The background of the page features a large, abstract graphic composed of several overlapping triangles. The triangles are colored in shades of red, orange, and purple, creating a dynamic and modern visual effect.

Impact Evaluation of the GLA Head 2Work programme

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1. Introduction

This report presents New Philanthropy Capital's assessment of the impact of the Greater London Authority's Head 2Work programme. The report aims to provide the Employment and Skills and Youth Social Action teams with an evidenced account of the level of success achieved by the Head 2Work programme over the 4 years of its operation, and provide wider learning for programmes that support people getting into work and education.

Head 2Work, The Greater London Authority and the European Social Fund

The European Social Fund (ESF) aims to improve employment opportunities across the European Union (EU), raise living standards, and assist people to improve their skills and chances of getting into work. While the UK was a member of the EU and the ESF, the Greater London Authority (GLA) was a Co-financing Organisation (CFO) and commissioner for eligible projects. This was in line with the GLA's statutory responsibility for economic development and employment in the London area.



The ESF runs in 7-year delivery periods. The Head 2Work programme was developed by the GLA for the 2014-2020 round of funding, which was extended to September 2023 following the UK's timetable for withdrawal from EU programmes and recognising the impact of Covid on delivery. The 2014-2020 round of ESF funding was €86 billion¹, of which the UK was allocated €4.9 billion². £508 million was made available for London by the UK Government, including 'match funding'.

The Head 2Work programme was a regional 'get into work and education' scheme funded by the GLA, drawing on ESF. It had an initial budget of £794,000 for the period August 2019 to July 2022, and was extended by an additional year and around £300,000³.

¹ https://www.fi-compass.eu/sites/default/files/publications/ESF_The_european_social_fund_EN.pdf

² <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7847/CBP-7847.pdf>

³ <https://content.tfl.gov.uk/gla-purchase-orders-over-5000-2021-2022.pdf>

Aim of the Head 2Work programme

Commissioned by the GLA, Head 2Work aimed to support Londoners aged 18 to 24 who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) into work and education. This included some Londoners aged 18-24 who had other needs disadvantages, putting them at higher risk of being long-term unemployed and on low incomes later in life.

The intended impacts of the programme were for young people:

- to enter sustained employment, education or training
- to be independent and not to rely on the welfare state.
- lead sustained and fulfilling working lives
- realise their potential and aspirations

The programme ran for 4 years from August 2019 to September 2023, with enrolment starting March 2020. It targeted residents of Greater London using 2 service providers (Groundwork and Rinova) who focussed on specific geographic areas in the North, East and Southwest of London (see p11).

The Head 2Work approach and theory

The key activities for the charity providers included:

- working to identify and recruit appropriate participants
- helping individuals to enter employment or re-enter education by running social action projects, providing training and support, and developing bespoke training and career plans..

The principles of the approach were to support participants to experience social action, create community impact, find purpose, and receive advice and coaching to support their long-term development and career planning.

In order to help structure the evaluation, a Theory of Change (ToC) was developed to solidify the intended impacts, outcomes, and mechanisms of change of Head 2Work and how these relate to the activities of the programme.

The ToC (below) was developed and reviewed in partnership between New Philanthropy Capital (NPC), GLA staff, and programme managers from Rinova and Groundwork. Having a ToC helped the NPC evaluation team apply a theory-based impact evaluation methodology (see p18).

Head 2Work Theory of Change

Activities	Mechanisms of change	Intermediate outcomes	Long term impact
<p><i>The actions, tasks and work a project or organisation carries. Can also be called processes or interventions</i></p> <p>Groundwork and Rinova work with the young people to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a bespoke training plan (BTP) • Access basic skills training (as required) • Deliver one-to-one support • Develop and deliver a group social action project (SAP) • Deliver employability training 	<p><i>How people will experience your work and how that experience will encourage or spark them to make changes (what they will say, do, think differently)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Young people start to recognise their skills and talents 'Who they are – what they bring'. 2. -Young people are able to develop their idea into SAPs and address issues that matter to them 3. Young people build positive relationships with trainers and advisers and others in the team 4. Young people will start to engage more positively with the programme and attend regularly 5. Young people will start to understand how they can influence change in their lives 6. Young people will start to feel valued by the advisers and peers 7. Young people trust their advisers 	<p><i>Shorter-term changes that happen as steps on the way to other outcomes and impact</i></p> <p>Emotional Capabilities: Young people have increased autonomy and control</p> <p>Attitudes: Young people develop positive attitudes to work</p> <p>Employability skills: Young people have increased teamworking skills Young people have improved communication skills Young people have improved problem-solving skills</p> <p>Experiences and involvement Young people have increased involvement in their community</p>	<p><i>Longer-term effects of a project or organisation's work that people achieve for themselves</i></p> <p>Young people realise their potential and aspirations.</p> <p>Young people lead sustained and fulfilling working lives.</p> <p>Young People to be independent and not to rely on welfare state.</p>

New Philanthropy Capital and the Head 2Work evaluation

NPC—a charity think tank and consultancy for the social sector—was contracted to serve as the evaluation and learning partner for the Head 2Work initiative in 2020. NPC's role was to assess the collective impact of Head 2Work and how social action, employability training, and engaging with employers increases the chances for young people to sustain employment, education, or training. The conclusions from the evaluation (p56) aim to inform future initiatives of the GLA's Employment and Skills and Youth Social Action teams.

Impact of Covid on the Head 2Work programme

The start of enrolment for the Head 2Work programme (March 2020) coincided with the start of the global Covid pandemic. To limit the spread of the virus, a number of risk reduction measures were implemented by the UK, and national governments including lockdowns and restrictions on gatherings.

Nation-wide lockdowns took place March 2020 to June 2020, then January 2021 to July 2021 and local lockdowns and restrictions took place between September and November 2020. These measures restricted gatherings and movements for everyone except essential workers. Non-essential shops were closed, schools, colleges and universities were closed and moved online, and the majority of jobs were either furloughed or encouraged to work from home if possible.⁴

For Head 2Work this meant that:

- employment advisers were unable to meet face to face with participants
- few employers were employing or recruiting staff
- opportunities for Social Action Projects were severely reduced

“The project was a lifeline to me during the Covid period.” – Head 2Work participant

There were also lasting challenges, for example business uncertainty and fear of in-person meetings.

The mental health of both advisers and young people was severely affected too. Advisers reported having to work very long and irregular hours - working much harder to engage participants during lockdown. Young people often needed far more support as for many their mental health and

⁴ Brown J, Kirk-Wade E. A history of English Coronavirus lockdown laws April 2021. House of Commons Briefing Paper number 9068. 30 April 2020

confidence had deteriorated. This meant that advisers' role often went far out of scope of the programme, and included providing emotional and mental health support.

"The Head 2Work project gave me the confidence and motivation I lost during Covid"
– Head 2Work participant

It is probably impossible to quantify the effect that Covid had on the programme and its success against expectations, as both young people and advisers faced immense challenges for over half the programme.

The level of success that was achieved is a testament to the dedication and quality of the employment advisers and the logistical flexibility of the GLA and provider organisations.

Situation Analysis summary

A **situation analysis** aims to think about the problem itself, taking a 'global view'. For example asking: what's the scale of the problem? who is affected? what are the consequences and what are the causes?

Head 2Work aimed to increase the opportunities for young people in London by targeting those aged 18 to 24 who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and providing them with support and skills development to help them enter work or education.

Head 2Work sought to help those **most at risk** of becoming long-term NEET, by aiming to recruit from target groups. These included young people with lower education attainment, homeless young people, young people from ethnic minority communities, young people with disabilities or health conditions, young women, and young people who are lone parents.

While London's overall unemployment rate for those over 16 is 4.7%, for those aged 16-24 it is 15.5%.⁵ This is higher than national unemployment rates of 4.3% for over 16s and 12.2% for ages 16-24. This means youth unemployment for those aged 16-24 is almost a third higher (27%) in London compared to the national average.⁶

⁵ ONS 2023 [X02 Regional labour market: estimates of unemployment by age](#)

⁶ ONS 2023 [A05 SA: Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity by age group \(seasonally adjusted\)](#)

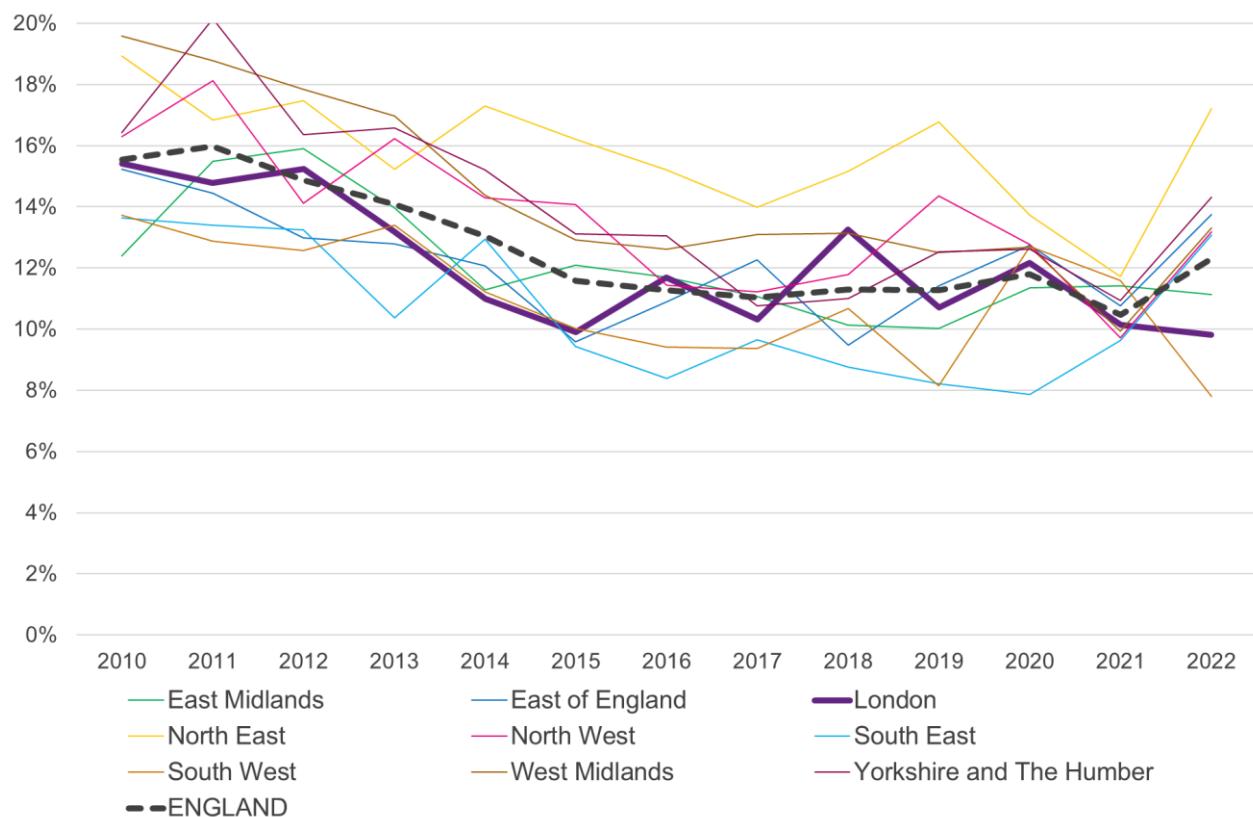
Currently in the UK 11.6% of all young people aged 16 to 24 are NEET⁷. The NEET rate in London is 9.8%. The North East of England has the highest NEET rate of all regions (17.2%), followed by Yorkshire and The Humber (14.3%)⁸.

And while the London NEET rate is the second lowest nationally by region, this figure represents almost 100,000 people aged 16-24, equivalent to the city of Lincoln.

As figure 1 shows, over the last 12 years the NEET rate in London has trended down and has been generally below the England average but with increases in 2018 and 2020.

Over the last year where data is available, while most regions and the England average have increased around 2%, London has decreased very slightly.

Figure 1 NEET rate by England region, ages 16-24, 2010 to 2022⁹



The proportion of young people in the UK who are NEET is higher for those with disabilities (28%) compared to those without (8%), and for those without any qualifications (24%) compared to those

⁷ Office for National Statistics (ONS), published 24 August 2023, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\), UK: August 2023](#).

⁸ UK Government 2023 [NEET age 16 to 24](#)

⁹ UK Government 2023 [NEET age 16 to 24](#)

qualified to GCSE level and above (9%)¹⁰. The proportion of young people NEET from a Pakistani/Bangladeshi background (13%) and from a Black/African/Caribbean/Black British background (12%) is also above the national average¹¹.

Head 2Work did not take a pan-London approach to delivery, but focused on specific providers operating in particular localities in London.

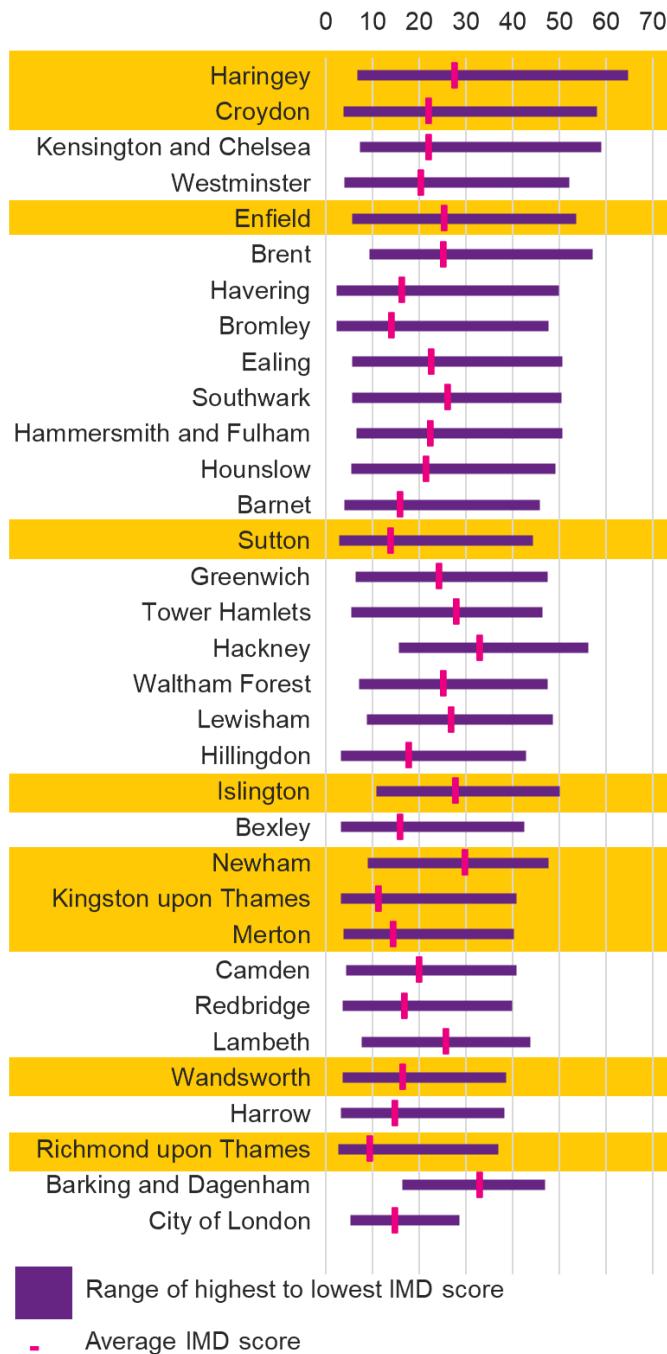
The providers of Head 2Work (Rinova and Groundwork) operated mainly in the London Boroughs of:

- Croydon
- Enfield
- Haringey
- Islington
- Kingston upon Thames
- Merton
- Newham
- Richmond upon Thames
- Sutton
- Wandsworth

¹⁰ HoC Library 2021 [NEET: Young people Not in Education, Employment or Training](#)

¹¹ HoC Library 2021 [NEET: Young people Not in Education, Employment or Training](#)

Figure 2 - IMD by borough, average, lowest and highest, ranked by range (Source: MHCLG IMD 2019)



The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is an official measure of relative deprivation in England and is part of the framework that forms the Indices of Deprivation (IoD) which encompass a wide range of an individual's living conditions to broadly define levels of deprivation¹².

IMD calculates the overall measure of deprivation experienced by people living in every Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA), or neighbourhood in England. Output Areas (OA) are the lowest level of geographical area for census statistics, LSOAs are made up of groups of usually four or five OAs¹³ with a population of around 1,600.

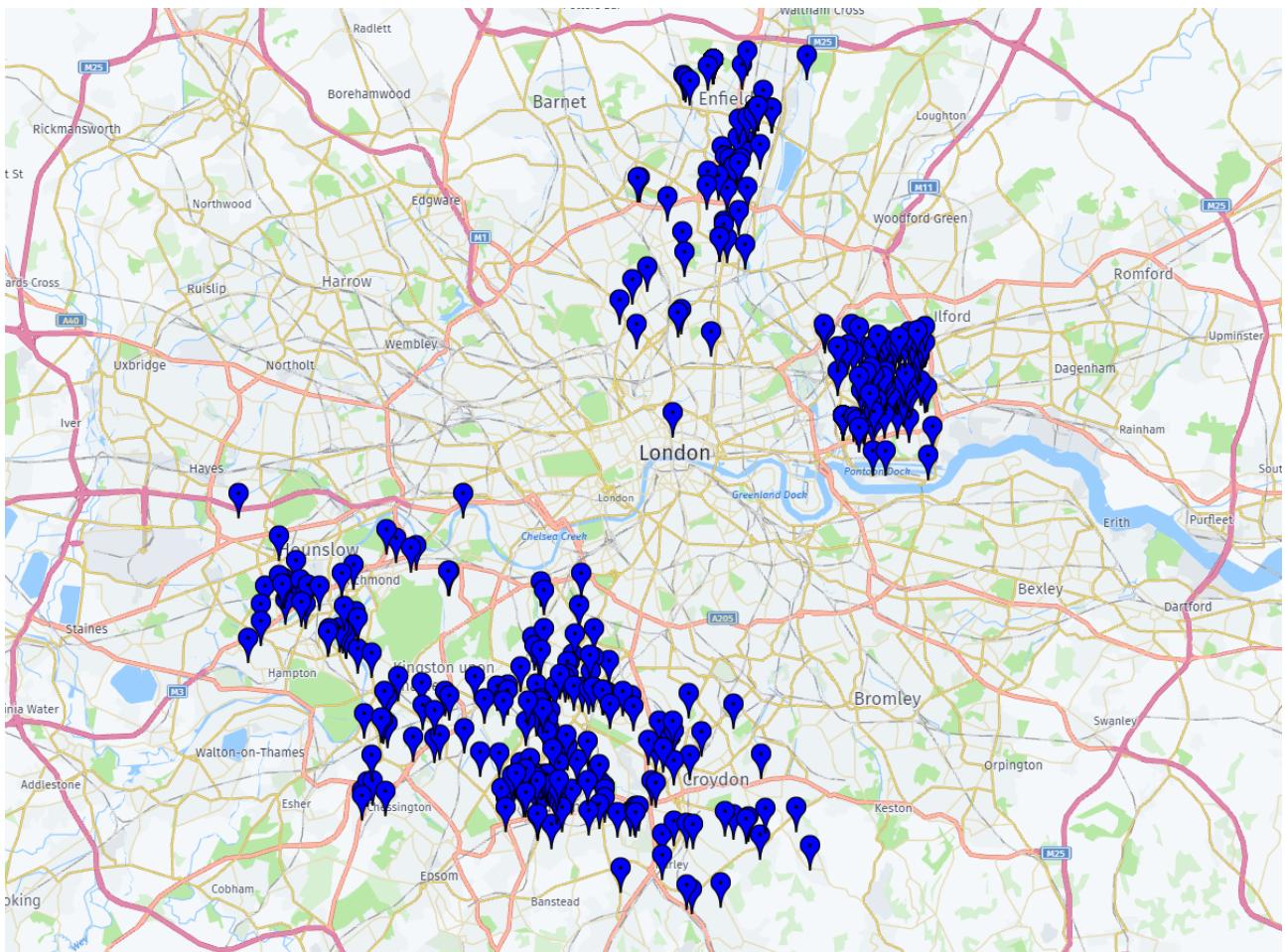
Figure 2 (left) shows the average IMD for the LSOAs in each borough (pink), ranked by the range between most and least deprived (purple bar). Boroughs where Head 2Work was active are highlighted in yellow. Head 2Work targeted some of the most deprived (Newham, Islington) and least deprived (Richmond and Kingston) boroughs by average IMD. Many of these boroughs are amongst the most unequal with the highest ranges between most and least deprived LSOA such as Haringey and Croydon.

¹² Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government [The English Indices of Deprivation 2019](#)

¹³ Office for National Statistics [Census 2021 geographies](#)

Figure 3 below shows the geographic distribution of Head 2Work participants. The clustering reflects both the areas of operation of the delivery charities, and the referral sources to them (for example, specific homeless hostels, job centres, and other local organisations).

Figure 3 - Map of participants of the Head 2Work programme



2. Provider stories

These provider stories aim to provide important context about the delivery and experience of the Head 2Work programme from the provider organisations.

The evaluation team wanted to know what challenges were faced and overcome, the impact of Covid, and what providers thought could be improved.

These accounts were developed over a series of semi-structured meetings and interviews over August and September 2023. Participants in the sessions were programme co-ordinators from the charity providers as well as employment advisers working with participants.

Rinova



About Rinova

Rinova aims to promote cultural economic, social and educational inclusion. It was founded in 2010 and while based in London, Rinova operates across the UK and internationally. Rinova is a limited company of around 20 full-time employees who specialise in Employment, Skills, Arts, Entrepreneurship and Social Action.

The benefit of Head 2Work that Rinova saw

The managers and advisers thought highly of the '**blended approach**'; that this programme was not just about getting a job but broader **engagement with and contribution to society**.

So rather than simple one-to-one support, Head 2Work enabled participants to work in their communities—making communities stronger. There were benefits for both local regions and individuals in prompting participants to think about and work with others. Being part of Head 2Work seemed to give young people a new language to discuss and approach employment and their local communities.

This more holistic approach also meant Rinova could **capitalise on their network of trusted organisations** both to recruit participants but also organise social action projects. This meant they could target very disadvantaged people by coordinating with homeless shelters and other charities.

Strengths and successes of the programme

Rinova felt that Head 2Work has been **more successful than other programmes** Rinova has been involved with and they could see a real difference in the approach and the benefits achieved.

They felt the programme was designed well for those who are disadvantaged and in temporary accommodation, and was **open minded** by not forcing participants into particular sectors or narrow outcomes.

One significant unintended consequence was that the support the GLA gave to assist Head 2Work providers through Covid **allowed for a true digital transformation in the organisation** and the employment advisers they employed.

Rinova has moved to a blended delivery model combining face-to-face and digital support and this is providing better inclusion for many participants. Offering blended support also prepares participants for the world of work, as it reflects the hybrid way in which many sectors operate today since the pandemic normalised working from home.

“For me as an adviser, one of the biggest stories was about the digital transformation of this area of work. Many of the tools and techniques we now use I had never used in my life or career before this and Head 2Work really helped us make this change” - Rinova Employment Adviser

Rinova's employment advisers felt that they **achieved a mindset shift in many young people** who were initial sceptical about social action projects. These opportunities allowed some participants to see the value of community-based learning and work, and realised that helping others can make you feel good about yourself.

Rinova's management felt **Head 2Work had more flexibility** compared to other ESF projects. For example, young people were able to rejoin the programme easily if they had left due to finding work but had to come back. This better reflects the non-linear journey of young people in the world of work and greatly improved engagement and success. The social action projects were very beneficial and drove real improvements to people's confidence and communication skills through meeting other people and employers.

Challenges to delivery

Covid proved to be a huge challenge for a 'get into work and education' programme. There was an initial delay as everything was shut down and uncertain, followed by an urgent need to go remote. This led to many delays, as Rinova had to develop IT skills for staff and also advisers.

"How do you do an employment programme when the whole economy is shut down? Similarly, trying to do a Social Action Project when society is shut down is really difficult!" - Rinova Employment Adviser

Social Action Projects (SAPs) were generally not possible during periods of national lockdown, with many locations such as retirement homes simply inaccessible. Imagination was required to rethink and find suitable projects and venues. SAPs were slow to get moving, but then benefited from word of mouth among participants. Engaging employers even after lockdown was also difficult.

Longer-term, Covid increased many people's fears in general, even after the lockdowns. Young people were still very hesitant to engage or do anything face-to-face, and this exacerbated a major underlying challenge. In London disadvantaged young people face barriers to travel including cost and accessibility, but also they may simply not travel to or through certain areas due to identity and geographical sensitivities.

Increases in the cost of living were hitting young people throughout the programme, with many participants using food banks. But in some ways, this provided much more pressure for individuals to get a job which may have helped to improve participation in Head 2Work.

These issues also impacted advisers, whose work-life-balance was severely affected as delays and difficulties meant they had to work very late to catch up with participants.

Learning for future programmes

Reflecting on the programme, Rinova staff noted that it was essential to ensure the digital skills and platforms are in place for a blended project and that implementation takes time. They also highlighted that young people are extremely put off by forms and admin. These need to be kept to a minimum and be designed with the user in mind.

Employment advisers reported that young people are less comfortable using phone calls to communicate, and now they prefer almost all interactions to take place by text. Staying in contact with young people for over 6 months to prove the outcomes achieved was very challenging and likely led to an under-reporting of sustained education and employment outcomes. Proving these outcomes was also very challenging and if there were ways to use Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) data that would represent a large saving of provider time.

Groundwork London

About Groundwork London

Groundwork London is a member of Groundwork Federation, a collection of charities which mobilises practical community action on poverty and the environment across the UK in order to transform lives in the UK's most disadvantaged communities. It has around 470 staff and over 25,000 volunteers. Last year it delivered over 600 projects, targeting the most disadvantaged communities, including Head 2Work.



What they saw as the benefit of Head 2Work

Groundwork saw value in Head 2Work's **activity-based approach** to supporting young people, and the range of opportunities the programme afforded participants. Head 2Work's aim is not simply to move people into jobs, but to move them into activity and meaningful productivity.

A Groundwork adviser described that being inactive and isolated from your community has the most detrimental impact on young people. Head 2Work provides access to activities and participation in projects, providing support that feels more practical than other, more lesson-based youth employment programmes.

Strengths and successes of the programme

"We get up in the morning to support young people through this programme. This programme has really helped young people and made an incredible difference."

Groundwork's Head 2Work Programme Manager

For Groundwork, the main strength of Head 2Work is **its focus on social action** as a means for young people to develop their skills and progress into education, employment or training.

Groundwork found that social action projects were a huge driver for participants to find employment or sustained employment. The link between young people finding employment and taking part in

social action is a key success of the programme, and makes a strong case for the importance of activity and community-based approaches to supporting young people into work.

More generally, Groundwork valued Head 2Work's **hands-on and holistic** approach to supporting young people into employment, as it provides an accessible alternative to classroom-based, structured employment initiatives where the end goal is solely to move a young person into work.

Head 2Work recognised participants as unique individuals, and the support they receive is tailored to that. Groundwork believed in the benefits of Head 2Work's individualised approach and applied it throughout the programme. Always meeting young people where they were, and prioritising the needs and interests of each individual in order for them to realise their potential and aspirations.

Challenges

The positive impact Groundwork achieved through Head 2Work has not been without significant challenge. As previously mentioned **Covid-19** had a detrimental impact on the delivery, progress and capacity of the programme. Operating during the pandemic made recruiting young people and sustaining relationships with them much harder—participants struggled to engage with virtual meetings and it was easier for young people to drop off the radar. Many young people also struggled to see the benefit of taking part in a programme like Head 2Work during a pandemic, impacting overall motivation to engage.

Another challenge has been the **effects of the European Social Fund (ESF) coming to an end**. The ESF funding for Head 2Work ended in September 2023. UKSPF is set to replace the fund but not until April 2024, meaning there has been a significant drop in funding for provision of support for adults and young people. This has led to high levels of uncertainty for those who need support, but also for Groundwork staff who are left unsure as to whether there will be funding to renew their contracts. Stress and uncertainty led to a severe decrease in Groundwork's capacity for delivery as many staff took time off work sick—there was only one Head 2Work project adviser working in the final few months of delivery.

Overall, while unprecedented challenges significantly impacted Groundwork's delivery, these **challenges also stressed the serious need for programmes like Head 2Work**. The pandemic, cost of living crisis and other social issues in the last few years has left young people who face significant disadvantage with little hope for the future.

Programmes like Head 2Work can encourage young people to engage with community again, recognise their value and talents, and equip them with skills and opportunities to create a positive future for themselves.

Learning for future programmes

Data collection was a notable challenge throughout Head 2Work, particularly in terms of participants' survey response rates. The difficulty in encouraging participants to take part in the surveys was identified early on, and NPC worked with Groundwork to understand the barriers and potential solutions to improving response rates—including using text-based invitations to surveys

instead of email, offering monetary incentives, and finally NPC taking responsibility for sending the survey out to participants. Ultimately, whilst these efforts slightly improved response rates, the challenge persisted, and survey completion rate remained relatively low throughout the programme.

Another improvement might be to better streamline administrative and reporting processes for providers and participants. Groundwork expressed that admin requirements were burdensome, which impacted participant engagement and put pressure on advisers.

For example, getting access to participants' ID to verify referrals was particularly challenging and overcomplicated, and it often fell down to the charity provider to "enforce" participation.

Groundwork staff suggested using just one digital form between referral agencies, participants and providers as part of the registration process, to improve communication between organisations.

It was generally agreed that admin processes were too often paper-based, which reduced efficiency and made engagement more difficult. If combining and digitising processes into a central online system from sign-up, referral, delivery, and completion were possible it would improve engagement, data collection, and the overall management and tracking of the programme's impact.

3. Evaluation methodology

The core approach is an **Impact Evaluation** of the Head 2Work programme based on the ToC (p5). The ToC presents a concise picture of what Head 2Work intended to deliver and the benefits for the key target groups. The objective of the evaluation is to assess the impact of the programme as described in the steps of the ToC, and evaluate the extent to which the aims of the funding have been met.

An impact evaluation aims to assess whether the intended changes have occurred for service users, identifies the breadth and depth of change for service users and considers how attributable changes observed are to the programme. This evaluation therefore uses evidence to demonstrate the level programme efficacy and supports learning for how to improve future programmes.

The NPC team have also applied a limited **Process Evaluation** lens to provide wider learning and context around the programme design, administration, and 'get into work' programmes more generally. This includes processes completed by the charity providers.

NPC complies with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct and the Social Research Associations Ethics guidelines.

Sources of information

Evidence collection to inform the ToC applied a mixed-methods approach combining programme data, baseline ('Before') and Endline ('After') survey data, focus groups, participant case studies, and desk research to understand the wider context of the programme. The table below shows how these different evidence collections mapped onto the ToC.

	Desk review	PDF data	Survey Data	Focus Groups	Case Studies
Situation analysis	✓				
Target Groups		✓	✓		
Activities		✓	✓		
Mechanisms of change			✓	✓	✓
Outcomes		✓	✓	✓	✓
Impacts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The table below outlines the total sample sizes of these collections and their timing within the programme.

Table 1 Participant and sample size of different data collections

Data source	Type of data	Data entries	Collection period
Participant Data Form	Entries in the data	424 (395, 138, 65)	September 2023, (Jul 23, Sept 21, Mar 20)
'Before'- On-line Survey	Quantitative and qualitative	137	April 2021 to April 2023
'After'- On-line Survey	Quantitative and qualitative	91	April 2021 to June 2023
Focus group	Qualitative	1 x 4 participants 1 x 5 participants	October 2021
Case studies	Qualitative	23	December 2020 to March 2023

Limitations

Timescale to achieve outcomes and impacts	Some impacts, such as 'Young people realise their potential and aspirations' (p54), will require more time to see benefit—beyond the 4 years of data collection. However there are options to monitor this impact over the longer term using the DWP Datalab (see p66).
Lack of control group or timeseries comparison	In order to better establish causation and whether the Head 2Work programme had a direct benefit on employment or education outcomes, ideally a control group or timeseries data is used to adjust for other factors and random chance. The evaluation team were unable to establish these as the evaluation design began after providers were chosen and participants started to be recruited, preventing the creation of a randomised 'non-intervention group'.
Unintended biasing effects of the provider organisations during evidence collection	Both Rinova and Groundwork staff attended and participated in the focus groups which may have meant participants were less likely to be honest about their reflections. Similarly, many participants lacked IT equipment (and occasionally IT skills) meaning provider staff filled in

	surveys closely with participants who may have felt unable to give a truly honest response. This may have caused some survey data to be overwhelmingly positive, and there is the possibility that this is not a true reflection.
Data collection incentives	Providers were not required to collect and report on all activities of the programme, only enrolment data, SAP completion, and education and employment outcome. This means the evaluation is unable to consider the success of other activities such as bespoke training plans, or particular skills sessions and can only review enrolment and participation in social action projects.
Response rate of pre- and post-programme surveys	There was a relatively low response rates and coverage of participants in the surveys; 32% for the pre-programme survey and 21% for the post-programme survey. This severely limits the reliability of the survey results, and the level of sophistication of analysis that can be applied.
Issue with 'basic skills' enrolment question	As part of assessing skill levels during enrolment, the programme wanted to establish whether participants met a basic skills requirement or if they needed some further support to participate fully. This was asked in the form of "Basic skills yes/no" and it was unclear to advisers whether this meant individuals met requirements, or needed basic skills training support. This has affected the ability to examine skill development over the programme.

4. Target groups

Target groups describe the types of people or institutions a programme wants to work with directly to achieve its intended outcomes.

Programme target group aims

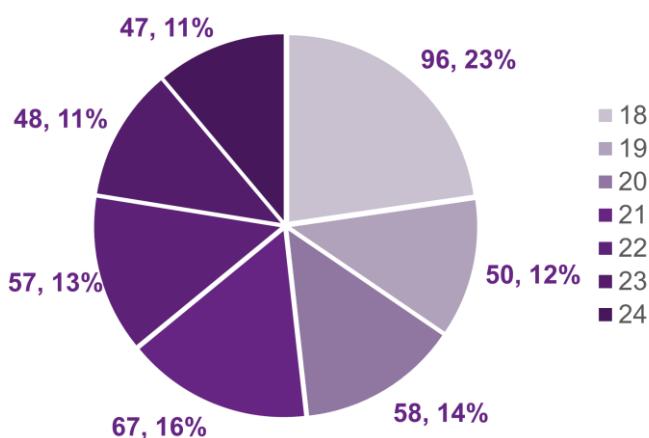
For Head 2Work the target groups for each provider were specified as 200 residents of Greater London (400 total), aged 18-24 (at enrolment) that are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Further targets for the programme included for participants with disabilities or health conditions to make up at least 10% of total participants, 65% of participants to identify as being from ethnic minorities, 50% female and 5% lone parents. The table below shows that the Head 2Work providers met or exceeded all key specifications and met all but one *aspirational* target.

Table 2 success reaching Head 2Work target groups

Target / criteria	Actual
Aged18-24 (at enrolment)	Met - 100% (see below)
Not in education, employment or training (NEET)	Met - One participant was registered as being in education upon enrolment
Resident in Greater London	Met – see map p11
Minimum of 200 participants per provider	Met by both providers, 424 total participants
10% Participants with disabilities or health conditions	Met – 49% of participants self-reporting a disability
65% Participants from ethnic minorities	Met – 65% of participants were non-white (see p22)
50% Female participants	Did not quite meet – 41% female see below
5% Participants that are lone parents	Met – 8% see p24

Age and gender

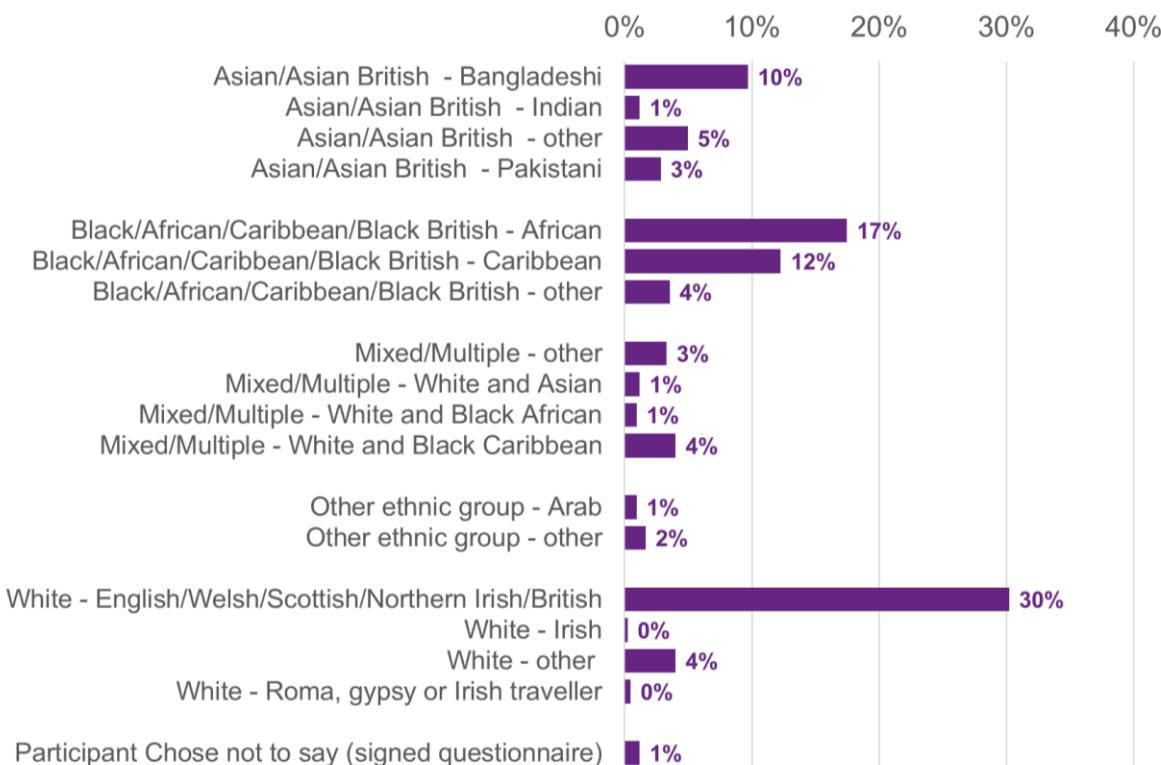
Head 2Work's target group was 18 to 24-year-olds, and aiming for 50% of participants to be female. All participants were in this age band at enrolment and the average age was around 20.5. The largest age group was 18 year-olds (23%), roughly twice as large as other single age bands (see figure 4 below). The Head 2Work's target for female participants was 50%, but the actual

Figure 4 Participants by age upon enrolment

proportion of female participants by the end of the programme was only 41%. This could reflect national trends, as while historically NEET rates have been higher in women, since 2019 there has been a slightly greater proportion of young men (12.2%) who are NEET compared to young women (11.0%)¹⁴.

Ethnicity

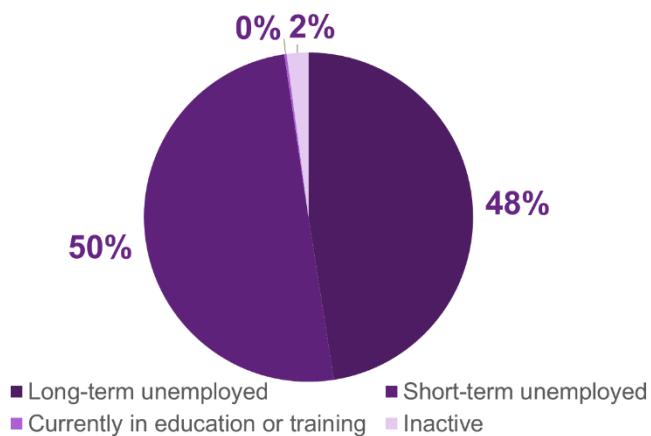
The programme target was 65% of participants from ethnic minorities, which the programme met with 65% of participants registering as non-white. The largest broad groups were 'White'; 35%, and 'Black / African / Caribbean / Black British'; 33%.

Figure 5 Participants by detailed ethnicity

¹⁴ HoC Library 2021 [NEET: Young people Not in Education, Employment or Training](#)

Education, employment and training status (NEET)

Figure 6, Education, employment and training (EET) status

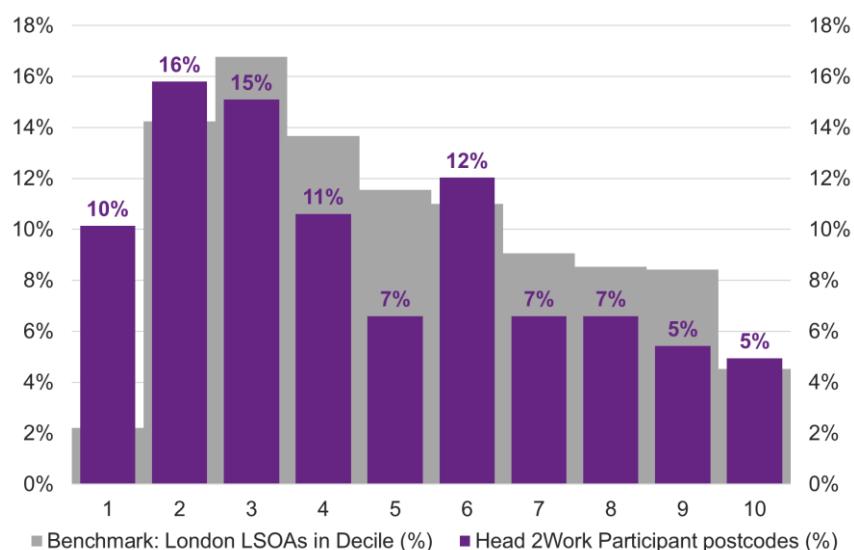


Overall, almost all Head 2Work participants were either long-term or short-term unemployed. There was one participant who was registered as being in education on enrolment.

Deprivation

Head 2Work successfully targeted and worked in the most deprived communities in London. 10% of participant postcodes came from within the most deprived Lower Super Outputs Areas (LSOA), a five-times higher proportion than the London distribution of these LSOAs (2%). This distribution highlights how inequality within London can be very localised, with 5% of participants (who are likely in a jobless household or homeless – see p24) residing in the least deprived decile of LSOAs. This is as expected with charity providers working in some of the most unequal areas of the UK such as Wandsworth and Haringey.¹⁵

Figure 7 Participants by deprivation decile



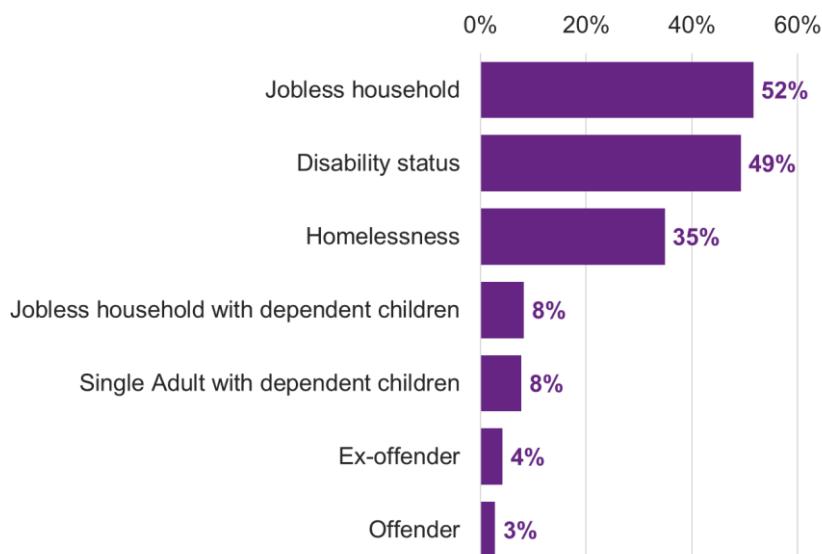
¹⁵ ONS 2021 [What are the regional differences in income and productivity?](#)

Disadvantage

Participants from both providers reported significant levels of disadvantage in terms of disability and having basic skills. One provider partnered homeless shelters and temporary housing associations to recruit participants, leading to a high proportion for overall participants. The self-reported disability rate of 49% far exceeded the 10% target, and is significantly higher than the UK reported rate of 24%¹⁶.

While these self-reported measures are not necessarily as robust as 'proxy-reported' (independently assessed) measures, triangulating with other data sources such as case studies, surveys and interviews with advisers, this likely reflects well the level of disadvantage of the participants. **Identifying and engaging this groups is a significant success for the Head 2Work programme.**

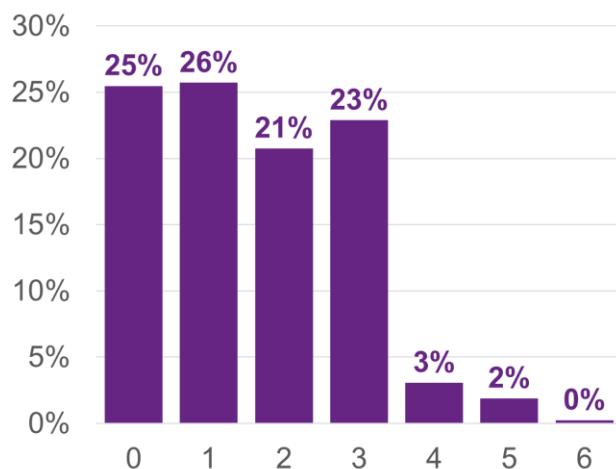
Figure 8, participants by disadvantage



49% of participants had more than one registered disadvantage, meaning that the young people on the Head 2Work programme faced a great deal of complexity and challenge in their lives, including in engaging with the programme or finding work or education.

¹⁶ DWP 2023 [Family Resources Survey: financial year 2021 to 2022](#)

Figure 9 Participants by number of disadvantages registered



This intersection of multiple disadvantages is highlighted by the case study, Participant 'S' below.

Case study: Intersectional disadvantages



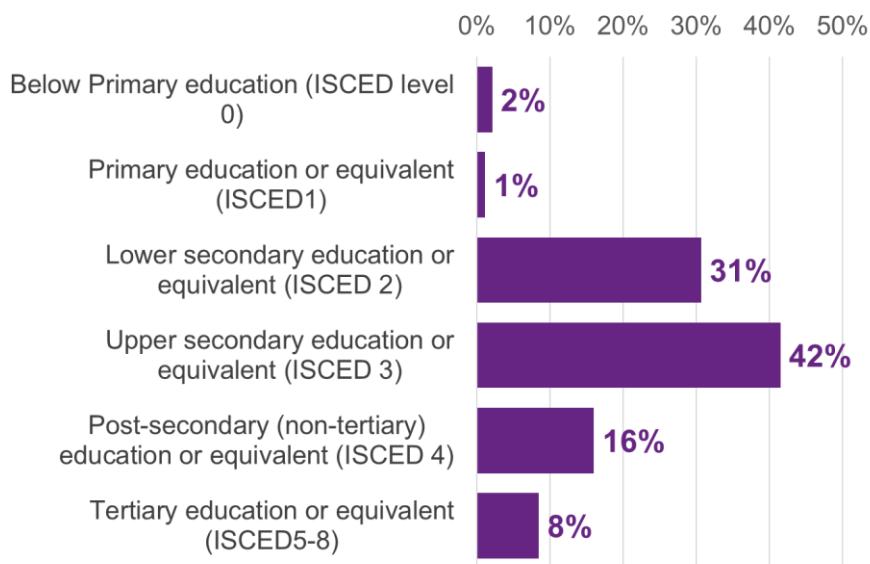
Participant 'S' was in the care system and is a single mother. She struggled with depression and faced multiple barriers to finding employment given her situation. She joined the programme during Covid-19, meaning she engaged in a virtual social action project. This was a challenge in itself, but S was supported by advisers, and was able to communicate by phone. She successfully completed the SAP, sending out surveys and presenting findings. S also started to volunteer at Voices of Hope and received great feedback.

Completing the programme S gained confidence through the SAP and employment skills training. She persistently applied for jobs and secured a role at a school, which suits her skills and circumstances, despite the challenges she faced.

Highest educational achievement

The majority (66%) of Head 2Work participants have upper secondary education or equivalent (ISCED 3) achievement or higher. However only 8% of participants had 'advanced' educational levels of ISCED 5-8, compared to 34% in the England and Wales population¹⁷. This shows that the Head 2Work programme was successful targeting low skills NEET young people.

¹⁷ ONS 2023 [England and Wales usual residents by ISCED-1 based on 2021 UK Census](#)

Figure 10 Participants by highest level of educational achievement

5. Activities

Activities are what you are doing or plan to do to encourage your intended **outcomes**.

The activities in the Head 2Work programme can be described using the participants' journey through the programme (below). This order of activities is largely illustrative. In reality participants might, for example, leave the programme if they find work, return and contribute to an SAP, then exit again. That was a key benefit of the blended, non-linear approach taken by the Head 2Work programme.

Figure 11 Participant journey and activities through the Head 2Work programme

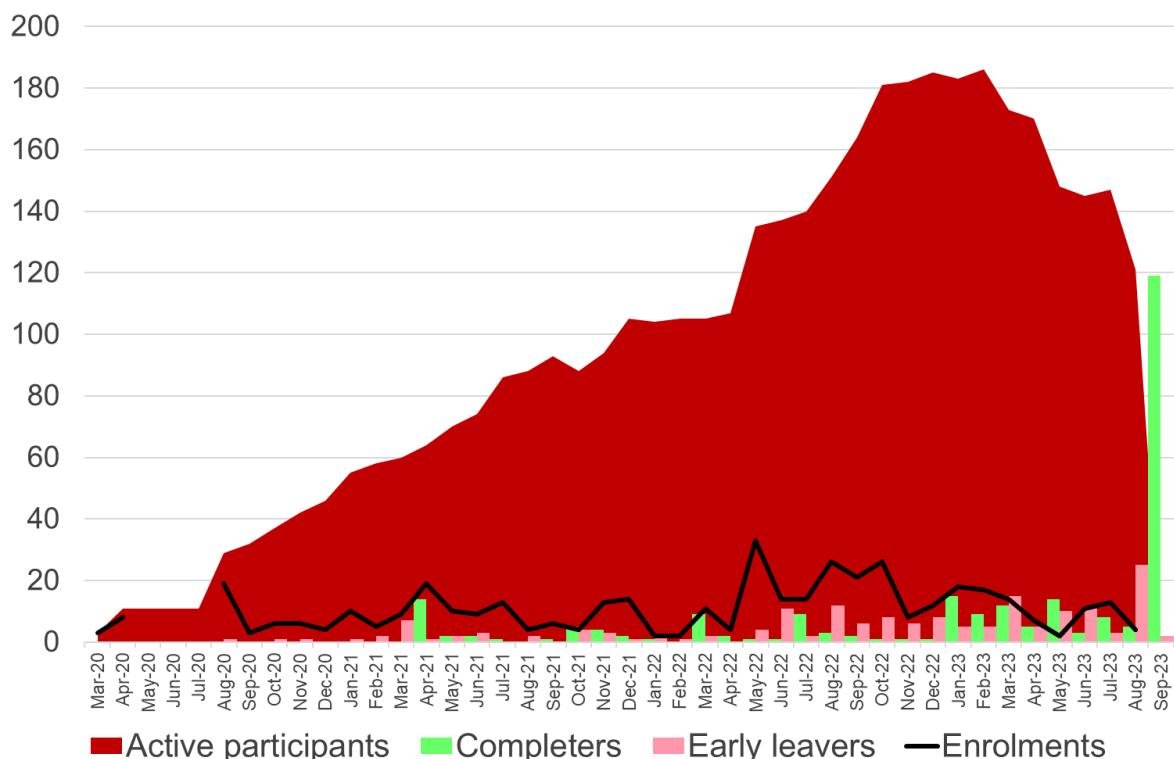


Due to evidence collection and reporting arrangements (see Limitations p19), the evaluation is only able to assess **enrolment** and participation in **social action projects**. This makes it impossible to evaluate the contribution of different activities offered within the Head 2Work programme, or the effectiveness of the skills assessments.

Enrolment, early leavers and completers

Recruitment to the programme was somewhat irregular, in part due to the impact of the Covid pandemic (see p6), with early peaks around August 2020 and April 2021, then a large increase in recruitment April 2022 to February 2023. No participants joined the scheme during the first national lockdown in 2020, but were able to join during the second national lockdown in 2021. The vast majority of participants completed or left the scheme in 2023.

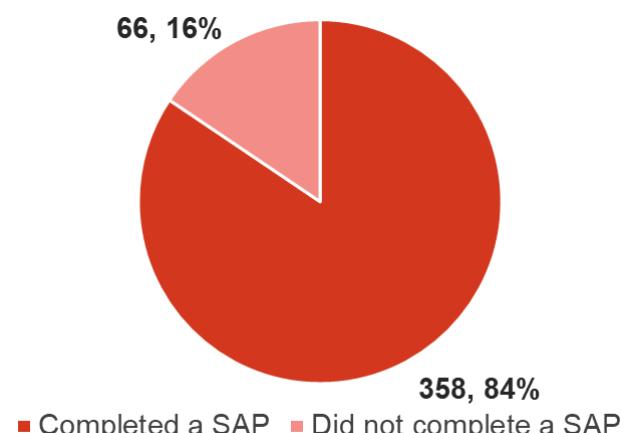
Figure 12 Participants, enrolments, completers and leavers by month



Social Action Projects (SAPs)

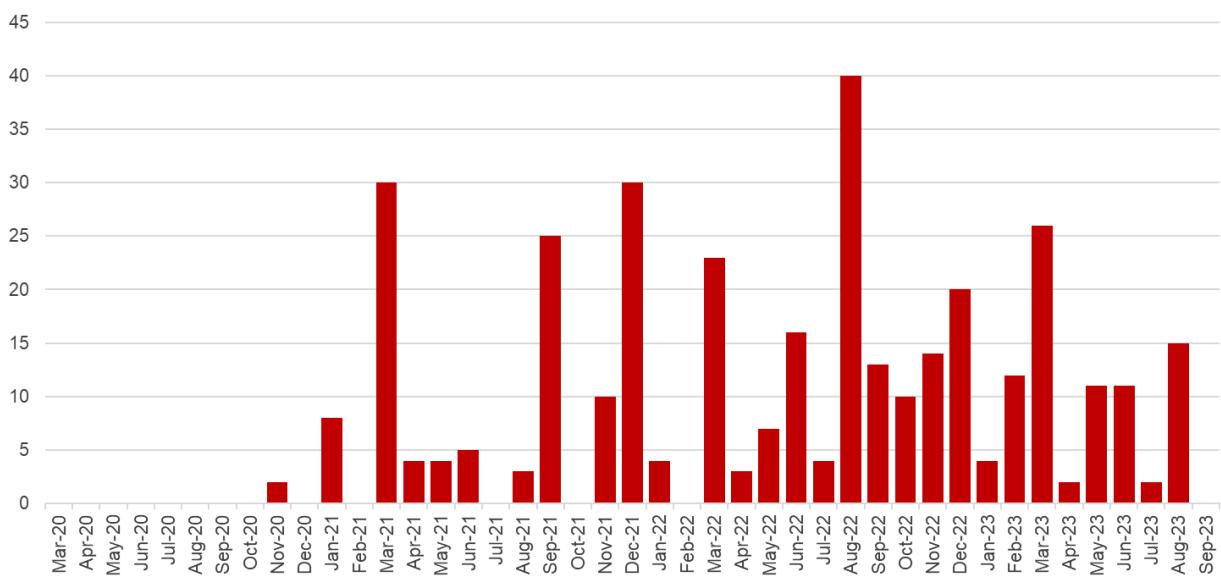
Overall 84% of Head 2Work participants completed an SAP. The average size of a SAP project session was between 4-5 people, although some sessions were may have had over 20 participants.

Figure 13 - Proportion of participants completed a Social Action Project



Smaller SAP sessions seemed to take place all through the programme after the first national Covid lockdown, and there were periods of large group activities including March, September and December 2021, August 2022, and March 2023. During the lockdowns, providers had to adapt SAPs to run online, based on activities that young people could do individually rather than in person with others.

Figure 14 Timeline of participants completing a Social Action Project



An example of a Social Action Project is outlined below in the case study.

SAP Case Study – Skillsets and Mindsets

Identifying a problem to address: Participants of the Head 2Work programme chose a socially regenerative project and after discussions they decided to improve a space that young people use. They applied ‘social innovation’ practices to renovate one of the common rooms in a local Christian Action Housing Association which provides supported housing for young people. This space wasn’t being used by the residents due to being in a state of disrepair, and without adequate heating.

Activities and training: Participants received training from a professional painter which not only aided this project but also improved general skill sets and mind sets for independent living. The participants applied critical thinking, teamwork and practical skills to transform the space.

The results: Residents are pleased with the renovation and are now happy to be making use of the space on a regular basis. A short video was produced that showcases the SAP, and shows the participants working to improve the space, as well as documenting the transformation.

6. Mechanisms of change

Mechanisms of change relate to how activities cause change; the causal processes that make interventions work. They describe how people experience the Head 2Work programme and how that experience will encourage them to make changes (what they will say, do, think differently).

The 7 mechanisms of change for the Head 2Work programme can be grouped into two categories; shifts in participant mindset and motivation, and changes in their relationship with the programme:

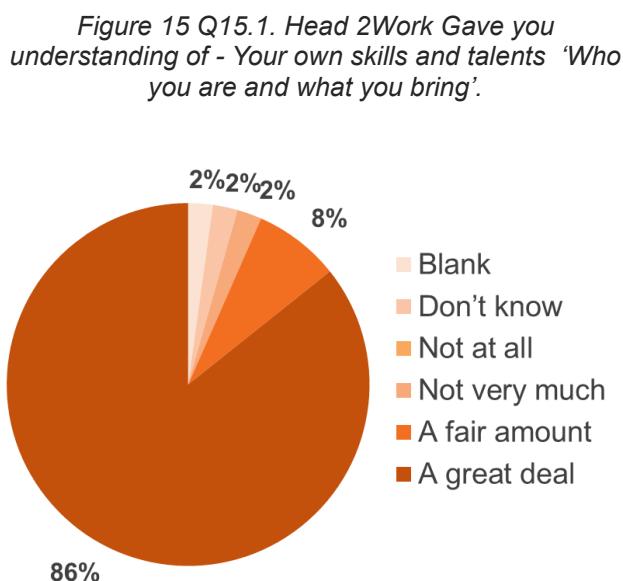
Mindset and motivation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Young people start to recognise their skills and talents: 'Who they are – what they bring'.
Relationship with Head 2Work programme	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Young people are able to develop their idea into SAPs and address issues that matter to them 3. Young people will start to understand how they can influence change in their lives
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Young people will start to engage more positively with the programme and attend regularly
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Young people build positive relationships with trainers and advisers and others in the team
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Young people will start to feel valued by the advisers and peers
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Young people trust their advisers

Participant mindset and motivation

The following mechanisms are attributable to improving young people's motivation and sense of purpose when it comes to their future. Each of these mechanisms aimed to achieve an incremental shift in participants' mindsets, from a place of lower confidence, self-belief and uncertainty about the future, to improved confidence, self-awareness and a better understanding of what they would like to achieve and their ability to reach goals.

1. Young people start to recognise their skills and talents: ‘Who they are – what they bring’.

Evidence from survey data and case studies shows generally, young people on Head 2Work improved their understanding of their own skills, the opportunities available to them and their confidence to achieve what they want to.



In the case studies, many young people mentioned that the skills workshops were key to discovering new skills, enabling them to job search more effectively as they realised what they can bring to a role.

Similarly, workshops introduced many young people to new opportunities they were not aware of prior to joining the programme—the felt they ‘stepped out of their comfort zone’ throughout Head 2Work.

The majority of survey respondents felt that Head 2Work improved their understanding of their skills and the opportunities available to them in the future. 86% said Head 2Work helped ‘a great deal’ in giving them an understanding of their own skills and talents (figure 15, left) and 81% said Head 2Work helped ‘a great deal’ in giving them an understanding of the opportunities available to them in the future (figure 16, below). These results suggest that the programme had a strong positive impact in helping young people recognise their skills and talents.

Figure 16 Q15.3. Head 2Work Gave you understanding of - The opportunities that are available to you in future

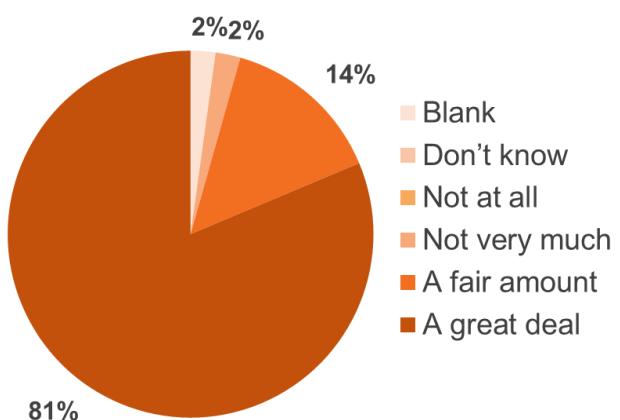
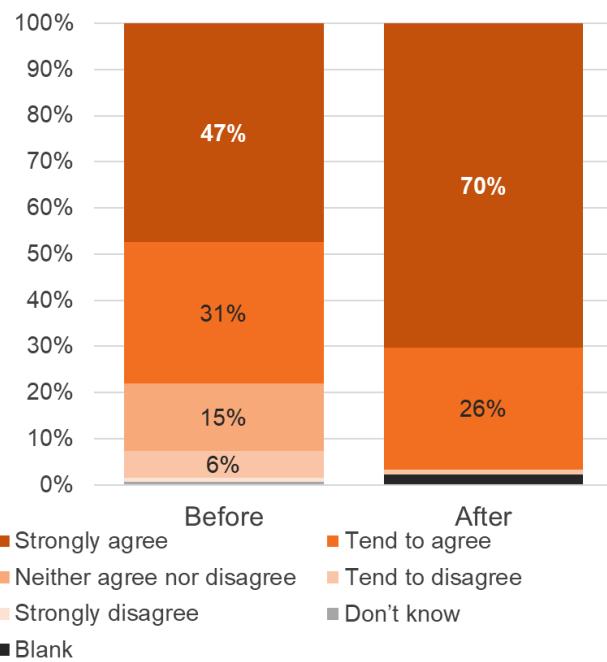


Figure 17 Q17.1. Agree / Disagree - I feel confident I can achieve what I want to



In line with this better understanding of themselves and opportunities, young people's sense of confidence to achieve what they want to increased substantially over the programme. Comparing survey results before and after engaging with the programme shows young people's confidence to achieve what they want has significantly increased—from only 47% of people saying they strongly agreed they felt confident in this before the programme compared to 70% after (figure 17, left).

Case studies provided some details about how Head 2Work improved some young people's confidence. Many young people

described how through workshops and SAPs they developed new skills. Through these activities, young people were able to become more self-aware of their interests and values, and better equipped to successfully meet their personal objectives, improving their self-esteem and confidence.

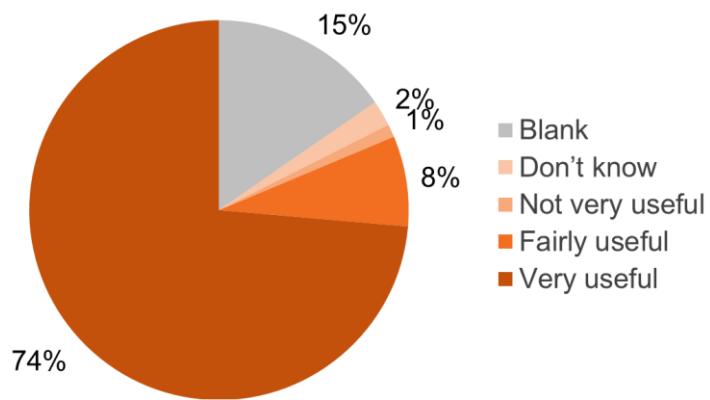
Overall, both young people and providers felt that Head 2Work prioritised individual interest and curiosity, which can lead to better outcomes for young people as they are more likely to find work they enjoy and stick with it.

2. Young people are able to develop their idea into SAPs and address issues that matter to them

There is good evidence to show that young people who completed SAPs found them useful. Engaging with SAPs allowed young people to develop their own ideas, make new connections and connect to a social issue that mattered to them.

It's important to note how significantly the pandemic disrupted this aspect of Head 2Work. Engagement, connection and collaboration are integral to successful and interesting SAPs for young people, all of which became extremely difficult to bring about during Covid-19 lockdowns. Providers had to adapt SAPs to run online, based on activities that young people could do individually rather than in person with others.

Figure 18 Q12. How useful do you think the social action project was this for helping you develop the skills and confidence that might help you move into employment, education or training?



Despite the challenges, for the 84% of participants who did complete SAPs, surveys show the outcomes were positive, and 74% of participants found SAPs 'very helpful' in developing the skills and confidence that might help them move into employment, education or training. In case studies, young people mentioned having improved confidence and motivation through participating in an SAP. SAPs provided an opportunity to meet other young people and work in a team, practice sharing ideas, building their confidence.

"We looked at some interesting topics, and working with other young people was fun to do and coming up with some great ideas".

Head 2Work Participant

Another key theme from case studies was the value of finding something meaningful for young people in their journey to employment. Young people mentioned the benefits of exploring interesting topics, forming ideas, and ultimately contributing something positive to their community.

The positive impact for those who did complete SAPs is clear, showing distinct benefits to their confidence, motivation, sense of purpose and skills development.

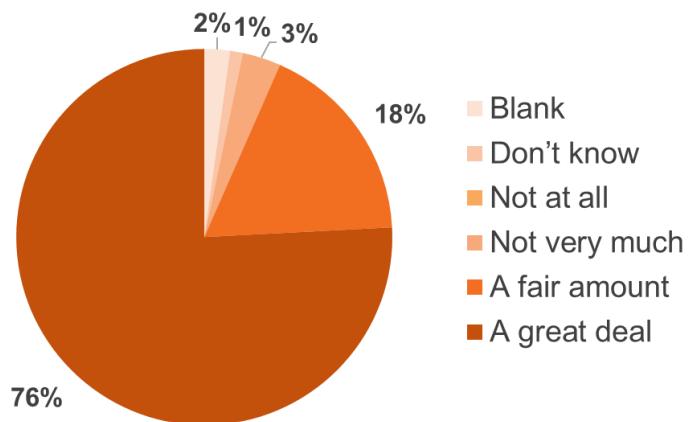
3. Young people will start to understand how they can influence change in their lives

Case studies and survey data show evidence that generally, participants developed an increased sense of autonomy and independence on Head 2Work, through working with advisers, learning new skills in workshops, and taking part in SAPs. Survey responses show that most respondents, 76%, felt as though the project helped 'a great deal' in giving them an understanding of how they can use their voice to influence personal change.

"I was able to contribute to the social action project, my voice was heard and my opinions were taken on board."

Head 2Work Participant

Figure 19 Q15.2. HEAD 2WORK Gave you understanding of - The different ways in which you can have a 'voice' and influence change in your life



A key trend in progress towards this mechanism of change is the role of advisers and advisers in fostering trust and confidence in a young person's own voice and ability to influence change in their lives. One-to-one sessions, personalised support, and consistent encouragement enabled young people to improve their self-belief, better equipping them to make positive changes and decisions for their futures.

In one case study for example, one young person was able to take control of their finances and learn how to invest more in their future, noting that their independence to meet their own needs significantly improved. In another, one young person worked closely with their adviser to reframe and navigate everyday challenges that were a barrier to sustaining work, and gain the skills to overcome those difficulties, allowing them to gain long-term work for the first time and improve the way they communicate struggles with others in order to seek support.

Case study, Participant 'A'

Prior to joining the programme, Participant A had a history of criminal involvement, and struggled to see a way out of that lifestyle. With an adviser, they set an objective to fully give up criminality and find better ways to make a living.

Since engaging with the programme and attending workshops, this young person improved dramatically in confidence, skills, self-esteem, and future outlook. They have so far met the objective of ending their involvement in criminality and have made great progress in applying for jobs and discovering their interests.

Overall, Head 2Work clearly provided some participants with support *and evidence* that they *can* take control of their futures and influence change in their lives, and therefore better equipping them to make positive decisions for their future.

Relationships with the programme and advisers

The following mechanisms focus on fostering a positive experience of the programme for young people, and provide evidence for the holistic and individualised support Head 2Work offers.

Many young people came to Head 2Work with little faith in the world of work and lacked trust in support from adults as a result of their past experiences and their exposure to multiple barriers in life. Through nurturing positive relationships between staff and participants, offering consistent and tailored support, and helping participants recognise their value, Head 2Work provided an opportunity for young people to rebuild their hope for the future and progress towards their goals.

4. Young people will start to understand engage more positively with the programme and attend regularly

While there is no relevant survey data for this mechanism, case studies do show there is some link between programme attendance and positive outcomes. However, as the data source is limited in numbers, this may not be representative of the entire cohort.

For some young people, engagement with the programme took time. It required consistent support from advisers to gain their trust, which then lead those young people to positive outcomes once they began attending more regularly.

One young person found it difficult to engage with the programme initially, leading them to lose contact with it entirely at one point. After an adviser made contact again, they were supported to re-engage and build the programme into a routine. They started to attend regularly and made significant improvements in skills and mindset.

Another young person lacked confidence and trust in the programme as a whole to begin with and did not participate actively in workshops. With the support of an adviser over time, the young person began speaking up in workshops and found enjoyment in them. By the end of the programme they were looking forward to starting a job and felt more positive about the future.

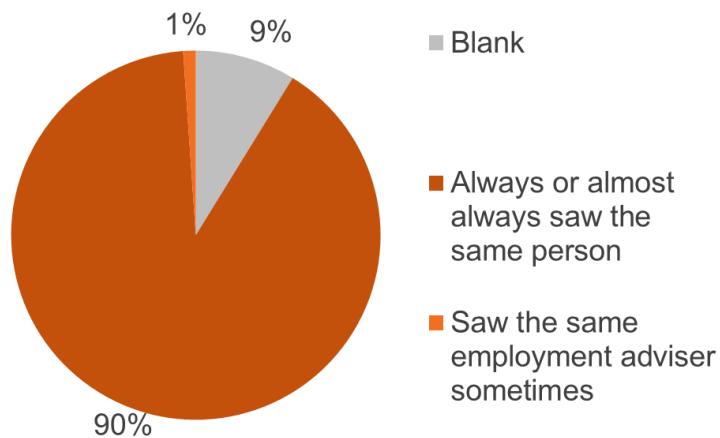
"I was very shy at the beginning, the others in the group encouraged me and helped me to get involved. My [adviser] also got me to work with other people to build my skills."

Head 2Work Participant

These examples are key evidence for the importance of the consistent support Head 2Work provided—engagement and progress is clearly not linear for many young people, but once engagement improves and becomes consistent, outcomes are positive.

5. Young people build positive relationships with trainers and advisers and others in the team, 6. Young people build positive relationships with trainers and advisers and others in the team and 7. Young people trust their advisers

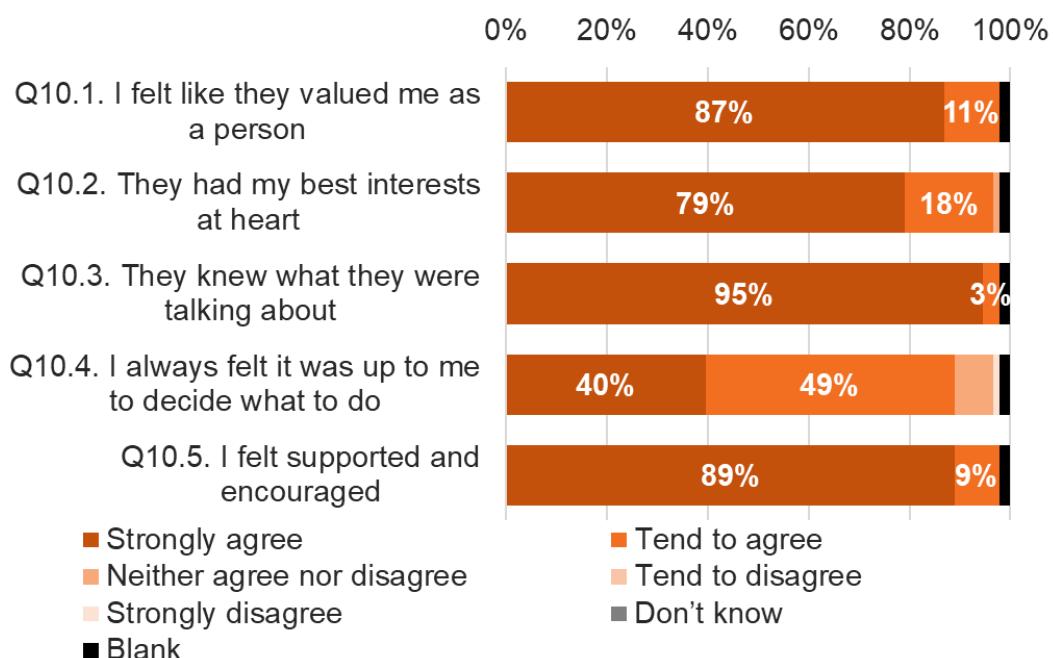
Figure 20 Q8 Adviser consistency over the programme



Overall, the relationship with advisers has been a key asset to the programme, with almost all participants (90%) seeing the same adviser throughout, which is especially impressive given the programme was operating during the pandemic.

It's clear that through this consistent support, strong and valuable relationships were forged between participants and advisers. Survey results show that young people held high opinions of Head 2Work staff, and they trusted advisers and their judgement.

Figure 21 Q10.1-5 Satisfaction with employment adviser



Survey results also show that young people felt supported and valued by advisers, and largely agreed that advisers had their best interests at heart.

One area for possible improvement is the sense of autonomy and control participants felt. Whilst 89% of participants agreed overall they felt it was always up to them to decide what to do, the confidence in these results is slightly weaker than for other questions around employment advisers—only 40% of these participants strongly agreed this was the case, and the other 49% tended to agree.

[Head 2Work made] me feel confident and believe in myself in the talents I bring. Shedding negative stigma towards my field and making me feel there's a route for me. Also making me feel heard as a person, not just a project file which needs completing.

Head 2Work Participant

Themes of high levels of trust and feeling valued by advisers were also clear across case studies. For example, one young person was originally very distrusting of adults after previous negative experiences. In this case, interacting with new people and socialising was extremely difficult. Through encouragement and support of advisers, they became more receptive to help from others as they were able to find a support system and a newfound sense of belonging. In some cases, adviser support has extended beyond improving employment skills and self-esteem.

In another case, a young person's adviser provided them with necessary basic requirements, including new shoes, and supported them to access daily-life essentials such as a travelcard, and photos for a passport. These are all tasks which can feel overwhelming to young people facing multiple challenges, and an adviser was able to take the weight off this young person, allowing them to focus on their goals and career aspirations.

Across data sources, the positive impact that connecting with advisers and other young people had on participants and their progress is clear. In many cases, building trusting relationships and finding a sense of belonging on the programme was integral to achieving goals. For many, young people established a support system with their advisers, enabling them to overcome challenges and barriers they faced.

7. Outcomes

Outcomes happen before impact. They describe the shorter-term changes in your target groups that might contribute to your impact

For Head 2Work the outcomes focus on ‘soft’ outcomes for young people—building up transferable skills for employment, developing their sense of responsibility and autonomy, shifting their attitudes towards work, and providing them with tangible opportunities to take part in something meaningful.

The 6 Head 2Work outcomes (and unintended outcomes):

Employability skills:	1 Young people have increased teamworking skills 2 Young people have improved communication skills 3 Young people have improved problem-solving skills
Emotional Capabilities	4 Young people have increased autonomy and control
Attitudes	5 Young people develop positive attitudes to work
Experiences and involvement	6 Young people have increased involvement in their community
<i>Unintended outcomes</i>	

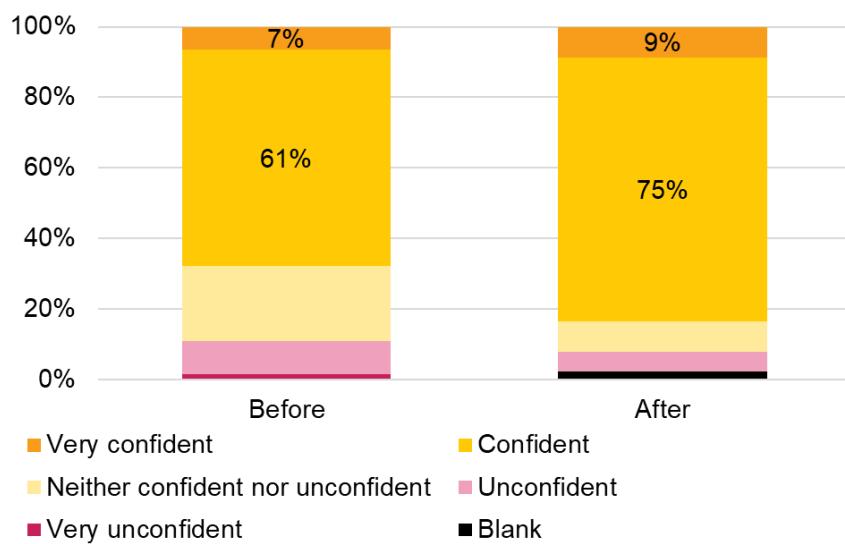
As shown in the provider stories, Head 2Work’s focus on developing young people’s soft skills and strengthening their mindsets is quite rare for youth employability programmes. Usually, hard-outcomes and the goal to secure a job hold more importance.

Head 2Work recognises that simply finding a job isn’t necessarily a means to an end—especially if the job lacks relevance or interest to a young person’s life. By cultivating young people’s interests, transferable skills, community involvement, ownership, and positive attitudes to work, young people will be better equipped to find jobs that are right for them, that they can sustain and excel in.

1 Employability skills: Young people have increased teamworking skills

Survey results show that young people's confidence working in teams increased from the beginning of the programme to the end. Pre-programme, confidence levels weren't necessarily low: 68% overall felt confident working in a team. But it is promising to see this jumped up to 84% of young people feeling confident working in a team after the programme. Interestingly, those who felt 'neither confident nor unconfident' working in a team made up 21% of pre-survey results, and only 9% of post-survey results—suggesting an increase in self-awareness and that young people are better equipped to identify their skills and how they feel about them.

Figure 22 Q18.2. How do you feel - Work with other people in a team



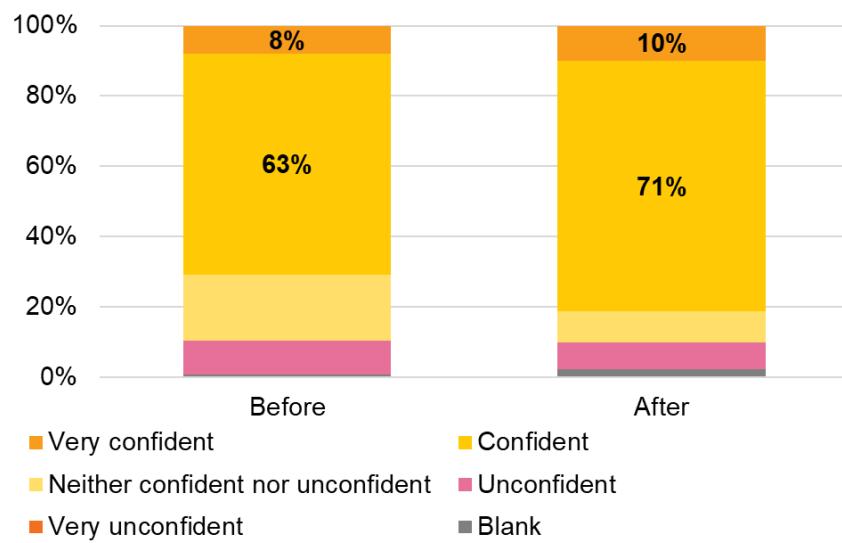
The SAP was an important vessel for developing teamworking skills as participants were taken out of their comfort zones, forced to make decisions as a group, plan activities, and learn new skills together. Some participants highlighted their positive experience of contributing ideas to a team, making plans and completing a project together.

"Our SAP was about working together and developing team building skills" Head 2Work participant

2 Employability skills: Young people have improved communication skills

Progress in communication skills follows a similar trend to improved teamworking skills—overall, young people have become more confident since engaging with Head 2Work. In this case, no young people felt 'very unconfident' in explaining their ideas clearly before the programme, or after the programme, which in itself is positive.

Figure 23 Q18.1. How do you feel - Explaining my ideas clearly



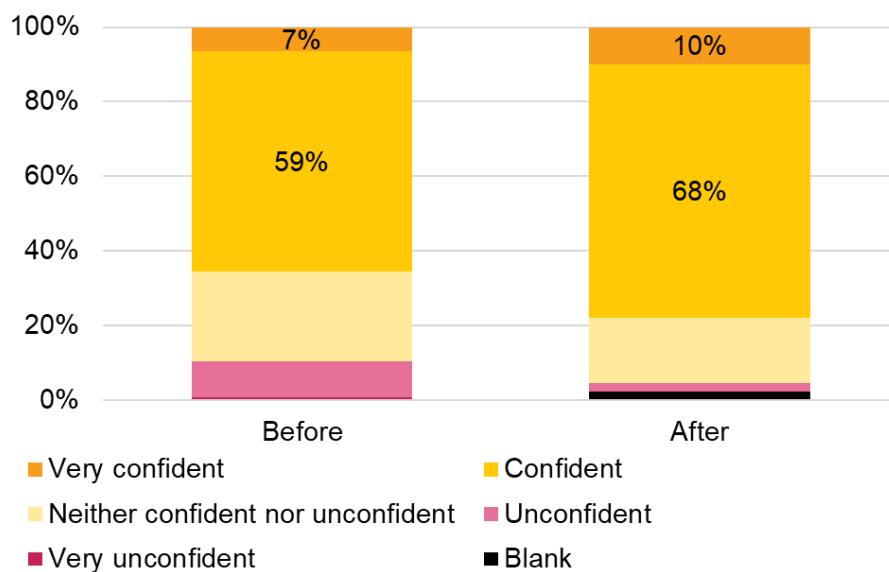
Many case studies describe young people entering the programme as very socially anxious, nervous and shy around people. On almost all occasions the programme has allowed them to make new connections, new friends, and improve their skills in working with others. Both the SAP and the workshop and training sessions helped to develop communication skills and participants reported making new connections.

Working with advisers was also crucial to improving communication skills for participants who found it particularly difficult to express themselves in environments outside of their comfort zone, such as job interviews or large groups. The case study below describes a young person who was able to improve their communication skills through working with their advisor.

3 Employability skills: Young people have improved problem-solving skills

Surveys show young people have also become more confident in their problem solving skills—out of the three employability skills outcomes, improved problem solving skills saw the biggest decrease in those who felt unconfident before the programme (9%) versus after the programme (2%).

Figure 24 Q18.3. How do you feel - Generating ideas and solutions when thinking about a problem



Case studies provide further evidence for overall improvements in employability skills, and data suggests much of this can be attributed to group work such as workshops and SAPs, where young people were able to learn new skills and increase motivation and confidence.

There was some evidence from the case studies that the training sessions helped people approach problems more logically, with one participant reporting they gained the tools and skills to tackle issues head on and in a logical way. The support provided by advisers beyond employment and skills by helping them access travel, solve housing issues and even get clothes and food allowed young people to see how they can tackle these issues themselves. The case study below describes how a participant was able to work with their adviser to improve their confidence and eventually enter employment.

Case study: participant 'M'

One young person joined the programme with extreme anxiety, and severely low confidence as a result of multiple set-backs with employment opportunities. Their low confidence made it particularly difficult to demonstrate their skills and abilities in job interviews, which resulted in unsuccessful experiences, further depleting their confidence. This young person worked closely with an adviser to improve their interview skills, gain confidence, and eventually entered employment.

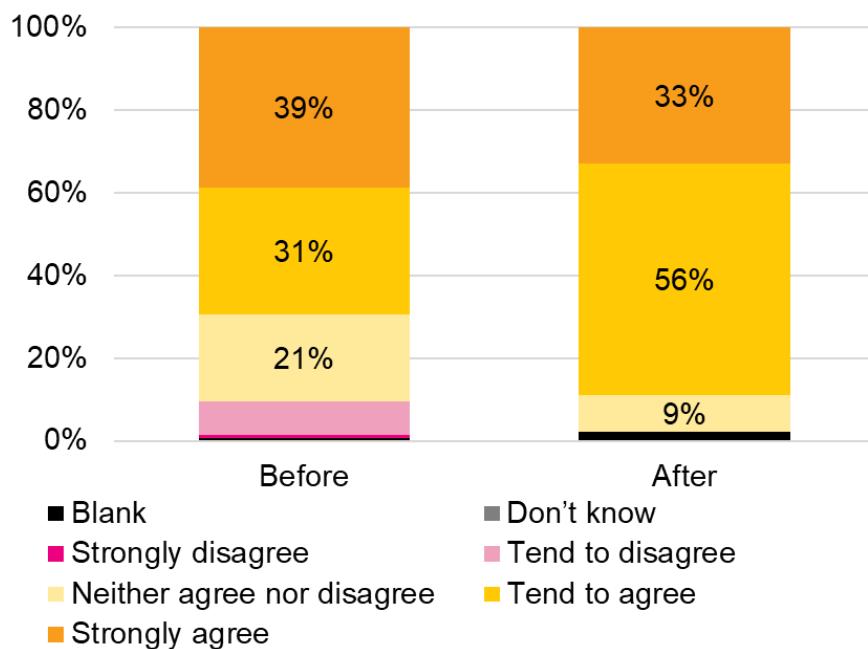
4 Emotional Capabilities: Young people have increased autonomy and control

It's clear from the data that young people on Head 2Work felt as though they had ownership over their decisions and increased autonomy as their confidence and self-belief improved. As reflected in the mechanisms section, surveys showed advisers played a significant role in empowering young people to believe in themselves and use their voice.

There is evidence the programme improved participants' sense of responsibility, as survey results showing overall increased sense of responsibility young people feel towards their outcomes in life. Survey results also suggest that young people's certainty around their own responsibilities increased, as fewer people 'neither agreed nor disagreed' with the above statement after the programme (9%) than they did before (21%).

"Head 2Work supported me in the very uncertain period of my life and helped me on my journey to the first job application. I can't thank enough RH for all the expertise and kindness." Head 2Work participant

Figure 25 Q17.3. Agree / Disagree - I am responsible for what happens to me



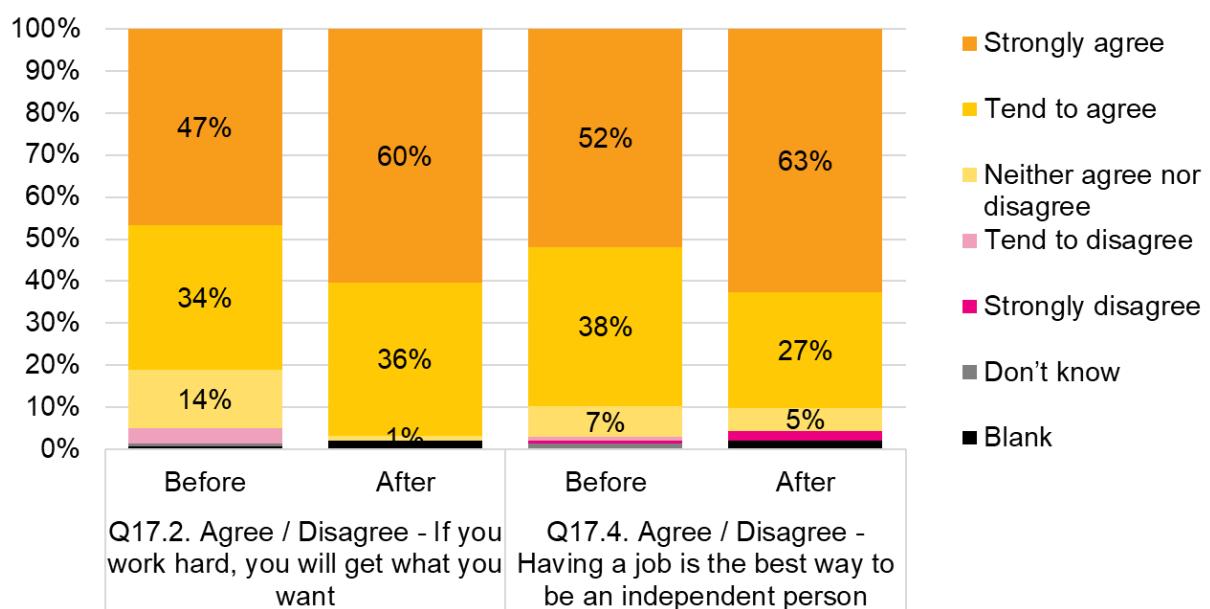
Case studies further evidence young people's increased motivation to take control over their everyday lives. Many young people started to take control of their daily routines, finances and travel. The workshops and group sessions provided young people with an impetus to make plans and organise themselves in order to attend these activities—budgeting for travel costs, scheduling for transport timings, and embedding activities into their daily routines. This improved

independence across multiple areas was often a new experience for participants, and case studies show it has led young people to develop stronger self-belief and confidence.

5 Attitudes: Young people develop positive attitudes to work

The survey data shows in many cases, as young people learn more about their skills and talents, and the opportunities that are available to them, participants formed a more positive attitude to work than they did before joining Head 2Work. Survey results show an increase in the number of young people who believe in working hard to achieve your goals after Head 2Work compared to before, suggesting an increased sense of motivation and belief in their own capabilities.

Figure 26 - Survey results for attitudes to work



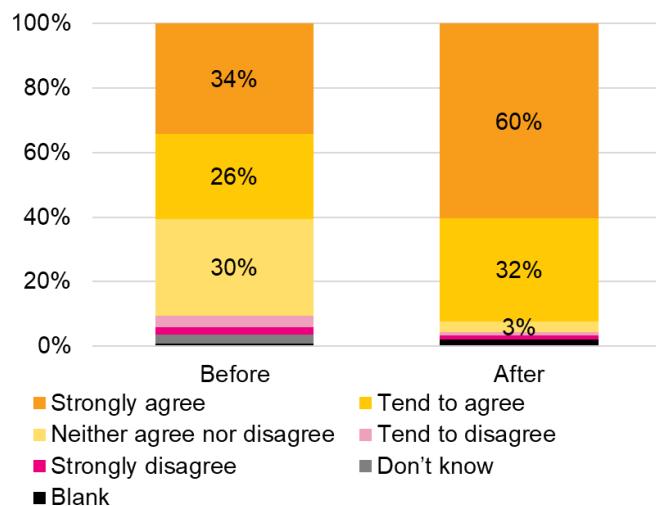
Young people's opinions as to whether having a job is the best way to be an independent person have also increased in overall agreement. Whilst the graph shows a decrease in those who tend to agree with the statement before and after the programme, results suggest that many of these people who previously only 'tended to agree' now 'strongly agree' that having a job is the best way to be an independent person. This reflects an improvement in young people's sense of the benefits of employment, and is likely to result from the number of positive work experiences young people were able to access during Head 2Work. However, there was a 1% increase in those who strongly disagree with the statement.

It is important to note the economic backdrop to the programme, including the Covid pandemic, furlough and the cost of living crisis, and this impact this could have on young people's attitudes to employment possibilities.

Despite current economic backdrop, 31% more young people feel positive about their future compared to before they joined Head 2Work. This may reflect participants' increased optimism and clarity around their future progression as a result of Head 2Work's support—93% of survey respondents said Head 2Work helped them gain an understanding of how to move into employment, education or training.

"The Head 2Work project gave me the confidence and motivation I lost during Covid".
Head 2Work participant

Figure 27 Q17.5. Agree / Disagree - I feel positive about my future

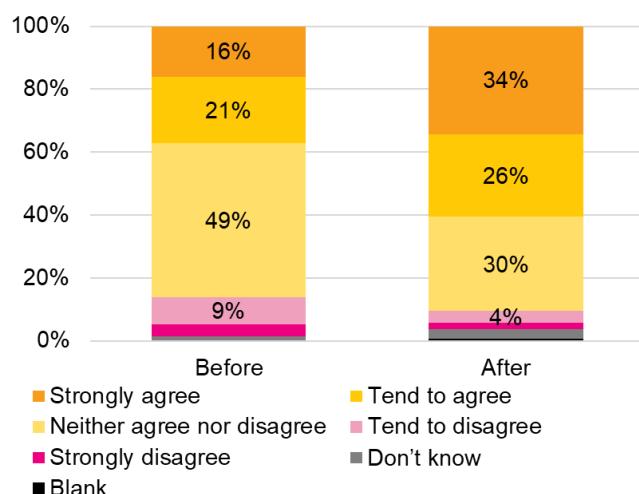


6 Experiences and involvement: young people have increased involvement in their community

"Our SAP was to give back to the community by collecting food items, toiletries from local businesses and donating them back to the local church. I really enjoyed the experience of giving back to the local community." **Head 2Work participant**

Taking part in SAPs has played a role connecting young people with their communities. Data shows that through SAP work, young people had the opportunity to connect with others, build confidence and feel motivated by taking part in work that was interesting to them. On the whole, survey data shows that through engaging with the programme, participants felt more involved in their communities than they did before.

Figure 28 Q17.7. Agree / Disagree - I feel involved in my local community



Not all young people were able to share this experience, the number of those who 'strongly disagree' they feel involved in their communities remained at 4% before and after the programme. Varying involvement in community is likely to have been affected by the pandemic—in a time of lockdowns and increased isolation, it's understandable that some young people may not have felt connected to communities. However it is promising to see evidence of better involvement in the majority of cases, showing that Head 2Work provided a positive opportunity for young people to make connections and develop a sense of belonging.

"What I enjoyed most about the social action project was young people coming together to plan something that will benefit the local community." Head 2Work participant

Case study, Participant 'B'

At the time of referral to Head 2Work, Participant B had no previous work experience and struggled to find employment. Through Head 2Work she developed a newfound confidence and motivation to help people in her community. With support from her adviser and the workshops, she completed her training and enrolled in a traineeship programme. Using this experience, she started her own community business, supporting children in drama and dance.

Unintended Outcomes

Head 2Work also supported young people to achieve a number of positive outcomes beyond those initially intended.

- **Making connections:** Many young people joined the programme feeling isolated, particularly during the lockdowns. Head 2Work enabled young people to socialise and form positive relationships with their peers, boosting their confidence and wellbeing. Multiple case studies mentioned this as a key benefit of the programme.

"I was living in a hostel, I felt lonely and never spoke to anyone, but during the workshops I had an opportunity to speak to the others and made friends which really helped my mental health." **Head 2Work participant**
- **New Support networks:** Young people who face significant disadvantage may also lack support networks to fall back on or reach out to. Head 2Work provided participants with a team of people who wanted to help and support them. Adviser and staff support was one of Head 2Work's strengths and had a real positive impact on young people. There were examples of participants reaching out to SAP team members. For example, participants asking team members to accompany them to jobs and interviews, or participants confiding in team members about struggles with wellbeing/confidence/financial difficulties.

"I have special learning needs and was very shy, but my adviser was patient, she encouraged and supported me to build my confidence and I got a job." **Head 2Work participant**
- **Overcoming fears:** Some young people joined the programme with a lot of anxiety and fear around social situations, job applications and the world of work in general. There are a few accounts of shy, insecure participants who found it difficult to engage to begin with, but once they established trust with staff members, peers and developed their self-belief, they started actively participating and contributing in workshops which previously didn't happen.

"I have special learning needs and was very shy, but my adviser was patient, she encouraged and supported me to build my confidence and I got a job." **Head 2Work participant**
- **Surviving and bouncing back from Covid:** Many participants expressed through the survey, and the case studies, that the programme was somewhat of a 'life-line' during the pandemic. While virtual workshops and sessions took some adjusting to, on the whole Head 2Work provided young people with a space to connect, work together, and socialise—which was incredibly important given the level of isolation people suffered during lockdowns.

8. Impacts

Impacts are the long-term change or improvement of features in the wider system. They are important and meaningful to your target groups and the community as a whole. The long-term impact will be achieved as a result of the work that GLA does alongside other system players.

The 4 intended impacts for the Head to Work programme were:

1. Young people enter sustained employment, education or training
2. Young People to be independent and not to rely on welfare state
3. Young people lead sustained and fulfilling working lives
4. Young people realise their potential and aspirations

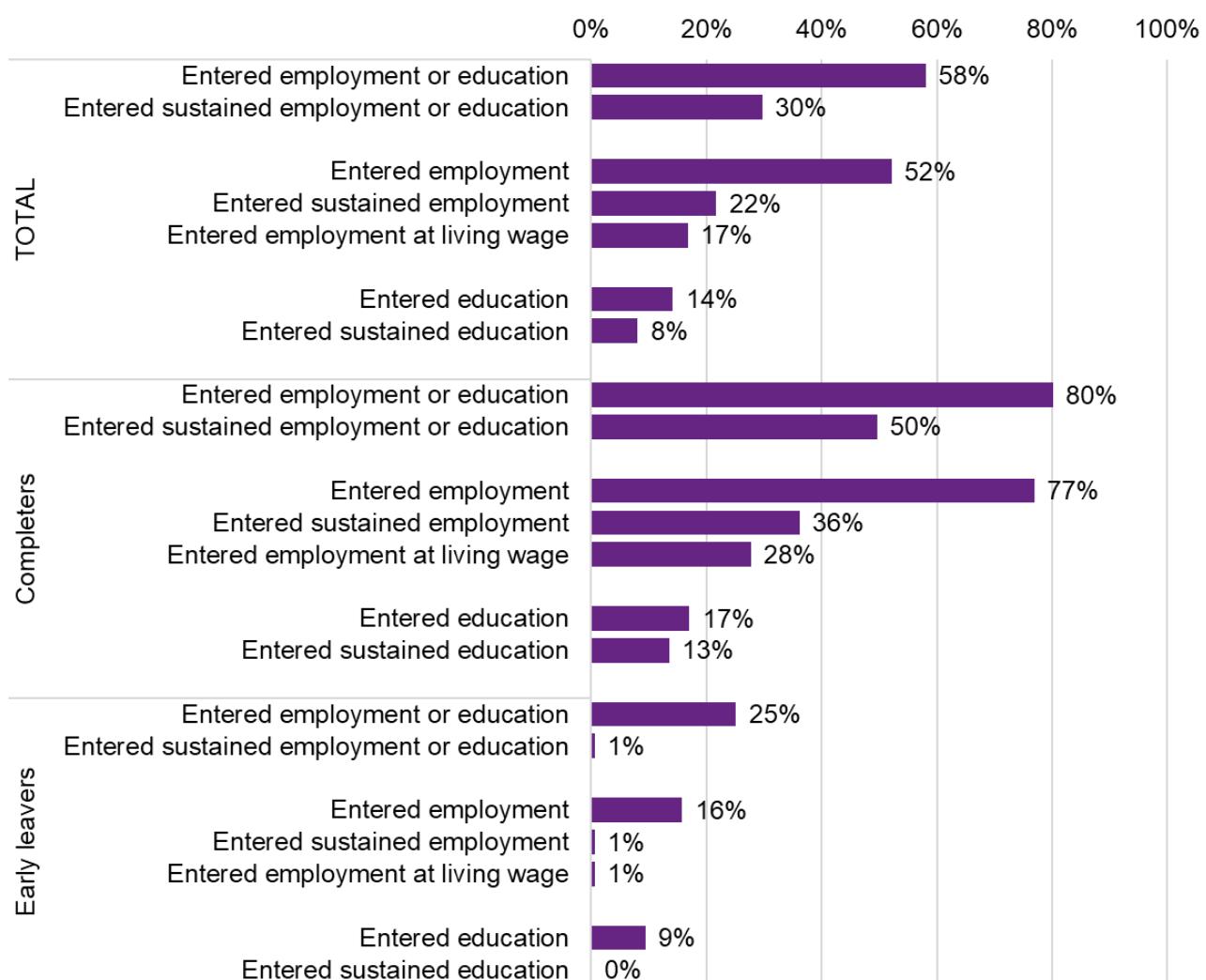
- 1 Young people enter sustained employment, education or training, and
- 2 Young People to be independent and not to rely on welfare state

Overall, 58% of participants in contact with the programme went on to some form of education or employment.

Although it cannot be statistically supported that Head 2Work was a direct causal factor, those who completed Head 2Work were more likely to have entered sustained employment or education: 80% compared to 25% for those who left the scheme early.

Also, whilst 50% of completers went on to sustained employment or education, for early leavers of Head 2Work, only 1% entered sustained employment or education.

Figure 29 - employment, education and training impact, total, completers and early leavers



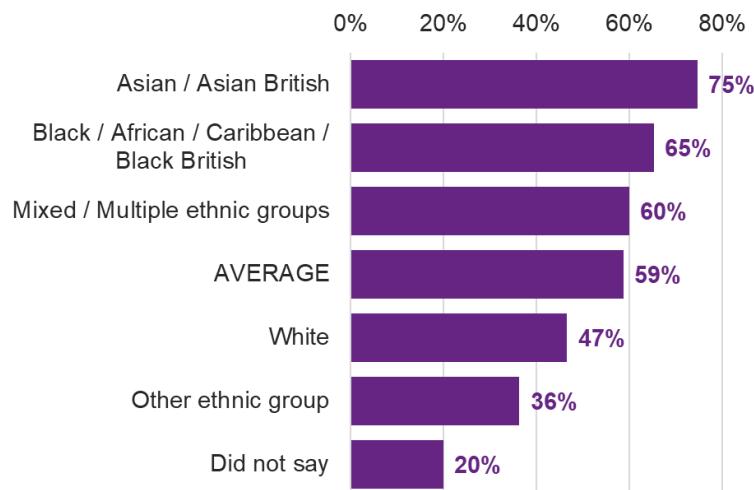
Out of the 52% of participants overall who entered employment, only 17% entered employment at living wage. For completers of the programme, 28% entered employment the London Living Wage (LLW), and only 1% of early leavers entered employment at LLW.

These figures are notably low, which could possibly reflect the burden of proof that was required to show that a wage was actually over the LLW. It's likely that providers may have undercounted slightly. Although it could also reflect the fact that a large proportion of jobs do not pay the London Living Wage.

Breakdown by background

While employment and education outcomes were similar for different ages and genders of participants, those in ethnic minorities were in fact *more likely* to enter employment or education. Due to the low sample size this could be down to random chance, and may also be a factor of geography and access to opportunity.

Figure 30 Percentage of participants entering employment or education by ethnicity

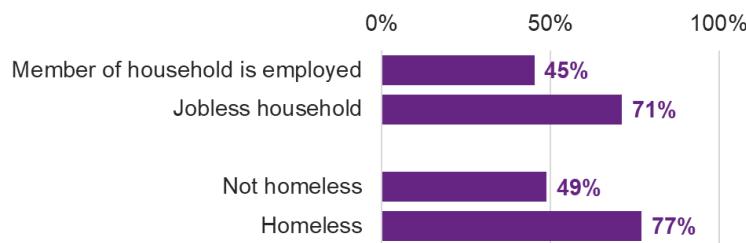


Breakdown by disadvantages

There was no difference in achieving education or employment for those in a single household or jobless households with dependent children, nor seen in offenders and ex-offenders, nor disability status.

Participants in a jobless household were more likely to have entered education or employment, 71% compared to 45%. Similarly participants who were homeless were more likely to have entered education or employment, 77% compared to 49% who were not homeless. This may reflect a more urgent need for participants from a more disadvantaged background to enter employment or education.

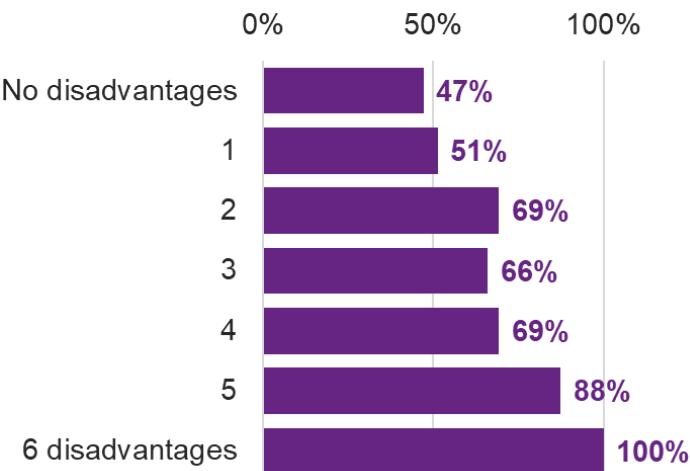
Figure 31 Figure 25 Percentage of participants entering employment or education by jobless household and homelessness



One unexpected results was a *positive* correlation between the number of registered disadvantages a participant has and likelihood of entering employment or education—a fascinating and surprising result (figure 32 below). In some ways it embodies the mission of Head 2Work and the providers—that people should have equal opportunity and access to fulfilling and successful employment opportunities, especially those who face the most disadvantage.

These results for the most disadvantaged participants hopefully show the importance of programmes like Head 2Work, and that with the right support in place, young people can overcome significant barriers to employment, education and training opportunities.

Figure 32 Percentage of participants entering employment or education by number of registered disadvantages



Breakdown by London Borough

There were large differences in employment and education impacts between boroughs of London, with the proportion of participants entering employment or education ranging between 25% to 86%. Figure 33 below presents this together with the average Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Score¹⁸ for the borough, the ‘job density’ of the borough, and the average number of online job adverts located in each borough in January of 2020, 2021 and 2022¹⁹.

The table displays a surprising relationship with many of the more deprived boroughs seeing better outcomes for participants. There is some correlation with job density in the borough but little correlation with average vacancies. Therefore it may be that nuances about regional delivery may be the biggest driver of success in achieving participant impacts.

Figure 33 Employment and education impact by borough, against deprivation, job density and vacancies²⁰

Borough	Percentage of participants that entered employment or education	Average Index of Multiple Deprivation score of LSOAs	Job density (jobs per resident of the borough)	Average number online job adverts (000s, Jan 2020, Jan 2021, Jan 2022)
Islington	86%	22,490	1.6	19.2
Enfield	76%	20,419	0.6	15.7
Newham	75%	24,139	0.6	10.8
Haringey	75%	21,888	0.5	4.3
Hounslow	67%	18,653	0.9	28.5
Richmond upon Thames	64%	7,159	0.8	17.6
Kingston upon Thames	57%	9,412	0.8	12.6
Merton	42%	12,225	0.6	8.7
Croydon	40%	18,371	0.6	30.8
Sutton	33%	11,415	0.7	6.1
Wandsworth	25%	14,312	0.6	11.5

Breakdown by Social Action Project (SAP) participation

Data shows those who completed SAPs were more likely to enter into employment or education. Of those who completed SAPs, 62% progressed into employment or education opportunities,

¹⁸ UK MHCLG 2019 [Indices of Deprivation](#)

¹⁹ ONS 2022 – experimental statistics - [Labour demand indicators by local authority, UK: January 2017 to January 2022](#)

²⁰ UK MHCLG 2019 [Indices of Deprivation](#), ONS 2022 – experimental statistics - [Labour demand indicators by local authority, UK: January 2017 to January 2022](#), ONS 2023, [Jobs and Job density](#)

compared to only 42% of those who did not complete SAPs. This suggests that social action projects are effective ways to encourage development and progression for young people.

We also know from case studies and evidence from the mechanisms of change data that SAPs helped young people to develop confidence, teamworking skills, and problem-solving skills. These are all skills which young people need in order to progress into employment or education opportunities.

We also know that many SAP activities involved new experiences for young people, including working in a team and contributing ideas in a group setting—this will have contributed to participants forming a better understanding of their own skills and talents. It is also important to note that completing an SAP is a positive thing to include in a young person's CV, and provides a tangible experience to speak about in applications or interviews.

Figure 34 - Entry to employment or education by SAP participation



The case study below illustrates the role a social action project played in one participant's journey.

Case study: Participant 'C'

One young person entered the programme in extremely challenging circumstances; homeless with few qualifications, struggling with their mental health. They received employability and resilience training and understanding mindset sessions and engages actively in an SAP. Through these opportunities, they were able to develop skills, improve confidence, and find structure and stability. They successfully got a job, and at the time of the case study, had been in it for over two months.

Evidence from Case Studies

Across the case studies there are accounts of young people who have started training, started their own business, and found employment after long periods of struggling to do so. In order to do this,

many participants had to overcome fears of rejection, anxiety and mistrust in the system, after a history of negative experiences.

Cast Study: *Entering education is a marathon, not a sprint*, Participant “J”

Coming to the programme, J had 6 GCSEs and achieved Level 1 Business Studies but had decided to leave college. Out of education and employment, J signed up to Universal Credit. J also is autistic making it challenging for J to move forward as he processes information differently to others, and can find it hard to communicate or work in a group.

Head 2Work helped J step out of his comfort zone and make new friends. Through the SAP, J’s peer group volunteered for Voices of Hope where J helped provide and create activities for families in need and ask local organisations and businesses for donations.

J also benefited from one-to-one advice and employability workshops, where he learned of Access Courses to degrees at university, a door J thought was closed to him.

Leaving the programme, J felt a great sense of achievement. Now, J is undertaking a Business of Football Traineeship and is considering doing a full time degree at university, either in Sport or Architecture.

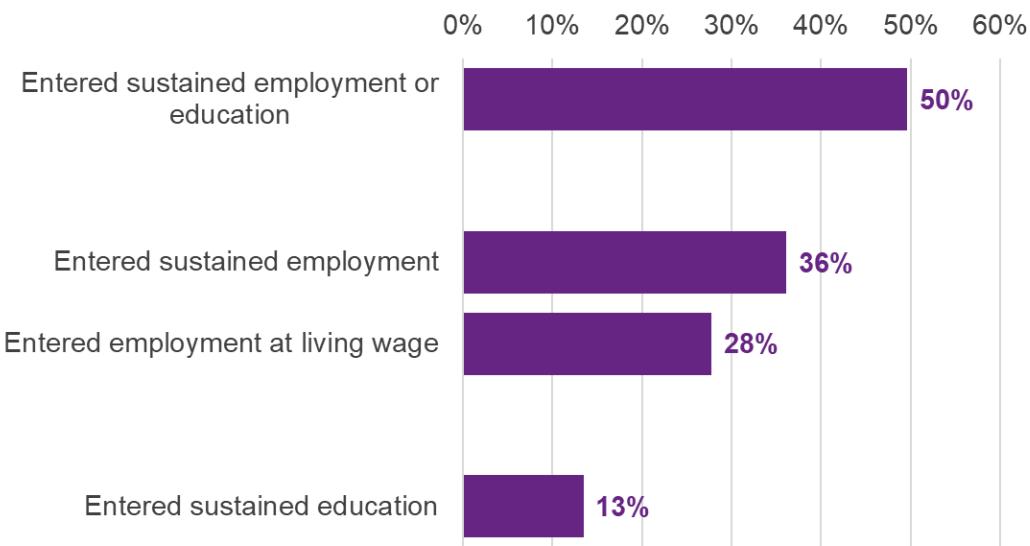
3 Young people lead sustained and fulfilling working lives

Out of those who completed the programme and were still in contact, 36% of young people went on to sustained employment. This may not seem particularly high, but it’s important to note that this impact is difficult to accurately measure in the short-term, and may have been impacted by providers’ ability to make contact with every participant who completed the programme.

With this in mind, it’s fair to say that Head 2Work has made good progress towards this impact.

A narrative is coming together that young people’s improved attitudes to work, increased autonomy and control and improved employability skills, has equipped many participants with strong foundations to lead sustained and fulfilling working lives in the future.

Figure 35 Percentage of participants entering sustained education or employment, or at a London Living Wage



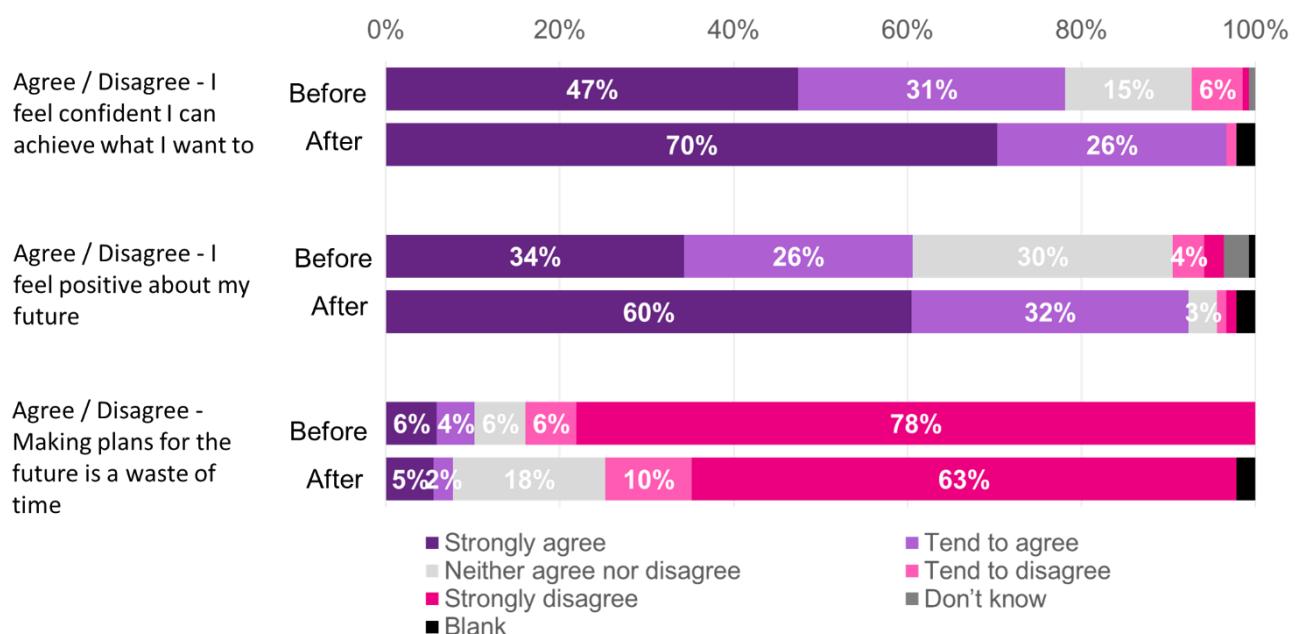
The Provider Stories (page 12) also make the case that Head 2Work's focus on developing young people's 'soft skills', such as confidence, relationship building, ability to engage with community and recognising their interests and talents, is key to leading fulfilling working lives—all of which Head 2Work has successfully supported as shown in **Section 6 Mechanisms of change**. Providers agreed that Head 2Work enabled young people to engage with work opportunities based on their own interests, rather than enforced work opportunities that may not be relevant to a person's life or interests. This will ultimately support young people towards finding employment they genuinely enjoy, which is more likely to be sustainable in the long-term.

4 Young people realise their potential and aspirations

As mentioned in the Mechanisms of Change p30, survey data provides evidence that Head 2Work has improved young people's ability to realise their potential and aspirations, improved their confidence in their ability to achieve what they want to, and more young people feel positive about their future having taken part in Head 2Work.

On leaving the programme, only 5% of all participants still did not feel positive about their future, and 7% think that planning is a waste of time. It's understandable to have a small proportion of participants who did not share a more positive experience, and this can potentially be linked to the difficulties of participating during a pandemic and cost -of living crisis, which significantly effected young people and their hope for the future.

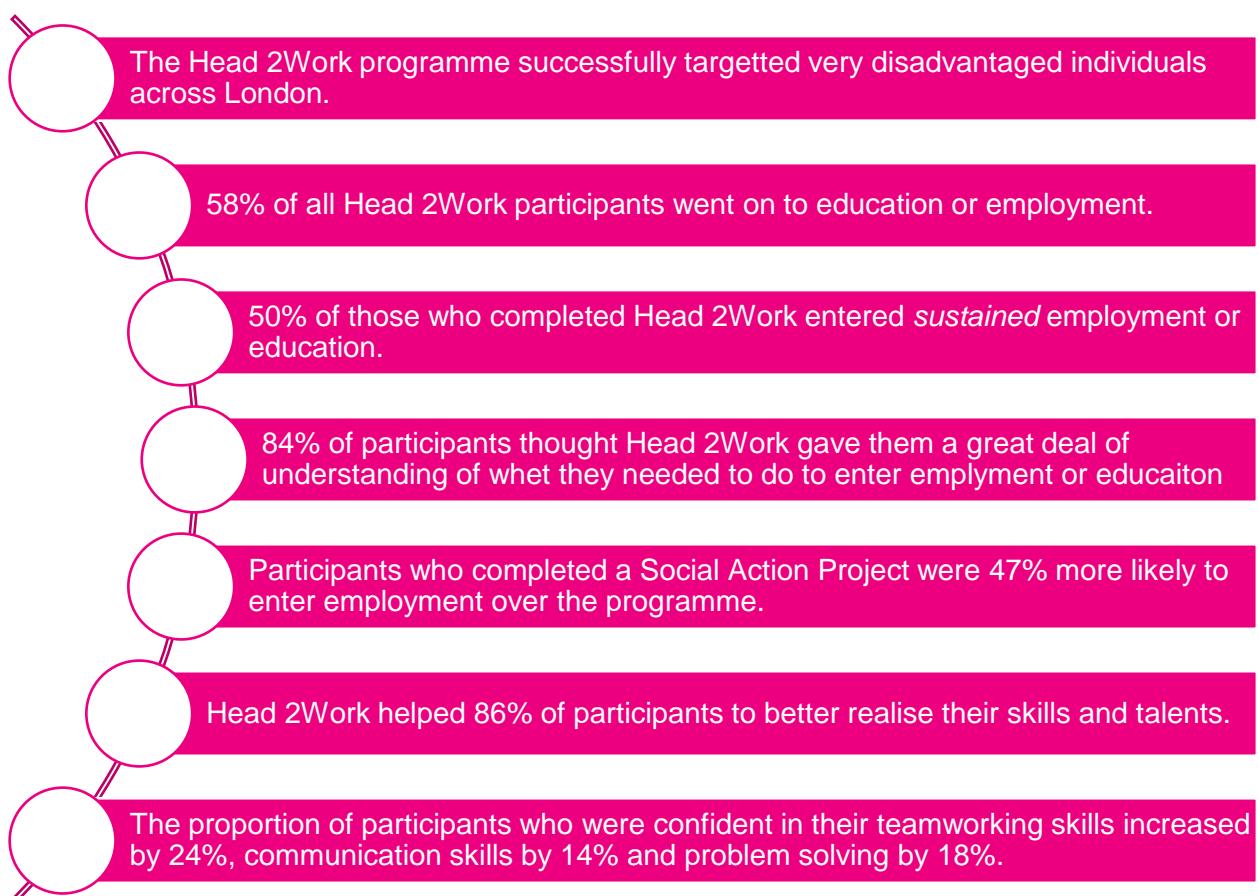
Figure 36 - percentage of participants agreeing with key statements about their future



9. Conclusions

The impact and effectiveness of Head 2Work

Whilst it's not possible to conclusively assess the extent to which participation in Head 2Work influenced progression into employment, education or training without a non-intervention group (see p62), evidence does support that Head 2Work contributed in many different ways to the lives of the young people who participated.



- The Head 2Work programme successfully targeted very disadvantaged individuals across London.
- 58% of all Head 2Work participants went on to education or employment.
- 50% of those who completed Head 2Work entered *sustained* employment or education.
- 84% of participants thought Head 2Work gave them a great deal of understanding of what they needed to do to enter employment or education.
- Participants who completed a Social Action Project were 47% more likely to enter employment over the programme.
- Head 2Work helped 86% of participants to better realise their skills and talents.
- The proportion of participants who were confident in their teamworking skills increased by 24%, communication skills by 14% and problem solving by 18%.

Head 2Work was successful reaching its target group of 400 London residents, aged 18-24 who are NEET.

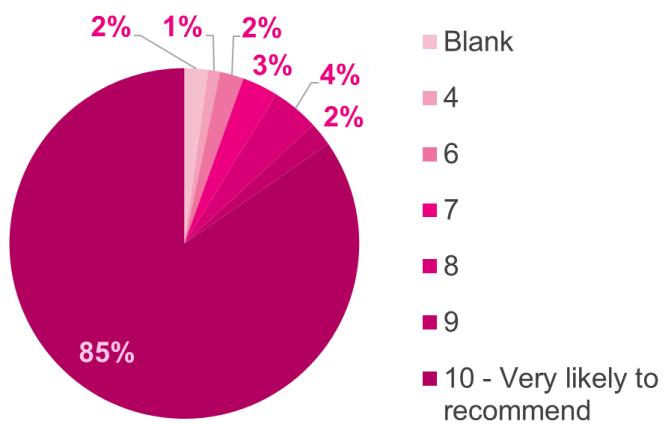
There is evidence that Head 2Work has been effective in bringing about its intended objectives:

- to support a minimum of 400 young people to transition into sustained employment or education
- To empower young people to realise their potential and aspirations, develop employability skills, secure employment and build the resilience needed to remain in employment.

As outlined in our previous analysis SAPs, engagement with advisers, and skills development workshops have been key in enabling young people to move out of their comfort zone, develop confidence, and raise their aspirations, giving them strong foundations to lead sustained and fulfilling working lives.

The vast majority of participants would recommend the programme to a friend or family member in a similar situation (figure 37, below).

Figure 37 Percentage of participants who would recommend Head 2Work to a friend or family member in a similar situation



The programme was also well regarded by provider organisations who felt that a similar pan-London programme would be highly beneficial, targeting other disadvantaged young people and deprived communities in London.

Strengths and successes of Head 2Work

Through our evaluation of the programme, NPC has identified a number of Head 2Work's key strengths and successes, which have been integral to achieving positive outcomes for young people.

Support from advisers

Advisers have been a key asset to the programme. The majority of participants built strong and positive relationships with trainers and advisers, which supported their development, confidence and resilience to overcome barriers to employment opportunities. The work of advisers and the impact they had on young people's progression and development highlights the holistic approach of Head 2Work, as support extended beyond the focus of employment outcomes, helping young people to develop as individuals.



Evidence from case studies and survey data show that Head 2Work advisers provided both emotional and practical support for young people. There are many accounts of young people confiding in their advisers about personal issues which were a barrier to their progress and development. By addressing these obstacles together, participants were able to develop the confidence to strive for job interviews and applications.

Advisers also helped young people with practical tasks which can feel overwhelming to young people facing multiple challenges, such as accessing a travelcard or photos for a passport, allowing young people in these cases to focus on their goals and career aspirations.

Advisers took a personalised and consistent approach to support which meant they could develop meaningful relationships with a smaller number of participants, leading to a much better chance of successful engagement and commitment from young people.

Programme flexibility and resilience through Covid

As highlighted in the provider stories, one of the most crucial strengths of the programme was its flexibility to adapt during the pandemic, and adjust to each participants journey, allowing them to re-enter if they became NEET again.

The programme was designed before the pandemic, and initially commissioned from August 2019 to July 2022, meaning there was less than eight months of pre-Covid planning and delivery. The UK went into its first national lockdown in March 2020, and Head 2Work's business-as-usual delivery was abruptly halted. The programme was forced to shift from in-person based delivery to unplanned, online delivery, which neither providers nor young people were equipped for.

The GLA supported providers to adapt to online delivery, granting additional funding for digital support and provision of laptops for delivery staff and participants who were otherwise digitally excluded.

The GLA also showed strong responsiveness by extending the programme twice, to account for the delays and barriers caused by the pandemic. This not only allowed providers more time for delivery and participants more opportunity to progress on the programme, but it also contributed to a trusting relationship between commissioner and provider, as it demonstrated the deep level of understanding the GLA had for the challenges and obstacles providers were met with. Flexible and adaptive support ultimately allowed providers to manage their delivery to a high level during such a challenging environment.

“Even though this project was challenging to get to grips with at first and was slow to get fully up-and-running, working with Douglas and Julie we generally got the support we needed, and this ended up being one of the easier projects to manage”

Head 2Work provider interviewee.

We heard from one provider interviewee that compared Head 2Work to other ESF funded projects, Head 2Work was more flexible in terms of its enrolment and retention of participants. In cases where young people left the programme early due to finding work, but did not end up sustaining it, they were able to rejoin the programme. The provider staff member shared that this approach better reflected the non-linear journey of participants, and Head 2Work's commitment to providing wrap-around, sustained support, which greatly improved overall engagement and success of the programme.

Effective Social Action

The GLA included Social Action participation as an explicit project deliverable in the contract, which made clear to providers that this was an important focus. Social Action Projects (SAPs) were integral to achieving positive outcomes for young people, but they were also one of the more challenging aspects of delivery during the pandemic. Providers needed to creatively adapt SAPs to run virtually, often having to identify activities young people could do by themselves online, rather than in groups or face-to-face.

Providers described that outlining SAPs in the contract incentivised high participation and engagement, that would not have been possible to achieve otherwise—especially given the difficulties of running SAP activities during lockdowns. At the end of the programme, the benefits of prioritising SAPs are clear, as data shows that those who completed an SAP were more than twice as likely to enter into employment or education.

Bolstering provider capacity and capability

As explored in the provider stories, one significant unintended consequence was that the support the GLA gave to providers through Covid enabled digital transformations to occur through the organisations and the individual advisers. This has helped both organisations develop a blended delivery model combining face-to-face and digital support and this is providing better inclusion for many participants. Offering blended support also helps provide participants with taster for how many sectors operate now.

“For me as an adviser, one of the biggest stories was about the digital transformation of this area of work. Many of the tools and techniques we now use I had never used in my life or career before this and Head 2Work really helped us make this change” Head 2Work provider interviewee

Limitations and opportunities for future programmes

Whilst reflecting on potential limitations of the Head 2Work programme, it is vital to take the impact of the pandemic into account and the evaluation team have aimed to consider the affects of the pandemic throughout the report. The section below outlines process-level limitations of the programme and makes suggestions for future programme learning.

Administrative burden

As reflected in the provider stories, providers found the level of programme administration and form-filling higher than other programmes. Many forms were paper-based and required multiple signatures from providers and participants, which was particularly difficult during lockdowns. This

"Programme designers need to think more about the frontline staff when it comes to administration. Both the advisers and young people would ask 'why do I need to sign 8 different forms?' Advisers often had to chase up young people for signatures and this risked jeopardising relationships between the advisers and young people."

Head 2Work provider interviewee

resulted in inefficient data processing and management, as well as putting considerable pressure on delivery staff.

For example, there were three separate forms required for enrolment which made the process laborious. In some cases, potential participants would drop off before completion of all three forms. Provider staff expressed that each SAP also required signatures from advisers and

young people at multiple stages, which felt tedious and a challenge for advisers to ensure participants signed repeated forms. This could even put a strain on advisers' relationships with young people.

It was also noted that some reporting processes were extremely challenging. In particular, providing proof of six months of pay for young people who entered employment. For young people in roles where payments were made on a weekly basis, proving six months of pay would require attaining around 24 pay slips, which took immense time from staff to get hold of and report.

Additionally, participant journeys were often non-linear—they may change jobs, or have a break from employment in a six month period, but it wasn't clear to providers how these discrepancies should be accurately recorded. Overall, the proof of payment administration was extremely time consuming and expensive, and it's likely that if the process were simpler, impact data for entering employment would be a lot higher than what it is.

Opportunity: Streamlining administrative tasks by identifying a bare minimum, keeping participants in mind, using digital forms over paper-based, combining forms to reduce volume, and making use of HMRC or DWP to simplify reporting on employment status. This could lead to significant efficiency gains in future employment, education and social action programmes.

Increasing choices and sense of autonomy for participants

One area for possible improvement was the sense of autonomy and control participants felt. 40% participants strongly agreed that they could decide what to do and then 49% tended to agree and this is markedly lower than results for other questions asked. This likely reflected limitations caused by the Covid pandemic, lockdowns and social distancing measures that reduced the diversity of the training and SAPs that could be offered.

Opportunity: Future 'get into work' programmes that apply a holistic, blended approach like Head 2Work would benefit from a greater diversity of opportunities available to participants for development and social action. Under different conditions, without a global pandemic, it is likely activities such as campaigning, community enhancements, contributing to foodbanks and other community organisations or fund-raising would be available, and it is important a variety is on offer to participants.

Absence of a control group

In order to confirm with statistical significance that an intervention such as Head 2Work has had a benefit, a 'control' or 'non-intervention' group is required. By studying a comparison group, you can estimate what would have happened without the intervention, creating what is called a counterfactual.

Creating a control group needs to happen at the same time as the intervention group is developed so that as many variables such as time frame remain the same. As potential participants for the programme are identified and approached, some need to be randomly assigned to the control group. The outcomes and impacts of this group are measured at the same intervals as those who participate in the initiative.

Opportunity: When designing future 'get into work' initiatives that target a complex population such as that of Head 2Work, it will be valuable to explore with the evaluation team how a control group could be developed in tandem with the delivery of the programme and how they would be assessed.

Data collection and reporting requirements

Over the course of the programme, NPC had ongoing conversations with providers and the GLA about challenges around data collection and reporting and whilst NPC, the GLA and the providers collaborated to improve and resolve issues along the programme, a few issues persisted that offer important lessons for future 'get into work' programmes.

A key issue was that a lot of vital data for the evaluation was not collected or submitted as it was not part of the delivery contract. The only activity data available for the evaluation was the completion of SAPs. No data was submitted for the skills assessment, the completion and nature of the bespoke training plans, the training and other support participants attended, or whether the training plan was fulfilled. This means that a high proportion of the programme's activities, and resources allocated, cannot be evaluated.

Similarly, completion of pre- and post- programme surveys was not incentivised or mandated. This led to relatively low response rates and coverage of participants; 32% for the pre-programme survey and 21% for the post-programme survey. This **severely** limits the reliability of the survey results, and the level of sophistication of analysis that can be applied.

Opportunity: Working with an evaluation team before the data collection and reporting requirements are defined, and before providers are chosen, will help ensure these important terms are appropriately baked into provider contracts before activities begin.

Where surveys are required, perhaps some skills transfer of how to conduct surveys, ensure strong response rates, and avoid bias would be beneficial to providers and ensure more reliable results.

Alternatively, arranging independent polling via the evaluation organisation or a dedicated polling organisation could be used but they would need to be well engaged with the programme, and have some visibility and trust of service users.

Data quality

Provider organisations tended to only report a single impact (for example confirming a single date of entering employment), regardless of the complexity of the participants journey. Participants are likely to enter and leave employment or education over their involvement with the programme and unfortunately this nuance has not been captured.

Further, it means the true benefit of the programme has been under-represented as from the three different datasets it is clear some participants entered education, then employment as the impact records differ at the different time intervals.

There was also a specific issue with the clarity of the enrolment questionnaire, where it was unclear if the basic skills question was asking if participants met the basic skills requirement or needed additional basic skills training.

Further, the surveys likely suffered from biasing as participants often completed questionnaires in front of their employment adviser or other provider staff. They may not have felt able to give honest responses and this may have led to possible exaggerated results. For example, 97% of one tranche of respondents gave the programme 10/10 in terms of recommending to a friend or family member. It is possible this is a true result, however these are extremely rare high levels of satisfaction.

It is also important to ensure that resource is available to provider organisations beyond the close of the programme for final programme data to be collected. This will allow important final outcome and impact data to be collected after the programme has finished and a fuller benefit can be capture. For example providing resource to collect survey results of participants up to a month after the programme.

Opportunity: If the programme is flexible and open to a variety of participant journeys, the data collection tools need to reflect this and be able to capture those nuances and complexities rather than a single impact. Also it is valuable to pilot enrolment questionnaires with provider organisations and a trial participant group to test that the questions and overall approach elicits what it needed.

To address biasing, provider staff may need to be reassured at the start that evaluations are not an employee performance management process, rather it is about assessing the programme. It would also help if contracts and resource extend beyond the end of programme activities to allow for final data collection.

Presumptions about Participants

As previously mentioned, designing programmes and administrative process needs to take account of the target groups. Beyond the level of admin burden, providers also mentioned that many of the communication methods such as telephone and email are now almost redundant for contacting young people who now only use and respond to messaging apps.

Further, once pandemic started the programme became very dependent on access to technology but many pts didn't have laptops or phones capable of this, adding added many steps to the process and creating delays.

Opportunity: The design of each element of the programme, including administration and use of IT needs to work with and for the target group. A robust sense-checking and piloting exercise is advised to avoid unintended consequences, potential exclusion and delays.

Mitigating funding ‘cliff-edges’

The Head 2Work programme was funded and tied to the EU’s European Social Fund, which not only operates in fixed 7-year terms linked to EU budget cycles but is also a fund the UK can no longer access after leaving the EU.

This meant that despite the extensions, there was no clear continuity of funding for Head 2Work beyond the programme close. This, together with more general uncertainty as the UK replaces the ESF with the Shared Prosperity Fund, meant that providers faced a serious cliff edge of funding once the programme was finished meaning that they could no longer employ advisers and capacity and continuity in the system was lost.

Some advisers and employees left long before the close of the programme due to this uncertainty making the final stages of delivery extremely challenging.

Opportunity: Providers expressed that it would help if commissioners were more mindful of the pressures providers face from transitions and ends of funding streams. It could be important and beneficial for the GLA and local boroughs to work together and think strategically about the capacity and sustainability of systems such as employment and training support to avoid sudden shocks to this system.

Other ad-hoc feedback:

- Providers voiced that they would have liked to convene more, not only with organisations delivering the same programme but beyond to other initiatives to take advantage of the GLA’s network of volunteering organisations. This could facilitate valuable knowledge exchange and also join up programmes to better help the young people that they serve.
- Some participants were critical of elements of the programme. For example, feeling:

- that communication was not clear or timely - *“I feel like communication could be improved since I would text the coach about an inquiry and didn't hear back for five days.” (participant)*
- that advisers could have done more given the level of disadvantage and need some participants had – *“I'm not sure, they did everything they could for me :)” (participant)*
- *That some levels of participation and lasting impressions were poor – “Oh my god it's so bad to say it now but I missed a lot of things on the programme, so I don't know exactly what the programme was” (participant).*

Opportunities for Head 2Work to endure

Even though ESF funding is unavailable to the GLA, and Head 2Work has concluded there are several important ways that Head 2Work can live on and the GLA can continue to monitor the success of the programme.

Completing the loop – from participants to mentors

There have undoubtedly been a number of true success stories for many participants. Their outcomes, but also their experience of the programme are valuable assets for their communities and future providers of ‘get into work’ schemes. It could be powerful to be able to draw on Head 2Work participants as mentors for future schemes and in that way passing on their lived experience and inspiring future NEET young people.

Due to data arrangements this may not be possible, but it could be explored with the Head 2Work providers and in the design of future initiatives.

Using the Employment Data Lab for Head 2Work and other ‘get into work’ schemes

As previously discussed, the Department for Work and pensions provides a service for organisations who work with people to help them into employment. The Employment Datalab provides these organisations employment outcomes data of their participants to help them understand the impact of their programmes, and the results publicly for the benefit of organisations in this sector.

When designing a future ‘get into work’ programme it would likely be valuable to see what support this team could support in terms of tracking employment outcomes and reducing the administrative burden on providers.

In terms of Head 2Work, the programme sought to work with those **most at risk** of becoming long-term NEET, by aiming to work with target groups including those from ethnic minorities, those with disabilities or health conditions, young women, and those who are homeless or lone parents.

This means that creating a control group and a robust, statistically significant result may be impossible as an intervention group with so many overlapping disadvantages is hard to adjust for.

But discussion with the DWP team have been positive and while there is a one-year waiting list, the team would be able to track Head 2Work participants long into the future and use tax and employment records to evaluate Head 2Work's long-term impact.