and to contribute in the community as well. When I have free time, I hope to do something valuable for me and the community."

"I have applied to improve my language skills and I would like to integrate into the community."

"One, to help the community. And also to gain experience and learning the language."

- **Skills and experience**

The majority of young people identified a motivation to gain work experience and/or to develop skills in addition to language development:

"The biggest motivation for me was job experience, and of course helping the community."

"I'm thinking to start volunteering, I'm thinking probably in the next month. It will be really helpful for me to get experience, so I would like to volunteer."

"I believe I will get more experience by participating in this voluntary work, and also I will develop my language through conversation with people. And also I'll develop different skills like working in teams, and giving back to the community by participating."

- **An opportunity to build connections**

Several young people identified a desire to be a part of the local community and to build connections. They viewed community volunteering as a good opportunity to meet new people and to integrate:

"The experience to interact with other people and the help with job experience as well."

"Help me with improving my language skills, interacting and engaging with the community."

"The biggest motivation for me was job experience and of course helping the community. And engaging in a society as well- as a new person in the country it is a really good opportunity for me to engage."

4.3 Experiences of Participating

Speaking to young people after they had participated in community volunteering or Youth Ambassador skills sessions, everyone spoke positively about their experience. Most participants felt that the experience had largely met their expectations, and they had benefitted from an opportunity to make new connections and develop their skills. In addition, participants identified some additional benefits that had not been mentioned in the earlier focus groups, primarily increased confidence and positive emotions.

- **Helping the community and giving back**

Many participants expressed pride and satisfaction in serving the community:

"For me I am a volunteer at Southsea library, I serve my community in Portsmouth and there are many kinds of peoples, the elders and the children. So sometimes when they want help to find some books I help them, when the kids finish what they want to do after then I take the books and put them in order."

"Sometimes when the manager wants me to help in any part of the library, I really enjoy it for that because I want to get experience and I want to help my community in Portsmouth, that's why I'm volunteering."

- **Developing English language skills**

Many young people reported improved confidence speaking English:

"The most motivating thing that led to me to volunteering was English. Because when I come here I never speak English, I was shy, my hands were shaking. So when I've been in Southsea cinema it's helped me a lot, communicating with people and daily routines. It's been nice to improve."

"The more you practice with people you get English better. It's helped me a lot from the beginning I have improved my English, and I now feel confident when I speak."

"I can say 60% yes, because the place wasn't that busy at the time I was there. It was a bit quiet, but I learnt a lot, and I have other experience in places that were quite busy."

- **Skills and experience**

Most young people enthusiastically shared examples of how they felt they had developed useful skills and gained valuable work experience from the opportunities in which they had participated. A wide range of skills were identified, including teamworking, customer service, problem solving, and practical skills:

"For me it's helped me a lot. Before I don't know how to deal with people; now I know how to deal with people. And also how to mix coffee, make sales also."

"[I learnt] self-confidence, communication, learning skills, how to be leaders, how to solve problems around the communities."

"Teamworking experience is the best I think, I need it in my future if I want to work, or anything else like problem solving, I enjoyed those."

"I also learned how to bake cake as well, and that was well received by others as well- they came back to order more. And I want to learn more how to make sweets and make everyone happy, and that is key in helping going forward."

"Some of the vacancies they are really difficult to find as they need a good CV. As you've been working as a volunteer that's helped you apply for it."

- **An opportunity to build connections**

Several young people spoke about how they had formed new connections and friendships as a result of participating in volunteering and/or skills workshops. In several cases, this led to contact outside of the activity, enabling the young person to feel that they were building a social network:

"I never knew people when I came here in Portsmouth, but when I used to be a volunteer in Southsea cinema for instance I knew a lot of people, in Southsea library as well. So now I have many people I know now, and when I met them in the road they call me 'hi, hi'. That's a part of the community, that's what I like."

"I gain integrations with the community and learning new experience, and it's healthy."

"Also there were other volunteers who teach me how to play music."

"I have benefitted from the networking, again a lot of networking."

"What I like about the volunteering is the way how you interact with new people, meeting new people, connecting with new people, and learning new skills as well on top of what I know. And how people are coming together and sharing information and those sorts of things are the most appealing."

- **Building confidence**

Several young people said that the experiences had helped them to feel more confident:

"Before, I didn't have any self-confidence, I can't make my own decisions, I was afraid for problems, I was afraid for how to work especially in the UK because new people, a new language, new cultures. But now I am better..."

"And at the same time I become more confident, I know how to solve problems because I met some challenge when I was working, there is some problems and I tried to solve them. There is many kinds of people, some of them are good, some of them that are no good, but I'm trying to adapt with all of the people, so that's it."

- **Positive emotions**

A small number of young people highlighted how the experience had a positive emotional impact, highlighting increased energy and feelings of wellbeing:

"I've learned lots of things by volunteering, like how people are communicating with each other and working together to help people. The positive emotion I like, I feel like something is good."

"I just want to say that the sessions gives us more energy, the one we did yesterday, public speaking session, that was great, we need more like that. I really appreciate the support and the time, and the opportunity to mention and show our experience and what we have."

4.4 Learning Points

Participants were asked what advice they would give to a friend who had expressed an interest in participating in community volunteering or skills development sessions. All were positive about encouraging friends to take part, and to make the most of the opportunity by doing things like being patient and asking questions:

"I would give them the advice of what works for me from my experience on this journey. I will tell him to improve his skills and also to ask questions, when you ask you learn more and different things."

"If I have a friend and I want to welcome him to this volunteering opportunity, the first thing I would do is I will show him what I learned and I will show him my skill, and I will lead by example. I will try to make him understand and show him the bright future that he has from this experience. And once I show him that, I will make him eager to come and learn more. So through that process they will come and join."

"I would want him to be patient... sometimes when you learn something you need to be calm, be patient and learn attentively. And once you understand, then you can implement. So basically that's the way I would encourage others to come and learn from this experience."

"To be confident and ask about anything they don't know. If they want to ask about something, you want to know about something, when you be shy you will never learn. When you are confident you will learn things quickly."

Several young people also shared thoughts on how the volunteering experiences could be improved. These focussed primarily on providing role-specific training before a young person first visits a community organisation. In some cases, this centred on a desire to better understand the cultural expectations of the host organisations:

"It would be helpful to have a bit more information about what would be involved."

"It would be a good idea to have information beforehand, so when you do coffee you need to know each and every step, the mannerisms- how to deal with underlings, how to deal with younger people. And if there is like a team conflict because everyone comes from different cultures, so how to resolve those conflicts and how to manage it and how to play as a team, I would like more information and knowledge beforehand."

"Yes, there is always room for improvement and I cannot say that everything is perfect. One thing that I want to add on this is that people have different ways of understanding things, some of them want to study for perhaps one day, but some of them may not capture everything in one day. So if there is flexibility rather than have one day with long hours, to break up over two or three days, that may enable some people to learn faster."

4.5 Additional Comments

Participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in community volunteering and the other skills development opportunities. Most were confident that their experience would provide future benefits. Specific requests were made for additional support to secure paid work and to develop independent living skills:

“All I wanted to say is thank you so much for the help and support. I really appreciate all the help.”

“I think everything is going good. If they can provide work alongside volunteering, so once you’ve gained experience if you want to start working. They are linking us with an organisation to do CVs, and also if there are more opportunities here that is good.”

“As we are now young people, we need more things, we will live alone, there’s no support, so we need to learn everything from now to know how to live the life. When I used to live in a home, if there was some challenge, and I ask the staff and I ask everybody about the challenge and they help me how to solve it. And at the same time the library has helped me learn how to do it in the future.”

“One thing I want to add before I finish is how grateful I am with this opportunity that I was presented from the project. And I want to say thank you for the opportunity of the volunteering, and about the cultural training that we have been given, and the integration with how to communicate with others and learning the culture of the country, and all those kind of things is the most impressing thing.”

Section 5 – Stakeholder Reflections

5.1 Stakeholder Interviews

Feedback was sought from community partners who had hosted volunteers from the Youth Discovery Project and/or had supported the delivery of other personal development opportunities. Interviews were undertaken one-to-one via telephone or video call, followed a semi-structured topic guide, and were recorded with permission. Recordings were transcribed and then coded to identify key themes.

5.2 Benefits for Young People

Stakeholders were asked for their perspective on how this group of young people had benefitted from participating in the opportunities. Three key themes were identified:

- **Increased confidence**

Stakeholders reported that they had observed significant increases in the confidence of the young people who participated in their activities. High levels of nervousness and apprehension were seen in young people at the start of their involvement, which was attributed to the additional barriers that this group may experience, such as language. However, all stakeholders remarked on how much the young people's confidence grew when given support, with large increases reported often in a very short space of time:

"When usually people come from that background they are very quiet and feel like a fish out of an aquarium. And then they come and we try and help them. They are usually quite shy, communication problems can happen. But over time they just get better and better."

"But I think overall it was just the level of confidence. So from the start of the day there was a reservation to speak out in case you get it wrong, especially as English is not their first language, so getting things wrong it can happen more than for the average young person. But by the end of the day they were all... really engaging, and it was just a completely different young person from the start to the finish."

- **Skills development**

Stakeholders reported observing the young people's motivation to develop their social, language and practical skills, and gave examples of how this had been achieved:

"I think they just wanted to develop their skills, and they saw the benefit of it."

"Definitely their social skills grow, they become more confident when talking with people. And then it helps definitely their language, and they learn about more cultural artforms..."

"I guess it's the skills, especially in the kitchen, the fact that now he could now go and work in a kitchen and say 'I can prep, I understand a wide range of dishes', and he would pick up the rest, he's a clever lad."

- **Access to opportunities**

Stakeholders noted how several young people had gained the confidence to explore additional opportunities, with some reporting young people getting involved in further opportunities, both with their organisation and in other settings:

"Also we've had quite a few of the young people from the group reach out to me in terms of accessing more opportunities as well. So alongside the project they could be getting involved in other programmes we deliver. One of the young people is actually really keen to start their own podcast, so we're supporting them to do that, so engaging in more of what's available."

5.3 Benefits for Host Organisations

Stakeholders were asked about any benefits that they had experienced as a result of working with the Youth Discovery Project. All identified specific benefits, including extending their own understanding and practice as a result of working with this cohort:

- **Positive contribution**

All stakeholders highlighted the positive contribution made by the young people who participated in their organisation's activities, which was typically viewed to have been higher than expected from the age group. Stakeholders also spoke about their positive working relationship with the Rural Refugee Network, and the Youth Discovery Project staff team:

"Both of these young lads are very hard working, so we have volunteers from all walks of life, we have volunteers looking for jobs, mental health issues or just giving back, so we have a variety of capabilities. Both of these two young lads are top; they are absolutely fabulous."

"They are hardworking, what they give to us is just absolutely wonderful."

"The young people themselves were also really engaged, super keen to learn and develop themselves, which I would actually say in some form is a difference to some groups, especially around that age range you usually get a little bit of a disengagement... whereas with this group you didn't get that- they were keen to learn and knew why they were there."

"The staff had a true passion for young people which was clear to see, which is always really lovely, and they were really involved from the onset and throughout the whole of the programme."

- **Extending practice**

Several stakeholders spoke about how they had reflected on their own practice in light of their experience of working with this cohort of young people. Most often this focussed on identifying alternative approaches to overcome language barriers:

"So in terms of the young people we work with, this is the first time we've ever worked with a group where English is not their first language. So we had many conversations with the staff beforehand, and also throughout the day just adapting the resources and activities that we had. So it was a massive learning point for us."

- **Understanding refugees**

One stakeholder reflected on how the involvement of the young people had positively affected other volunteers within their organisation, through building positive connections with a different group of people and increased understanding:

"I think always working with volunteers it's good for others to see how these refugees do want to give back to society. We hear so much negative in the press, and it's good for the other volunteers to realise they are working with volunteers, but they are working with someone who is an asylum seeker that's had most probably a horrendous background. I just think it's good for us, for society to see that these people are not as they are portrayed in the press."

5.4 Looking to the Future

Stakeholders were asked about their thoughts on future links with the Youth Discovery Project. Three key themes were identified.

- **Desire to continue**

All stakeholders spoke positively about their partnership with the Youth Discovery Project, and expressed a desire to continue this association:

“We’re just grateful they are volunteering and we’d love it carry on. So if you can keep the funding going it will be great for us.”

- **Supporting young people’s progress**

One stakeholder expressed a desire to be more engaged with supporting the young people’s longer term development, for example by providing feedback on their progress and seeking their input to shape additional opportunities:

“[With our other volunteers] we like to evaluate or make records of when they come and when they go, then we can have a better idea of their routine and their engagement... and we can maybe share our observations with the young people and get feedback from them, and that could make the relationship more fruitful.”

- **Exploring youth-led opportunities**

The Youth Discovery Project was viewed by stakeholders to have been successful in offering positive personal development opportunities to participants. It was suggested that this success could be built on by involving young people in leading future opportunities. This was suggested as an opportunity to both ensure that future work is shaped by the experiences of participants, and provide additional opportunities for young people to gain experience in leadership and strategic planning:

“It makes so much sense for those young people that have been on that journey that have gained that confidence to take ownership of what the project looks like going forward; so rather than assuming what the group wants, it’s the group determining what the next year looks like.”

Section 6 – Staff Team Reflections

6.1 Staff Team Interviews

Semi-structured one-to-one interviews were undertaken with members of the Youth Discovery Project staff team. These focussed on identify staff views on the strengths of the project, learning points, and areas for future development. Interviews were recorded with permission. Recordings were transcribed and then coded to identify key themes.

6.2 Distinctive Features

Team members were asked to reflect on what they felt were the distinctive features of the Youth Discovery Project. Each team member had their own prior experience and professional expertise, but nevertheless highlighted the same four elements of the project. The combination of these four elements in shaping the project design and delivery approach was viewed by all team members to be unique in their experience.

- **Holistic Approach**

All team members highlighted the Youth Discovery Project's holistic approach, recognising the interconnections between learning, personal development, physical and mental wellbeing, feeling safe and being connected. Understanding and supporting young people as individuals was identified as being central to the project's approach, and a key factor in the project's success in delivering positive outcomes:

"I suppose I think we provide almost like a youth club kind of feel but with a focus on learning and building confidence and trying out new activities, and linking with community organisations. But I also think we provide a place where there's a sense of belonging and the young people can be themselves and there's that natural peer support that comes from the group and friendships that grow. I'd say that's quite unique really, I don't think many of them get that from college necessarily, or elsewhere."

"So this project has a very holistic development approach, so focussing on different aspects but they are interconnected with each other. I feel like other projects maybe just focus on one area, on one skill, or one thing. But this project has focused on the social, focussed on the emotional, we've had some art therapy, focus on the cultural, British culture, not only British culture but we've also explored sharing of their own culture."

"Also doing things like, I do a lot of sort of meditation, yoga, and we introduced calming techniques as well, because I'm a great believer in the whole person, it's not just about the learning."

"One of the sessions last year we went down to this little place on Southsea beach where there's this garden and they learned all about the planting and stuff. And we did some clay moulding, and all of them- after we had taught them how to do it- they had free will to make what they wanted. And most of them made something from their home... and it's fascinating that their minds are always back at home in some ways and yet here they are really trying to make a future for themselves. And we have to really appreciate that they are not at home, and they must miss home."

- **Creativity**

Team members highlighted the use of creative approaches and how these had been successful with engaging and supporting young people:

"I think what's gone well is that we've been able to embed a bit more creativity into the programme."

"I think we've done a lot of community collaboration, and we've had some really creative, interesting workshops."

- **Co-creation**

Team members highlighted the involvement of young people in shaping their engagement with the project. This includes the freedom for each young person to choose how and when to participate in activities, and also the involvement of participants in selecting and developing future activities:

"They have choice and autonomy in the space; it's like we'll give options and ask what they would like to do and always seeking feedback."

"And having them shape the programme as we are doing... so they can have an active role not only in the project but in the community. And having that confidence that wherever they go they have the tools to be able to talk with anyone and to express their aspiration and to fulfil their desire and aspiration."

- **Community Collaboration**

Team members highlighted the wide range of fruitful partnerships that the Youth Discovery Project has developed with other community organisations and service providers. This is viewed as having extended the breadth and depth of opportunities offered to young people:

"I think another thing that has been going well is giving the opportunity to young people to be involved in the community. So not only as a passive member of the community where they receive what we are trying to help them with, but also them to give back and to be part of the community, which is really I think young people can feel they can contribute, they have their part in the community."

6.3 Enablers of Success

Team members were asked to identify any notable enablers of success for the Youth Discovery Project. The two key themes were the support of community networks of other providers, and the culture of the Rural Refugee Network.

- **Community Networks**

Staff noted the considerable value that was contributed to the project by working in partnership with a wide range of community organisations and service providers. This significantly increased the breadth and depth of opportunities and support on offer to participants than would be possible if working in isolation:

"I've learnt a lot more about what's available in the city, all of these community organisations. I thought I knew a lot of them before, but there's just so many and that partnership work is really important and really helpful."

"I believe that working together is more powerful than trying to do everything on our own. So building relationships with key stakeholders who have supported throughout this journey, career and employment advisors, we had people supporting young people with volunteering opportunities, local cinema, cafés in the local church, Southsea library... So building that relationship and having the support from other organisations in the local community really supported us to deliver what we did and what we are doing."

- **Organisational Culture**

Staff identified the culture of the Rural Refugee Network as supportive and empowering, and credited this with positively shaping the delivery of the project:

"I think the culture of the organisation, I work in a very supportive organisation. From my manager or more broadly about the trustees there is a very good culture in this organisation. And of course that trickles down to staff, trickles down to young people."

6.4 Areas for Development

Finally, team members were asked if they had identified any areas in which they saw opportunities for the Youth Discovery Project to further develop. All were agreed that the main priority should be maintaining the success to date, and remembering that the key focus for the majority of the young people who participate is developing language skills and confidence. Suggestions for development focussed on building upon previous success:

- **Food offer**

Reflecting on reduced attendance during Ramadan, it was suggested that a range of benefits may come from offering a meal at times when Muslim participants were breaking their fast. This would likely increase attendance from participants wanting to eat a meal at sunset, and would also offer opportunities for sharing cultural practices and understanding with non-Muslim participants:

"I think perhaps rethinking how we hold the workshops in Ramadan, so we are making Iftar and the breaking of the fast a part of the drop-in, because our numbers drop so low then because a lot of the young people wanted to break the fast at home and so didn't attend. I think just because we do more snacks and cereal bars and fruits and stuff, but I think maybe that if it was a hot meal... then I think that would be better for them."

- **Opportunities to Integrate**

It has previously been noted that development of English language is a top priority for the majority of Youth Discovery Project participants. This is largely due to the perceived importance of language to integrating with the wider community. Reflecting on the success of community partnership activities undertaken by the project to date, staff noted that this was an area that could be developed even further:

"They want to integrate; they want people to get to know them."

- **Careers Support**

Echoing the comments of those young people who expressed a desire for more support to secure employment, team members suggested that there were opportunities to further develop this aspect of the project:

"I think the careers support and helping the young people to find voluntary work and paid work, we could develop that. I know we've made a really good start but there is more to do."

Section 7 – Concluding Remarks

7.1 Key Findings

The evidence within this evaluation indicates that the second year of the Youth Discovery Project has built on the successes of year one. Analysis of Self Reflection Measure data shows that the cohort overall has experienced significant positive change during the time of their involvement with the project. The strongest improvements have been seen in the areas of Knowledge and Participation, which are the primary focus of the project's activities.

A recommendation from the year one evaluation was to consider options for wider personal development opportunities. Year two of the project has seen the introduction of community volunteering and skills development activities. Feedback from participating young people and stakeholders indicates that these new opportunities have successfully delivered personal development outcomes. Young people report increased confidence, skills and community connections, and view the opportunities as likely to benefit them in the future. This is matched by community partners reporting positive experiences working with the Youth Discovery Project, and a desire to continue this association in the future.

Overall, this indicates that the second year of the Youth Discovery Project has both sustained the success of year one, and offered additional opportunities that have enhanced the experience of and outcomes for participants.

7.2 Recommendations

The Youth Discovery Project has had a successful second year. Participants and stakeholders are keen to see the project build on the foundations that have been established. It is suggested that consideration is given to the range of comments and suggestions outlined throughout this report. The following recommendations highlight areas for consideration:

- **Consolidate the current activities**

The current activities of the Youth Discovery Project are successfully delivering the project's intended outcomes. Suggestions from young people, stakeholders and staff team members all focus on building on success to date, rather than looking to take a different approach. Maintaining an approach of small, incremental improvements based on feedback from participants is likely to offer the best prospect of future success.

- **Explore options for youth leadership**

The personal development opportunities delivered during the year have been successful. There would be value in looking at options for building on this success, for example by exploring how participants may be given the opportunity to lead activities and/or the strategic direction of the project overall. This would be a natural development of the co-creation approach already utilised within the project, and would fit well with the project's Theory of Change.

- **Explore options for extending employment support**

Participants express their gratitude for the opportunities the project has given them to develop experience and workplace skills. Support to prepare CVs and job applications is acknowledged and appreciated. This indicates a strong base on which some additional support could be provided to help participants to secure paid employment.