Youth Investment Fund Phase 1: process evaluation report

October 2022

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1 Executive summary

Ipsos UK has been appointed by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to deliver a process evaluation of Phase 1 of the Youth Investment Fund (YIF). This was carried out between May and September 2022.

The Youth Investment Fund's objective is to create, expand and improve local youth facilities and their services, in order to drive positive outcomes for young people, including improved mental health and physical wellbeing, and skills for life and work. The Fund provides investment to youth organisations to expand and improve facilities for youth activities in areas of need. These areas, referred to as "left-behind" areas, have been identified based on a combination of high need and low existing provision.

The Fund is being delivered in two phases, and administered by intermediary grant makers on behalf of DCMS. This report is about Phase 1 of the Youth Investment Fund which has now been completed. Phase 1 made up to £12m funding available to youth organisations for small-scale capital projects to be delivered within short timescales in the 2021/22 financial year. Phase 1 therefore aimed to address urgent or shorter-term demand for equipment and/or capital that would enhance youth services, in particular digital infrastructure (a need highlighted by the pandemic) and smaller-scale refurbishment and renovation. BBC Children in Need (CiN) were appointed by DCMS to be the intermediary grant maker to deliver this phase.

The aim of the process evaluation was to explore the reach of the funding, what has worked well and less well in implementing the Fund, and whether YIF Phase 1 has met its aims and objectives. The findings will inform the delivery of Phase 2 of the YIF, which was launched in summer 2022. They will also be used to inform future youth-related funds.

1.1   What has worked well, and less well, in implementing YIF Phase 1?

YIF Phase 1 received 1,270 applications and was substantially oversubscribed. The distribution of applications was roughly in line with the distribution of eligible areas, with the largest number of applications coming from the North West, followed by the West Midlands. Likewise, the distribution of grants also largely followed this pattern, suggesting that Phase 1 of the YIF achieved good regional coverage. The overall level of funding made available was increased from £10m to £12m (with overall spend of £11.7m), reflecting the higher than anticipated level of demand.

The vast majority of applicants were charitable organisations, and our survey of successful applicants suggests they had 14 staff and 20 volunteers on average – although 29% were run entirely by volunteers.

Organisations heard about the fund from a range of sources, most often the Children in Need website or other youth organisations. Larger organisations were more likely to have heard about the Fund from multiple sources. Umbrella and sector support organisations (such as Councils for Voluntary Service) are an important source of information for organisations with small numbers of staff.

Successful applicants we surveyed reported that the eligibility criteria for the fund were clear in terms of who could apply (100%) and for what (96%). Likewise, they also reported that the guidance on how to apply was clear (97%). However, Children in Need still received around 100 applications which had to be declined for reasons of eligibility, and some unsuccessful applicants reported that they did not understand why their application was declined.

Most survey respondents found the application process easy and reasonable for the size of grant. This was said to have compared favourably to other funds. Organisations with no paid staff were more likely than larger organisations to find the application difficult, but nevertheless 97% of these organisations were satisfied with their experience of the Fund (as were 94% of surveyed grant holders overall), and organisations with no staff were more likely than larger organisations to say that the process was reasonable relative to the size of the grant.

Two-thirds (64%) of successful applicants we surveyed had not received support with their application. This was typically either because they did not believe they needed support or because they had not had time to seek it. The smallest organisations (with no staff) were more likely to have received support, often from their organisation's national headquarters. Successful applicants praised Children in Need for answering questions promptly and providing clear guidance.

The high volume of applications meant that the grant selection process was first-come-first-served. If organisations were eligible, able to spend the money in time, and posed no significant risks or concerns, they were funded. This method allowed organisations to receive a decision quickly, which was appreciated by grant recipients. However, both successful and unsuccessful applicants expressed some concerns about the fairness of this selection process, since many applications were declined without being able to be reviewed.

The majority of organisations (88%) were satisfied with the time it took to hear back about their application and receive the funding. However, the timeframe in which organisations were required to spend the money had created widespread problems: applications opened in February 2022 and organisations were required to spend their grants by the end of March 2022. This had put pressure on grant holders, especially smaller organisations that had less flexibility with cash-flow, and in some cases led to purchases which were lower value-for-money as it was not possible to "shop around" for the best prices. Other grant recipients found that the equipment they had hoped to buy was not in stock when they needed to buy the items. Children in Need had helped organisations to manage some of these difficulties.

1.2   How far and in what ways did the YIF Phase 1 meet its objectives?

Youth organisations that received Phase 1 funding report that they are now able to provide more and higher quality activities to young people as a result of the grant.

Many grant applications were for several different uses of the fund, with the purchase of equipment to expand and enrich youth activities perceived by grantees as the most impactful use of the funding. This was followed by the purchase of vehicles or mobile units, which organisations used to expand existing provision and bring activities to new locations that were isolated and "left behind".

In terms of the benefits of improved and expanded youth provision, nearly all (98%) of surveyed grant holders thought this would improve the mental health and wellbeing of the young people they work with, with two-thirds saying the grant would contribute to this to a great extent. More than half of grant holders thought the grant would also contribute a great extent to improvements in young people's social, emotional (60%) and practical skills (52%).

The fund was also reported to have had positive effects on youth organisations themselves, in terms of reducing the burden on staff and volunteers of making multiple trips to transport young people or storing large quantities of equipment at home.

Most grantees did not identify barriers that could potentially limit the impact of the fund. In a few cases, the recruitment of staff and volunteers could not keep up with the growing need for youth provision in deprived areas, which could potentially limit the impact of the purchased equipment. Collaboration across community organisations and sharing of equipment purchased through YIF grants was identified as a key factor in enabling greater impact of the investments made.

Youth organisations consistently fed back that they faced ongoing challenges in accessing funding, and reported that YIF Phase 1 had been an unusual opportunity in terms of the relatively large amounts available to smaller organisations. Some grant holders said that they were unaware of any other funding sources they could have used for the equipment or works they wanted. Others believed they may have been ultimately able to access alternative sources of funding, but that this would have been a much slower process perhaps taking several years.

1.3 Demand for Phase 2

Nearly three-quarters (72%) of surveyed grant applicants expressed interest in applying for Phase 2. However, this was largely with expanding or repurposing existing facilities in mind. Only around a third (36%) of those interested in applying for Phase 2 were interested in applying for a new building. This lower level of interest was typically due to the assumption that their organisation would not have the capacity to do so: in particular, organisations cited concerns around the time and resources required to apply, getting planning permission, and finding firms to do the construction work. This level and nature of interest may reflect the small size of many Phase 1 applicants.

A relatively small proportion of survey participants (11% of those interested in Phase 2) expressed interest in a modular building. Findings from interviews suggest this may partly be due to low awareness of this as an option, but some also expressed concerns that a pre-designed building might not meet local needs.

Organisations that were interested in applying for a new building believed that this would reduce their running costs, provide a consistent space for young people to drop-in outside of school hours, and could be shared with other local organisations.

2 Introduction

Ipsos UK has been appointed by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to deliver a process evaluation of Phase 1 of the Youth Investment Fund (YIF) and an impact feasibility study for Phase 2 of the YIF. This document reports the findings from the process evaluation, which was carried out between May and September 2022.

2.1 The Youth Investment Fund

The Youth Investment Fund forms part of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)'s wider National Youth Guarantee, a £560 million investment to ensure young people have access to more activities, trips away from home and volunteering opportunities. This was informed by DCMS's Youth Review[1], which engaged a range of stakeholders, including around 6,000 young people, to develop a clear direction for policy relating to (out-of-school) youth provision.

The Youth Investment Fund's objective is to create, expand and improve local youth facilities and their services, in order to drive positive outcomes for young people, including improved mental health and physical wellbeing, and skills for life and work. The Fund will provide up to £368 million of investment; providing capital funding to youth organisations to expand and improve facilities for youth activities in areas of need. These areas, referred to as "left-behind" areas, have been identified based on a combination of high need and low existing provision (determined by current expenditure per head on youth provision[2]).

The Fund is being delivered in two phases, and administered by intermediary grant makers on behalf of DCMS. This report is about Phase 1 of the Youth Investment Fund which has now been completed.

- **Phase 1** made up to £12m funding available to youth organisations for small-scale capital projects to be delivered within short timescales in the 2021/22 financial year. BBC Children in Need (CiN) were appointed by DCMS to be the intermediary grant maker to deliver this phase. Applications opened in February 2022 and organisations were required to spend their grants by the end of March 2022. Phase 1 therefore aimed to address urgent or shorter-term demand for equipment and/or capital that would enhance youth services, in particular digital infrastructure (a need highlighted by the pandemic) and smaller-scale refurbishment and renovation. Anticipated outcomes from Phase 1 included organisations being able to offer new activities (such as new sports, DJing, outdoor activities), buildings being more secure and young people feeling safer, and more young people being able to participate in activities.

- **Phase 2** is being delivered over the next three financial years from 2022/23 to 2024/25. Phase 2 of the Youth Investment Fund is largely a capital fund (up to £288m) with some resource funding (up to £60m) for activities to be delivered in up to 300 new or redeveloped youth facilities. The Fund is being administered by a consortium of four organisations: Social Investment Business (lead organisation), National Youth Agency, Key Fund, and Resonance.

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-review-summary-findings-and-government-response/youth-review-summary-findings-and-government-response

[2] The method used for selecting eligible areas can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-investment-fund-yif-places-selection-methodology/youth-investment-fund-yif-places-selection-methodology

2.2   Evaluation aims and objectives

The aim of the process evaluation of Phase 1 of the YIF was to explore the reach of the funding, what has worked well and less well in implementing the Fund, and whether YIF Phase 1 has met its aims and objectives to create, expand and improve local youth facilities and their services. The findings will inform the delivery of Phase 2 of the YIF, which was launched in summer 2022. They will also be used to inform future youth-related funds.

A full list of the questions the process evaluation sought to address is presented in an annexe to this report.

2.3   Methodology

Scoping stage

The evaluation began with a scoping stage, the purpose of which was to deepen our understanding of the context, rationale and strategic intent of YIF, progress and learning to date in implementation, plans for Phase 2, and expectations from the study. It was informed by an inception meeting with DCMS, a desk review of relevant documentation and data on YIF and an initial round of consultations with key stakeholders from DCMS and Children in Need who have been involved in the design, development and/or delivery of the YIF.

Monitoring information

DCMS provided the evaluation team with organisations' application data that had been submitted to Children in Need. This included information about applicants, the amounts requested and a breakdown of what this would be spent on, and the anticipated impact of the funding.

Online survey of grant recipients

An online survey was issued to all organisations who had received a grant from the Fund. Over half of all grant recipients (56%, 235 organisations out of 418) completed this survey, which was live between 16th June and 7th July 2022.

The survey was designed to complement the application data. The survey questionnaire focused on questions around how organisations had heard about the Fund, the process of applying and receiving their grant, and their overall experience of the Fund. It also contained a small number of questions about the anticipated impact of the grant on their organisation, and awareness of and interest in Phase 2 of YIF. On average, the survey took 8 minutes to complete.

Interviews with successful and unsuccessful applicants

One-to-one interviews (and a small number of small group discussions) were carried out with representatives of organisations that had applied to the Fund. A total of 29 interviews were completed with organisations that had received a grant and 5 with organisations that had had their application declined. These interviews took place between 28th June and 22nd August 2022 by telephone or video call, lasting between 30 minutes and one hour.

The purpose of the interviews was to capture the breadth of YIF grant recipient experiences, including how this varied by factors such as organisation location, size, types of activities delivered, numbers of young people engaged and value of grant award. They explored in depth what worked well and less well about organisations' experience with the Fund, how they used the grant, and the perceived impact of this on their organisation and the young people they work with.

Case studies

Four case studies were completed with organisations that had received a YIF grant. The purpose of these case studies was to illustrate the types of organisations that have received YIF funding, the young people that they work with and how the funding has been used. These case studies took place in September 2022. Three of them involved face-to-face visits to the youth organisations, while one was conducted virtually.

2.4   Structure of the report

The remainder of this document is structured as follows:

- Chapter 3 presents findings relating to the implementation of the Fund and what has worked well and less well.

- Chapter 4 presents findings relating to early outcomes from Phase 1 in terms of expanding and improving local youth facilities and their services.

- Chapter 5 presents the findings relevant to Phase 2 of the fund, including levels of demand, organisations' views on applying for Phase 2 funding, and findings around what monitoring and data collection youth organisations carry out.

- Throughout the report there are four case studies illustrating projects that were funded by YIF Phase 1.

Some of the images in the case studies belong to the relevant organisations, this means they own the copyright and permission was sort to use these images.

3 Implementation of Phase 1

Key findings

The distribution of applications and grants is roughly in line with the distribution of eligible areas, suggesting that Phase 1 of the Fund achieved good regional coverage in terms of publicity and grant awards. The North West region contained by far the largest number of eligible areas (22% of all eligible areas), and projects from the North West made up over a quarter of all YIF funded projects.

Most survey respondents found the application process easy and reasonable for the size of grant. This was said to have compared favourably to other funds. Organisations with no paid staff were more likely than larger organisations to find the application difficult, but nevertheless 97% of these organisations were satisfied with their overall experience of the Fund, and they were more likely than larger organisations to say that the process was reasonable relative to the size of the grant.

Two-thirds of successful applicants had not received support with their application. This was typically either because they did not believe they needed support or because they had not had time to seek it. The smallest organisations (with no staff) were more likely to have received support, often from their organisation's national headquarters.

The majority of successful applicants were happy with the time it took to hear back about their application and receive the funding. However, some grantees raised concerns about the fairness of the first-come-first-served selection process.

Some grantees struggled to purchase the equipment in the required timeframe. This put pressure on staff and volunteers, and sometimes led to purchases which were lower value for money.

The timescales for reporting back to Children in Need were seen as too soon to provide meaningful information about the impact of the grant. Otherwise, the reporting process was seen as simple and relevant.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter covers what worked well and less well in implementing Phase 1 of the Youth Investment Fund (YIF).

The findings presented are based on Fund monitoring information, scoping interviews with those involved in administering the Fund, interviews with grant recipients and unsuccessful applicants, case studies with grant recipients, and a survey of grant recipients.

3.2 Profile of applicants

Despite the short timeframe for applications, Phase 1 was significantly oversubscribed, indicating high demand for capital funding amongst organisations in the sector. A total of 1,270 organisations applied to Phase 1, of which 423 applications were approved and 351 declined (section 3.6 on selection process

discusses the most common reasons for this). A further 496 applications could not be assessed within the time available.

3.2.1 Profile of applications by organisation type and size

Of the applications received, 32% were from registered charities and 22% from charitable incorporated organisations (Figure 3.1). A further 16% were from uniformed organisations and 15% were from community interest companies. The 7% in the 'other' category included exempt (non-registered) charities, sports clubs and statutory services/schools.

Figure 3.1: Types of organisations that applied for the YIF

Registered charity	32%
Charitable incorporated organisation	22%
Uniformed organisation	16%
Community interest company	15%
Company limited by guarantee	6%
Local Authority	2%
Other	7%

Source: CiN data (provided April 2022) on 774 organisations that applied to YIF and had their applications assessed.

Organisations that were funded by the YIF had an average of 14 members of staff and 20 volunteers (Table 3.1), based on our survey data. However, there was wide variation between organisations on these measures. Of those who responded to the survey, almost one in three (29%) had no paid staff, whilst one in ten (9%) had more than 50 paid staff. Only 3% of organisations had no volunteers.

Table 3.1: Number of staff at the organisations that took part in the grant recipient survey

	Paid staff	Volunteers
None	29%	3%
1 to 4	16%	16%
5 to 9	16%	20%
10 to 24	20%	35%
25 to 49	11%	14%
50 or more	9%	13%
Mean	**14**	**20**

Source: Ipsos survey of grant recipients (June 2022). Base: All survey respondents (235).

Feedback from interviews with grantees suggested that the largest organisations (those with more than 50 paid staff) offered a wider variety of youth activities and were more likely to have formed partnerships with schools, councils and other organisations. Most of the smaller organisations interviewed were run by volunteers (with no paid staff).

3.2.2 Profile of applications and awards by region

In line with the government's levelling up agenda, the Fund was designed to prioritise "left-behind" areas of England. Table 3.2 below shows the distribution of eligible areas across the 9 English regions, as well as the distribution of applications and grants.

The North West region contained by far the largest number of eligible areas (22% of all eligible areas), and an even higher proportion of both applications and grants. Projects from the North West made up over a quarter of all YIF funded projects.

The distribution of applications and grants is roughly in line with the distribution of eligible areas, suggesting that Phase 1 of the Fund achieved good regional coverage in terms of publicity and awards. As with the North West, London, the South West and the East Midlands had a higher proportion of applications and grants than of eligible areas. The regions that had relatively fewer applications and grants were Yorkshire and the Humber, the North East and the South East.

Table 3.2: Geographical distribution of organisations that applied for the YIF

	Proportion of YIF eligible areas in this region	Proportion of YIF applications	Proportion of YIF grants
London	2%	5%	4%
North East	13%	9%	10%
North West	22%	26%	27%
South East	14%	10%	10%
South West	8%	10%	11%
Yorkshire & the Humber	11%	8%	8%
East Midlands	9%	10%	10%
East of England	11%	10%	9%
West Midlands	11%	11%	11%

Source: IGM data on eligible postcodes (proportion of eligible areas = proportion of eligible postcodes that are in this region). CiN data (provided April 2022) on 774 organisations that applied to YIF and had their applications assessed.

3.2.3 Profile of awards by provision

Insights from interviews with grantees suggested that arts and crafts, sports and outdoor activities were among the most common activities offered by Phase 1 grantees. Most of these services and provisions were offered to children and young people living locally, with some also targeting specific groups such as
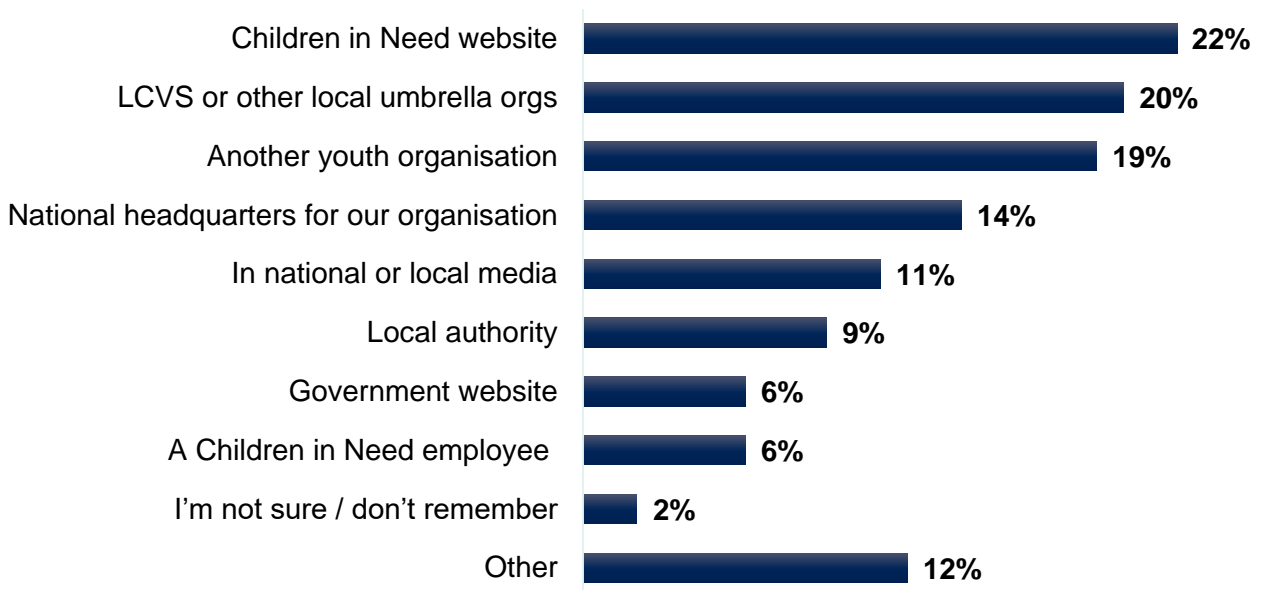
young people with disabilities or additional needs, young people from the LGBT+ community, and those with experience of the criminal justice system.

3.3 Programme launch

Phase 1 of the YIF was heavily oversubscribed, suggesting that publicity worked well. The survey identified a wide range of channels from which successful applicants had heard about the fund, with some hearing about it from several different sources.

Grantees who responded to the survey were most likely to have heard about the YIF from the Children in Need website (22%), umbrella or network youth organisations (20%) or other youth organisations (19%).

Figure 3.2: How successful applicants had heard about the Youth Investment Fund

Source	Percentage
Children in Need website	22%
LCVS or other local umbrella orgs	20%
Another youth organisation	19%
National headquarters for our organisation	14%
In national or local media	11%
Local authority	9%
Government website	6%
A Children in Need employee	6%
I'm not sure / don't remember	2%
Other	12%

Source: Ipsos survey of grant recipients (June 2022). Base: All survey respondents (235).

Larger organisations were more likely to say that they had heard about the YIF from multiple sources. Interviews with grantees suggested that larger organisations were more likely to be better connected, with many points of contact with other youth organisations, local councils or their national headquarters, and with dedicated staff working on fundraising. Some successful applicants described hearing about the fund from grant brokers whose role is to match them with funding opportunities based on their profile.

> **"We'd been aware the fund was coming for some time. We knew when the fund opened because we heard about it from [name of charity] and the other one was [name of charity]. So, two larger youth bodies told us about it. … [Knew they were eligible because] there was a briefing by Children in Need, which I found really useful. Workshops are also helpful and places like your local CVS can help as well. Having access to a support network is useful."** – Grant recipient

However, the majority (86%) of successful applicants had heard about the fund from only one source. These applicants tended to be smaller. Some smaller organisations said they had experienced difficulty in accessing information about the fund.

"It was very difficult to find out about it, I heard a rumour and then I googled and googled and asked the council's external funding department to look into it and they couldn't [find it] … it felt like a secret and then [the portal] opened and closed immediately." – Unsuccessful applicant

This suggests that organisations with existing channels of communication to other youth organisations, voluntary services or local councils were able to learn about the fund more easily.

For Phase 2, it will be important to use multiple channels for reaching smaller organisations and ensure that bodies from whom small organisations are likely to seek information (such as local authorities, CVS organisations and other umbrella bodies, national headquarters of youth organisations, and grant brokers) are well-informed about the Fund.

Case study 1: Shanklin Youth and Community Centre

Background: needs of the young people and the role of SYCC

Shanklin is a coastal town on the Isle of Wight, with a population of around 10,000 people. The Isle has pockets of deprivation and few employment and community engagement opportunities for young people. Seasonal hospitality work is the most common employment option for young people in Shanklin.

"There is nothing for young people to do here except maybe wait for a ferry to the mainland." – Young member of SYCC

"There is quite a lot of sport, but it is quite selective. You have only two cinemas on the whole island. Transport is a big issue. The prices are proportionally higher, while the wages are proportionately lower compared to the mainland." – SYCC volunteer

Shanklin Youth and Community Centre (SYCC) was set up in the 1960s with the objective of creating an accessible, affordable, and safe space for young people to stay connected with their peers and community. SYCC is a charity organisation that is run by volunteers and has no paid staff. The lead volunteers all grew up in the Shanklin area and were members of SYCC themselves.

SYCC membership has no age restrictions - children and young people of all ages are welcome to take part. Before the pandemic, the club consistently gathered about "350 young people every Friday night". SYCC has not yet recovered its attendance numbers due to restrictions introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited the extent to which young people from different schools were allowed to meet.

In terms of activities, volunteers organise "the core offer" of the club, which typically involves a few weekly social nights, and the young people take on leadership roles to organise events that are of interest to them. Youth-initiated activities include table tennis, crafts, and drama nights. The community aspect of the club means that other youth groups are welcome to use their building space. Space rentals help SYCC stay financially viable.

Figure 1 Shanklin, the Isle of Wight

Figure 2 YIF Phase 1 Eligibility Areas around Shanklin

Experience with the YIF and use of the fund

SYCC heard about the YIF fund from a local community action group which regularly shares information about upcoming funding opportunities with organisations in the area. The club applied for £8,295 to purchase a camera, drone, two monitors, and an audio recorder to expand their film and photography projects. The person responsible for the YIF application had extensive experience of applying for grants and is consistently seeking alternative sources of funding, although they did not have a specific alternative funding option in mind at the time of applying.

SYCC reported in their survey feedback that they were very satisfied with the application process. During the interview, the organisation's volunteer co - lead described the application process as 'excellent' as the questions in the application were easy to understand, the application process was not too time-consuming, and the online platform for uploading the application was easy to navigate.

"The number of times in my life that I have applied and then waited weeks to hear back. This was far simpler. [Now there are many] professional fundraisers, so a lot of funding is removed from the little groups who need help. This format was very good for small organisations. We are a little group that is run completely by volunteers who have day jobs." – SYCC volunteer

In line with feedback from other grant recipients, SYCC appreciated the quick turnaround of the decision on their application but then struggled with spending the allocated funding within the short timeframe available. In the time between funding application and award, the availability and prices of cameras had changed, and they had to go through the process of selecting which equipment to buy again.

In terms of reporting back to Children in Need, SYCC has worked with them in the past and so found the reporting format and requirements familiar and easy.

Early outcomes and long-term projections

The purchase of the equipment will enable more young people in Shanklin to have exposure to film - making and photography, which they might not have access to otherwise. The process of making films about Shanklin is seen by the volunteers as improving young people's confidence, teaching them various skills including technical skills, the ability to work collaboratively across age groups, and to carry out a project to the end:

"It builds their self-esteem, to give them a purpose in some respects. For example [name] was very shy and through [the filming projects] she got out of that shyness. For me it is a great achievement that she wanted to stand in front of the camera, she wanted to do some readings. If there is a group of six to seven children, one can do the reading, while the others can be filming them. It is a process, one can be holding the microphone, one can be holding the camera, so they learn the whole process." – SYCC volunteer

"We take young people out to do photography. We can print pictures they take. It gives them confidence. I want them to touch the camera, and try to take some pictures. The core offer has been there, but this adds to what we do. This opens opportunities for more young people to do projects they want." – SYCC volunteer

During the fieldwork visit, the young people using the equipment shared their excitement about learning how to operate the cameras and especially the drone. One of the young people had completed the formal training to get a drone license and has since created a YouTube channel where he shares the landscape videos of the Isle of Wight:

"I've wanted to try a drone for over five years. When we got it I asked if I could open the package. I might never be able to open a brand new drone in my life. […] It is my main hobby now. […] I even have a YouTube channel now; can I show it to you?" – Young member of SYCC

Early outcomes and long-term projections

The drone licensing requirement and the GDPR regulations of filming in public spaces are the only potential limitations to the impact of the funding. Without a licence, young people are technically not allowed to use the drone for filming. To reduce the risk of violating GDPR requirements, the club is focusing on producing films with footage of historical buildings and landscapes. With regards to licensing, they try to give young people a taster of flying a drone in private spaces to decide whether they want to get a licence.

Another potential limitation is the difficulty of recruiting young people to the club because of the increasing rate of home-schooling in Shanklin. Both the volunteers and the young people have expressed concern that young people who would benefit most from the club activities are the most difficult to recruit and engage because they historically recruit their participants through schools:

"There are two areas of acute deprivation in the Bay [with] huge number of people home schooled, probably two or three schools' worth of children." – SYCC volunteer

[People don't go back to school] for all sorts of reasons: transitions that do not work, mental health, COVID and everything like that. That changed what they are accustomed to. Increase in anxiety and depression. There is a lot of bullying. With cyberbullying, that's what encourages people to study at home. I was one of the lucky ones who didn't get bullied. – Young member of SYCC

Further to the above, the SYCC member added that young people tend to leave the Isle due to the lack of activities and employment in the area. As a young person who wants to stay on the Isle of Wight, having a community to learn video and photography with makes them feel more connected to Shanklin and excited about the decision to stay.

SYCC were not intending to apply for Phase 2 funding themselves as they already have a building. However, they mentioned that they will be supporting other organisation on the Isle in their application as their space needs refurbishment.

3.4   Eligibility criteria

Grant holders surveyed said that the information about the YIF was clear and straightforward. All respondents (100%) found the guidance about whether their organisation was eligible to apply very or fairly clear, and almost all (99%) found the aims and objectives of the fund to be clear. Similarly, there was clarity on what organisations needed to do to apply (97%), what they could apply for (96%) and where they could go with any enquiries (86%)[3].

> **"It was incredibly simple for a relatively large amount of money [to work out that we were eligible]. We found it a really simple process and it was obvious we would be eligible and suitable."** – Grant recipient

Unsuccessful applicants also found the eligibility criteria clear in terms of who could apply, with some receiving emails to inform them of their suitability for the fund.

> **"We were already a previous grantee of Children in Need and received an email that we were eligible to apply and that it was on a first-come-first-served basis and it outlined what we needed… [also researched eligibility criteria] through DCMS sites to make sure what we were applying for was appropriate."** – Unsuccessful applicant

However, 49 applicants were turned down for not working with enough young people in the relevant age group, 42 for including ineligible items in their budget and 39 for being outside a left-behind area (of 351 declined applications altogether), suggesting some degree of confusion or misunderstanding about eligibility. In interviews, some unsuccessful applicants reported that they did not understand why their application had been declined and had been unable to find this out.

Some questions about eligibility were still being resolved during the assessment process. This was due to it being a new Fund with different eligibility criteria to Children in Need's usual grants, and applications being received from types of organisations or for types of equipment that had not been anticipated. Stakeholders commented that it would have been helpful to have had a test phase to identify these areas of uncertainty. However, there was insufficient time for this and those involved felt that the process worked as well as it could have.

3.5   Application process

The application process was generally considered to be simple and clear. More than two-thirds of successful applicants (69%) who responded to the survey said they found the overall application process easy, with 17% finding it neither easy nor difficult and 14% finding it difficult.

Organisations with no paid staff were more likely than larger organisations to find the application difficult, but nevertheless 97% of these organisations were satisfied with their overall experience of the Fund, and they were more likely than larger organisations to say that the process was reasonable relative to the size of the grant.

3.5.1 Length of time required for application

The majority (71%) of survey respondents found the application process to be reasonable for the size of the grant they were applying for. In interviews, grant recipients praised the application process in comparison to other grants they had applied for in the past.
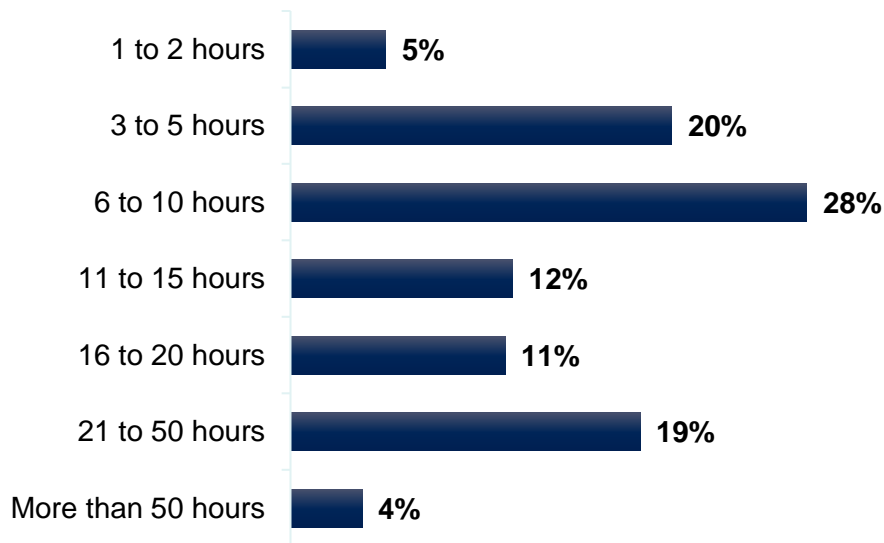
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[3] Percentages are those who said that the guidance on these points was "very clear" or "fairly clear".

"It was an incredibly quick turnover, not as time-consuming as other grants can be. Some applications with half of that amount have taken up an inordinate amount of time." – Grant recipient

However, almost a quarter of respondents (23%) found the application process unreasonable. In interviews, the elements of the process that were seen as more demanding were typically related to safeguarding and governance, particularly the need to provide documented policies; the time needed to gather cost information from suppliers; and the overall short timeframe to apply.

Almost half (48%) of survey respondents had spent between three and ten hours on their application. Feedback from interviewees suggested that this was regarded as appropriate and proportionate.

Figure 3.3: The time it took successful applicants to complete their application

1 to 2 hours	5%
3 to 5 hours	20%
6 to 10 hours	28%
11 to 15 hours	12%
16 to 20 hours	11%
21 to 50 hours	19%
More than 50 hours	4%

Source: Ipsos survey of grant recipients (June 2022). Base: All survey respondents (235).

Organisations who applied for the largest grants generally took more time to complete their applications. Those who applied for larger sums of money (over £40,000) were more likely than those applying for smaller sums to take 21 to 50 hours to complete their application. However, almost one in three (28%) who spent more than 21 hours (equivalent to three working days) applied for less than £20,000, indicating that some people take more time on applications, regardless of the size of the grant.

Reasons given for needing more time to write an application included lack of experience in writing bids, difficulties using IT generally (unrelated to the YIF) and needing time and input from other people to complete certain sections of the application. One grantee suggested that having the word count and list of all the questions on the first screen would have made planning and completing the application easier, especially for people with dyslexia. One organisation described taking over a week for a grant of less than £20,000 because the application was passed around to various volunteers at the organisation and there were numerous iterations before it was submitted. Others described the application taking longer to write because they had brainstorming sessions lasting a few hours prior to writing taking place.

Smaller organisations who applied for larger grants tended to report that they took a long time to complete the application. Despite this, they tended to be positive when describing the application process overall. One successful applicant who took around 10 hours to complete their application over a

two-week period felt that it was simple to complete. The application itself was described as being "easy", "straightforward" and "well laid out".

Some respondents made favourable comparisons with other grants they have applied for and commented that the process was accessible for organisations with no paid staff. Organisations with no staff who found the application easy tended to have previous experience writing bids.

> **"The application process was a dream. It wasn't overcomplicated, it was simple, and I didn't feel like I had to prove anything. For some funds I've felt like I'm selling my soul. For a grassroots charity that doesn't employ anyone, let alone professional bid writers, it was really easy and to the point."** – Grant recipient

Other applicants with less experience commented that they would have found an example application useful in terms of judging what to write. Due to the first-come-first-served application process (see section 3.6), the quality of written bid answers does not appear to have been a major factor in awarding YIF Phase 1 funding. However, providing example answers where appropriate may be helpful in terms of supporting and reassuring less experienced applicants to future funds. Another suggestion was to allow applicants to include articles and links to their website illustrating the work they do for additional context; however, this would potentially give some organisations an unfair advantage.

3.5.2 Support for applications

The majority of grant holders (64%) reported that they did not receive support with their application. In interviews, applicants explained they did not need to seek support because they had a lot of experience writing bids, and could draw on information they had put together in the past. However, some applicants also reported they had insufficient time to seek support because of the short deadlines for applying.

Organisations with no paid staff were more likely to have received some support with their application (only 33% had not). This may reflect that they were more likely to have found it difficult, or that smaller organisations were typically uniformed youth groups with national headquarters, since the most common source of guidance was headquarters of national youth organisations (17%). This was followed by another youth organisation (6%), their local Council for Voluntary Service, or other local networks (4%). One organisation that received a larger grant (between £40,000 and £50,000) described receiving support from their organisation's headquarters as well as attending workshops by professional grant writers.

Over half (57%) of successful applicants surveyed had interactions with Children in Need while writing their applications, and the majority of these said they found this support to be helpful. Children in Need were particularly praised for providing clear guidance, answering questions quickly and coming to organisations to clarify points instead of simply disregarding their application.
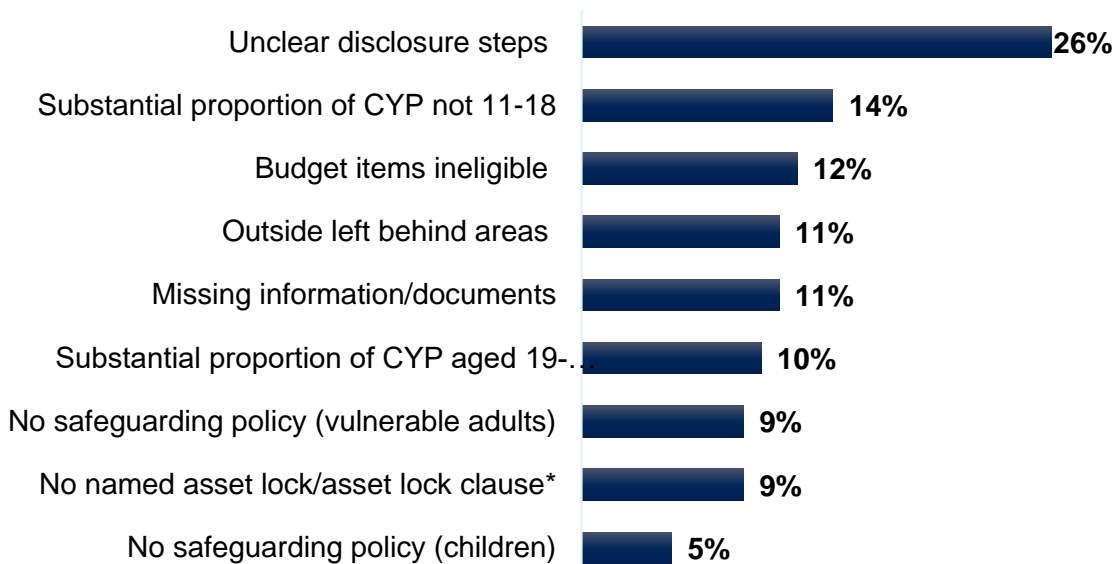
3.6   Selection process

Individuals from DCMS and Children in Need, interviewed at scoping stage, agreed that the high volume of applications had been well managed. There was said to have been positive feedback on the Fund from the sector via the national youth sector groups. Children in Need had relevant expertise in managing grant processes and were able to draw on their existing systems, including an online application platform and pool of grant assessors. However, the application and selection process took place over a much shorter timeframe than typical for Children in Need (an average of 22 days for a decision to be made, including weekends).

The application form and scrutiny process was stripped back to its essential elements, so that applicants could apply and receive a decision more quickly. Nevertheless, Children in Need have very strict safeguarding requirements and the most frequent reason for applications being declined was these not being met: 26% of declined applicants were declined because they did not have clear disclosure steps to take in the event of an incident or concern about a child, and others were declined because they did not have a safeguarding policy for children (5%) or vulnerable adults (9%). The Scout Association provided guidance to individual Scout groups on how to complete the application form, which resulted in applications from uniformed organisations (largely Scout groups) having the highest success rate. It may be worth considering providing similar guidance as a standard part of the application process for Phase 2, so that small organisations without a central headquarters are not disadvantaged.

Other common reasons for applications being declined were a substantial proportion of users not being in the 11-18 age group; ineligible items in the budget; being outside one of the selected "left-behind" areas; and missing information or documents in the application form.

Figure 3.4: Main reasons applications were declined

Reason	%
Unclear disclosure steps	26%
Substantial proportion of CYP not 11-18	14%
Budget items ineligible	12%
Outside left behind areas	11%
Missing information/documents	11%
Substantial proportion of CYP aged 19-…	10%
No safeguarding policy (vulnerable adults)	9%
No named asset lock/asset lock clause*	9%
No safeguarding policy (children)	5%

Source: CiN data (provided April 2022) on 351 organisations that applied to YIF and had their applications declined. Applications could be declined for more than one reason.

*An asset lock describes what happens to any property or money if the organisation closes. To meet CiN's requirements, the clause must say that these are to be given to another not-for-profit organisation with similar charitable aims.

The grant selection process was first-come-first-served, as there was insufficient time to compare all applications. If organisations were eligible, able to spend the money in time, and posed no significant risks or concerns, they were funded. This method allowed organisations to receive a decision quickly, which was appreciated by grant recipients. However, this method meant the spread of funding across geographical areas (or other criteria) could not be prioritised accordingly. Once the funding was exhausted, 496 applications were declined without being reviewed, leaving some organisations disappointed. Both successful and unsuccessful applicants expressed some concern about the fairness of the 'first come first served' selection process.

"Obviously it worked in our favour, which is great, but what if I had a strong application but missed out because I applied five minutes too late? It is a shame that many applications did not even get looked at, and they all have put work into putting a strong application. I think it is quite unfair". – Grant recipient

3.7   Delivery process

The majority of organisations (88%) were satisfied with the time it took to hear back about their application and receive the funding. There were also high levels of satisfaction among organisations with the amount of money they were granted (95%). The overall level of funding made available was increased from £10m to £12m (with overall spend of £11.7m), reflecting the higher than anticipated level of demand.

Both spontaneously and when probed on the most difficult aspect of the grant, the timeframe in which to spend the money was mentioned by several organisations, who explained that the short timeframe and the need to make sure suppliers could deliver within this time had put pressure on them.

Timescales were mentioned as problematic specifically for some smaller organisations who could not 'pre-order' in the way larger organisations were able to do, due to cash-flow. One group leader reported that they had no alternative but to make some purchases on their personal credit card. In some cases, grantees believed that the short deadline to spend the money had led to purchases which were lower value-for-money as it was not possible to "shop around" for the best prices.

"If you have more time, you can plan ahead, do a bit more research, we probably would have made a bit more savings on some of the things we bought. We had to go with the people who said they can do this sort of work within that time." – Grant recipient

Multiple organisations described how this issue was resolved for them with the help of Children in Need who arranged for items to be bought and shipped to them once they became available:
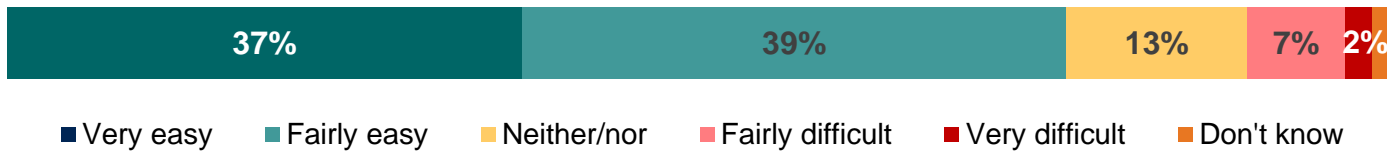
"By the time we got the money in our account there was only 15 days to spend it and that was hard. You can't buy [type of equipment bid for] for love nor money at the moment unless you pay a high premium price. Luckily, a guy from Children in Need got it sorted for us. Without his help we would have struggled. He got proforma invoices and arranged for it to be shipped here later." – Grant recipient

Other grant recipients found that the equipment they had hoped to buy was not in stock by the time they received the funds, or that prices had changed. One recipient suggested allowing applicants to include some budget in their application for such contingencies, such as for changes in the cost of equipment between writing their application and receiving the grant. While this may not be acceptable, grant makers could at least reduce uncertainty by specifying the extent to which there may be flexibility in these situations.

3.8   Reporting

The reporting requirements were generally considered relevant and uncomplicated. Three in four successful organisations (76%) found the reporting requirements for the grant easy. Almost all (95%) found the questions Children in Need asked about how they spent the fund relevant to their organisation.

Figure 3.5: How easy or difficult the reporting requirements were for successful applicants once the grant was awarded

37%	39%	13%	7%	2%

■ Very easy   ■ Fairly easy   ■ Neither/nor   ■ Fairly difficult   ■ Very difficult   ■ Don't know

Source: Ipsos survey of grant recipients (June 2022). Base: All survey respondents (235).

Just 3% considered the questions to be not very relevant. Among those who found the reporting requirements not very relevant, this tended to be because they had not yet received the equipment about which they were reporting yet, or the installation they had spent the money on had not been built.

"What is the point of reporting if I do not have the minivan yet. I can tell them why I think it will be useful, but how can you report on something that you have just had for three weeks… what were they thinking?" – Grant recipient

Case study 2: 9UP CIC

Needs of the young people and the role of 9UP

9UP CIC is located in the West Midlands, just outside Birmingham. The organisation works with all ages but has a particular focus on children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who may be at risk from gang involvement and knife crime, as well as children and young people with additional needs.

> **"We're a mixed martial arts-based Community Interest Company that breaks down racial areas and different postcodes through physical contact. We have both females and males too which is good. We play a major role in this area... Combat breaks down a lot of barriers without even talking."** – Director at 9UP

9UP meets the needs of young people in the area, aged up to 16, by providing them with specialised mixed martial arts (MMA) training, access to their gym, hot meals, support, and a sense of community. Young people come to 9UP and are trained in Thai boxing and MMA by professional athletes who teach them specialised techniques. They also get time to relax in between training sessions where they can play games on consoles with other members. The youth club's aims are to provide a safe environment for young people, cater for all needs and include each person regardless of their ability. 9UP also partners with other local youth clubs so that members can participate in other activities, such as football, if they wish to.

Experience with the YIF and the use of the fund

9UP heard about the YIF via a mailing list they are subscribed to. Similarly to other organisations who applied for funding, they found the eligibility criteria clear and straightforward.

The club's bid for £6,500 was used to make building improvements to their eating area, and to purchase gym equipment and consoles for gaming. 9UP explained that the fund came at the right time for them as they were already looking to create a dedicated area in 9UP and improve the offering for young people. They are located within a larger gym, so the funding allowed them to create a fully functioning activity area and facility in the gym just for young people receiving MMA training. Whereas previously 9UP members were sharing the space of regular gym users, they now have a dedicated space for the club.

The organisation found the application process clear and not too time-consuming. Like other organisations, the only difficult aspect was the short turnaround to spend the money once they received the fund. This was difficult due to the price of the consoles changing since they applied for the funding and the specific items not being in stock when they needed to spend the fund. This was resolved with the help of someone from Children in Need who arranged proforma invoices and for the equipment to be shipped to the club later.

If the fund had not been available, 9UP would have made smaller changes with funding they received from other sources, such as Sport Birmingham and Sport England, but they would not have been able to make as many improvements to the club.

Early outcomes and long-term projections

The improved venue provides a fully functioning gym area for members. It is expected that this will benefit around 120 young people. The development of a proper eating area is expected to make a big difference to the club, as it will further increase communication between different young people, outside

of the MMA training they receive. The new gaming consoles bought with the funding will also allow for more mixing between different young people and offer alternative activities for those who want to take a break from the training. One trustee described what the new facility will offer young people:

> **"They can walk into the area and know that it is dedicated to them… with a Thai boxing ring, an MMA ring… it will always be there and it's a big venue… with proper MMA matting so if they do fall down, they won't get hurt."** – Trustee at 9UP

One young person who had recently joined the summer camp programme described the activities they get up to at the club as "brilliant":

> **"[What would you tell someone thinking of joining?] I'd tell them to 100% do it. Even if it's not their thing I'd tell them to give it a shot because it's really fun… We get free hot meals and there's fun activities and stuff like that, it all appeals to me and there's not anything else I would be doing during the holidays… I'd probably just be sitting at home."** – Young member of 9UP

It is expected that the new equipment and facilities will continue to make young people feel good about themselves, increase socialising, and help them to increase their confidence.

4 Early outcomes of Phase 1

Key Findings

Youth organisations that received Phase 1 funding report that they are now able to provide more and higher quality activities to young people as a result of the grant.

The purchase of vehicles and equipment to deliver youth activities was perceived by grantees to be the most impactful use of the funding.

Expansion and improvement of youth provision are perceived by grantees to be key to improving young people's physical and mental health as well as skills.

Most grantees did not identify barriers that could potentially limit the impact of the fund. In a few cases, the recruitment of staff and volunteers could not keep up with the growing need for youth provision in deprived areas, which could potentially limit the impact of the purchased equipment.

Collaboration across community organisations and sharing of equipment purchased through YIF grants was identified as a key factor in enabling greater impact of the investments made.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides emerging insights into the perceived early outcomes of the YIF Phase 1 on youth facilities and the young people using them. It also reflects on the barriers and enabling factors that can limit or enhance the impacts of capital funding investments. The findings presented in this chapter are informed by depth interviews and a survey with successful YIF grant applicants as well as four case studies involving young people, staff, and volunteers of youth organisations.

The findings are based on evidence gathered within the first four months of organisations having received the funding and should be interpreted within this context. Furthermore, all evidence on outcomes is based on self-reported data and should be treated as indicative, without any causal inference.
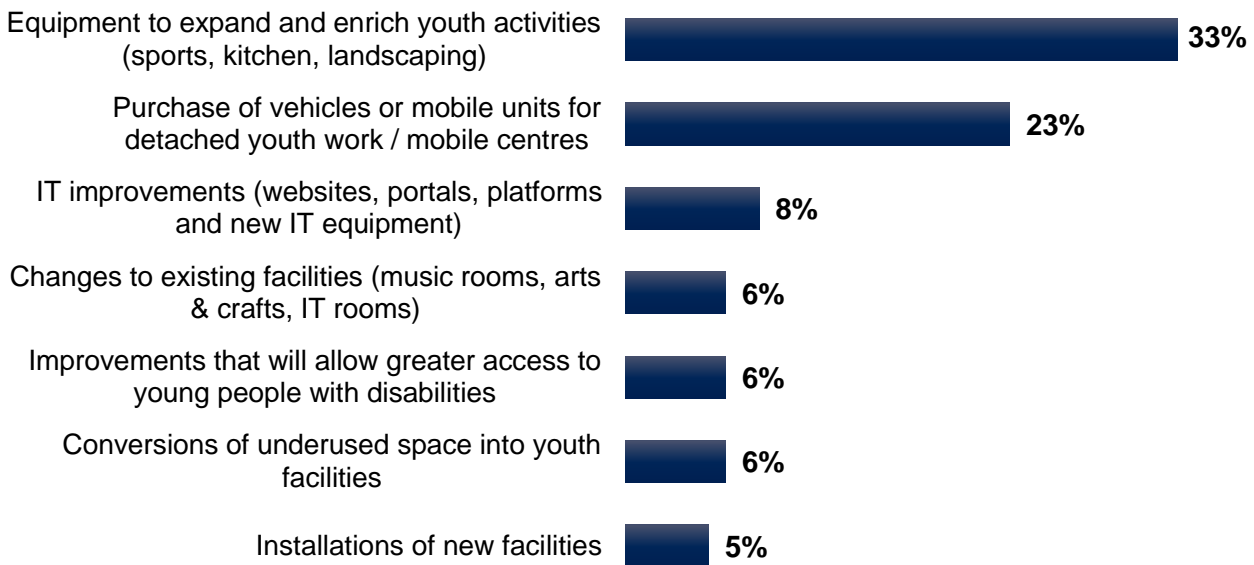
4.2 Perceived impact on young people

The YIF was found to have enabled grant recipients to deliver more and higher quality activities to a greater number of young people. Survey results show that most grantees expect to increase the number of activities they deliver (80%) and improve the quality of the services they provide (76%) as a result of the funding. Two thirds (66%) of survey respondents said that following receipt of the grant, they can reach a greater number of young people and thus improve access to their organisation. Nearly a third of respondents said that they will be able to make their organisations a safer space for young people (34%). Some organisations will be able to expand the space for their activities (29%), save more on costs (27%), and be able to keep the organisation open for longer hours (20%).

Enriching youth activities using new equipment, including sports and kitchen equipment, was perceived by survey respondents as the most impactful way of spending the YIF funding. Grantees applied for a

wide range of capital improvements and equipment, and many stated several different uses of the fund. The purchase of vehicles for detached youth activities (taking place away from a youth centre), including in the mobile youth centres, was the second most reported impactful use of the fund (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Which, if any, of the following uses of the fund do you expect to have the greatest positive impact on your organisation?

Use	Percentage
Equipment to expand and enrich youth activities (sports, kitchen, landscaping)	33%
Purchase of vehicles or mobile units for detached youth work / mobile centres	23%
IT improvements (websites, portals, platforms and new IT equipment)	8%
Changes to existing facilities (music rooms, arts & crafts, IT rooms)	6%
Improvements that will allow greater access to young people with disabilities	6%
Conversions of underused space into youth facilities	6%
Installations of new facilities	5%

Source: Ipsos survey of grant recipients (June 2022). Base: All survey respondents (235). Answers of over 5% shown. Figures include those who only used the fund for one purpose.

During interviews, the purchase of mobile sports equipment and vehicles was frequently cited as crucial for enabling youth organisations to bring engaging activities to geographic locations that are 'left behind' in terms of youth provision. The expansion of provision to new locations typically meant reaching a greater number of young people:
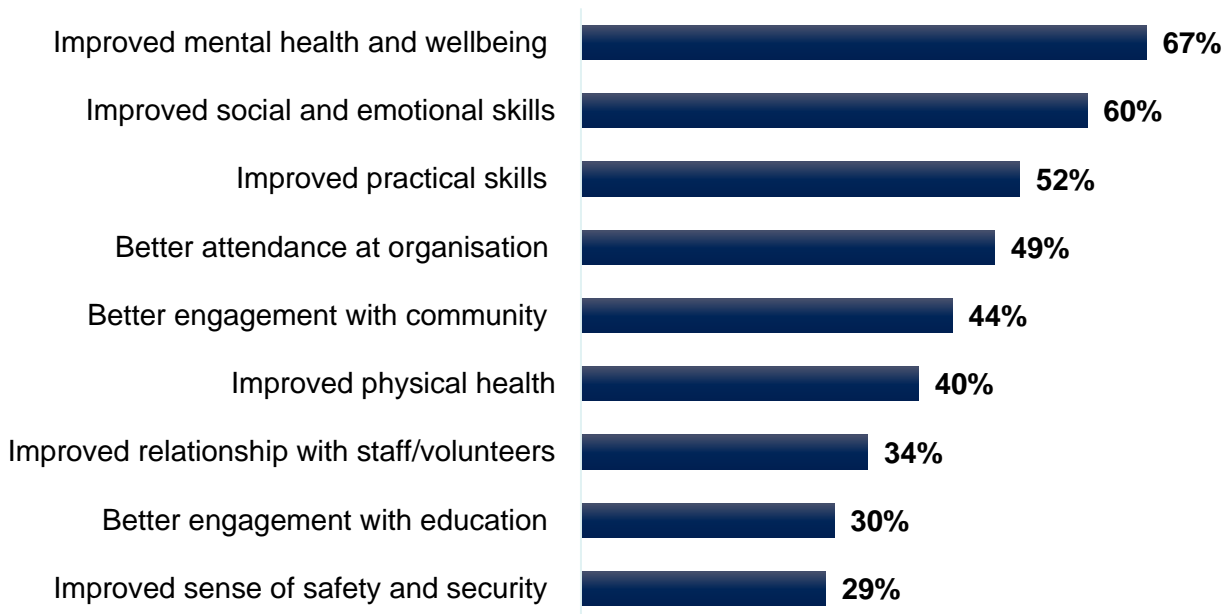
> **"I cannot reemphasize the impact of [purchasing a new van] on what we can offer and the benefits to young people. We will be able to reach many more people than we otherwise would be able to. […] We will reach additional 1.5-2,000 young people through mobile events having this van."** – Grant recipient

In most cases, the funding enabled youth organisations to expand their existing provision. For example, one youth organisation has widened the reach of their mobile youth bus activities by purchasing new IT equipment. The volunteers managing the mobile IT bus regularly take it to the most deprived areas in their region. The mobile IT room provides free Wi-Fi and computers for young people to do their homework, complete digital skills training, apply for jobs, and socialise while watching movies. The grant has enabled the organisation to purchase additional computers and tablets. Prior to receiving YIF funding the organisation had to set strict limits on how long the young people could use the computers for, whereas now they have more flexibility:

We saw a rise in young people using tablets and computers during the lockdown [and] asked the young people what they could benefit from; we just needed access to more equipment. Before we used to have to limit the amount of time they are using the computers. So, you would say you have only got so long. Where now we have a bit more flexibility. – Grant recipient

Survey respondents reported a range of potential benefits of the YIF grant to the young people they work with (Figure 4.2), with two thirds (67%) of the view that the YIF grant would contribute greatly to improved mental health and wellbeing.

Figure 4.2: To what extent do you think the grant you received through the Youth Investment Fund will contribute to the following benefits for the young people your organisation works with? (% of those said "to a great extent")

Improved mental health and wellbeing	**67%**
Improved social and emotional skills	**60%**
Improved practical skills	**52%**
Better attendance at organisation	**49%**
Better engagement with community	**44%**
Improved physical health	**40%**
Improved relationship with staff/volunteers	**34%**
Better engagement with education	**30%**
Improved sense of safety and security	**29%**

Source: Ipsos survey of grant recipients (June 2022). Base: All survey respondents (235).

The potential impact on young people's mental health and wellbeing was also raised during the follow-up interviews. Youth organisations' staff and volunteers said that young people in economically disadvantaged areas often have limited access to after-school activities, which can lead to social isolation and poor mental health. In many cases, the grantees we spoke to are the only organisations providing evening youth activities in their location.

In such contexts, one of the greatest needs for young people is to have a safe and consistent space to go to after school. This need was perceived by grantees to have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which had contributed to an increase in problems at school and mental health referrals amongst the young people they work with. Through provision of more frequent and engaging activities, youth organisations can contribute to improved mental and physical health, skills and confidence amongst young people.

In the area we are in there is no youth provision at all. There is a lack of activities for young people to take part in. Many organisations are still closed or are only doing online support [following the pandemic]. And there has been a real increase in mental health issues. The waiting lists for mental health support are too long for them. The biggest need for young people is to access any support in general. – Grant recipient

4.3   Perceived impact on organisations

The funding was also perceived to have had positive effects on youth organisations themselves. The purchase of vehicles and facilities for storing equipment was associated with reduced burden on staff and volunteers running events. In one organisation, volunteers had spent a lot of time transporting young people to and from events prior to receiving YIF as they had only one small van. When applying for funding, the organisation had bid for another van specifically to make the volunteers' lives easier:

> **We already have a minibus, but that can take only 17 people. And we thought that if we have another one, it will make it easier for our volunteers. At the moment, they have to go there and back there and back each time. Now we will be able to transport everyone in one go.** – Grant recipient

Another common route through which the YIF made a positive impact and reduced the burden on volunteers was the purchase of storage facilities. In cases where organisations have outdoor equipment, but do not own their facilities, the equipment often gets stored at volunteers' homes. With growing demand for youth provision and increasing numbers of young people attending, storing equipment at homes is neither feasible nor sustainable:

> **The fund paid for a shipping container, for storage. As a new group, we started with no funding. The county[4] gave us a £500 set-up grant. That was in 2016 and did not last that long. We have now built up quite a lot of camping equipment through donations. […] All of that was stored in my house, in a shed. By the beginning of this year, it was absolutely full and not particularly dry. There was no opportunity to expand. It [storage] has been our target for several years.** – Grant recipient

Another group that worked with disabled young people explained that more accessible and visible storage facilities meant that young people could access the equipment they wanted themselves, which was empowering as well as reducing demand on staff.

4.4   Barriers to impact and enabling factors

No major factors potentially limiting the impact of the funding were identified through the evaluation[5]. However, youth organisations consistently fed back that funding was the most significant long-term challenge they face. The consensus was that ongoing funding was needed to enable meaningful and sustained impact on the well-being of young people:

> **We struggle all the time for funding. It should not be like that, the council should be providing us with a building to run these events. I understand that you should be able to show the outcomes, but we need more money. Because the wellbeing of these young children is paramount, they are our next generation.** —Unsuccessful applicant

The need for more funding was echoed by the excitement and gratitude youth organisations expressed in receiving the YIF funding:

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[4] Here 'county' refers to the Guiding/Scouting group of volunteers that helps organise the individual scouting groups within a local area.

[5] Please note that all evidence on outcomes is based on self-reported data and should be treated as indicative, without any causal inference.

> **I was absolutely amazed when they said "hey, you can have the money!" […] Grants are spread thinner these days than they used to be. We could have fundraised I suppose, but it is difficult to get anything really. We were just really lucky.** – Grant recipient

Most organisations interviewed reported experiencing difficulties meeting the increasing demand for youth provision. Some of the organisations further indicated problems with recruiting staff and/or volunteers to manage the youth activities. A small number of organisations mentioned that shortage of staff and volunteers might limit the impact of the fund. The interviewees often concluded that recruitment for these types of positions is difficult because of relatively low pay, people in deprived areas presenting with more mental health and relational difficulties, and the requirement to work evening and weekend shifts on a regular basis.

> **The demand for our services has just sort of gone through the roof, we are really busy. Because of the demand, we need to put more evenings on. [But] we are struggling with recruitment. We have a few job vacancies at the minute. It is not just our organisation, other young organisations [are also] really struggling. I don't know if it is the nature of the work, or sometimes it is the social hours and the pay. Plus the types of challenges we are facing have changed completely in the last 12-18 months.** – Grant recipient

The issue of growing unmet demand for youth provision was especially apparent from the responses of organisations facilitating outdoors activities. When discussing the needs of young people in their area, interviewees frequently reported that there were long waiting lists to take part in their activities. While shortage of youth provision is an issue in all areas we have spoken to, it might be more apparent with trips/outdoor activities which require equipment and can accommodate a smaller number of young people.

> **Scouting is a great activity and many people want to do it. There are 26 scouting groups in [area]. Somewhere around 1,000 people want to join but we just have got no space for them. That is a massive impact issue for us. If there were 1,000 spaces, we could fill them and then in two years we would have another thousand on the waiting list again. […] The biggest challenge is finding young leaders, the volunteers. Every member of our team is unpaid.** – Grant recipient

To ensure that the new equipment or the refurbished premises have as wide a reach and impact as possible, organisations typically aimed to collaborate and share their resources with other organisations in their area. Organisations hoped that joint efforts could provide a greater variety of times and locations when the services are available to young people.

Case study 3: Girlguiding Cheshire Forest

Needs of the young people and the role of Girlguiding Cheshire Forest

Girlguiding Cheshire Forest is located in Northwich. It is a campsite activity centre for girls aged 4 to 18 years old. The club works with young people from all the surrounding areas, including Liverpool and Manchester, and from places further afield such as Edinburgh, so young people using the site are not just from the immediate local area. Half of the girls attending the club come from disadvantaged communities.

The aims of the organisation are to build resilience, increase self-confidence through outdoor activities, and to provide a social space and mental health support where young people can come together and be with their friends. Volunteers described that this was more important than ever given the recent impact of Covid on young people's social relationships.

Young people commented on the range of activities and the social aspect, particularly the continuity and friendly space offered by the club:

"We do a really big range [of activities]. When you're younger and a Rainbow or Brownie, you do more craft-based things and go on nature trails… and then Guides is obstacle and assault courses, and then Rangers involves more independence, doing things like geocaching and orienteering, it's good... It works you up to being independent in these sorts of areas."– Young member of Girlguiding

"I trust the people here which makes me feel safe. I feel like I can be myself." – Young member of Girlguiding

It is important for the organisation to keep the space girl -only, but the facility is also used for other groups of young people during the week. These include schools from left-behind areas with children who have been excluded, who use the facility for outside activities once a week. There is also a group of 18+ adults who use the facility, as well as facilities for Forest Schools to train their leaders. The organisation is looking to provide opportunities for additional groups of people to also make use of the facility.

Experience with the YIF and the use of the fund

Girlguiding Cheshire Forest heard about the Youth Investment Fund through the national Girlguiding newsletter. They applied to the fund immediately, as they were already looking for existing funding opportunities.

They applied to the Youth Investment Fund for a new building on the campsite where girls can stay overnight, accessible for young people with disabilities. They previously had a smaller prefabricated building which slept around five or six young people on the campsite. There were also no facilities for girls with disabilities who came to the campsite, only in the main building, further away on the site. The aim is to make the site building both accessible and sustainable. They had been intending to build this for a long time but after the pandemic, the cost of the building greatly increased due to labour shortages, increased cost of materials and additional costs due to Covid restrictions.

They found the application for the fund very easy and straightforward. The quick acknowledgement of submission of their form was appreciated, together with the speed with which they heard that their application bad been successful and short period of time it took to receive the money.

The Youth Investment Fund grant helped Girlguiding Cheshire Forest to reach the total cost of the building. Whilst they had received funding from elsewhere, including their own money, the organisation reported that the fund enabled them to complete the work. If the Youth Investment Fund had not been available, they would have asked other charities for funding and fundraised themselves, but in their view this would have taken considerably longer and led to further delays in implementing their plans.

Spending the grant was easy and straightforward as they already had planning permission in place and builders lined up to do the work.

"The DCMS grant came just at the right time. We had everything in place, all the planning permissions and everything, we just had not been able to start." – Chairman of campsite activity centre

Early outcomes and long-term projections

The building was not finished at the time of the case study but was close to completion. The new building included a large space for girls to stay overnight, a large accessible bathroom and a kitchen area. The new building and improved facility will ensure that all outdoor activities are accessible to everyone, a key reason for application to the fund. The new bathroom will enable girls with wheelchairs to have a room to stay in and an option for their carer if they also need to stay. The building is also energy efficient. The organisation does not anticipate any limitations or barriers to making full use of the building.

"We'll have a proper opening [of the building] and the girls will be able to come and see it. We did a lot of surveys with young people and asked them what they wanted to see in it… the kids said they'd love to have a deck out the back, so we put it in." – Chairman of campsite activity centre

The new building is expected to attract more people and allow Girlguiding Cheshire Forest to offer their facilities to schools and other young groups during weekdays. The building will ensure a larger number of diverse girls from left behind areas will be able to use and benefit from the site. The young people interviewed were excited about the new building being completed and the greater number of young people that will be able to attend an overnight stay.

"The new building will give us a lot more opportunities to go on camps. I think it can hold up to 30 Guides in the room and the Leaders will have a nice place to stay as well." – Young member of Girlguiding

One volunteer at the club described what the new building will offer young people in terms of independence and training opportunities:

"I can see the building being used quite a lot by Rangers for training for things like D of E because quite often Rangers aren't a large number so something like [this building] where there can have some camping outside, some camping inside and then the little cooking facilities, it's a nice area for them. I can also see it being used for small trainings for council and things like that. It's just so nice having all the doors able to open up and you can see right the way through, it's amazing… and they can be quite independent in there which will be really good for them because they can build up more skills." - Volunteer at Girlguiding

There was also a sense from both volunteers and young people that the new building will allow young people to further build their confidence and develop skills they are already in the process of learning.

5 Interest in Phase 2

Key Findings

Nearly three-quarters of successful grant applicants expressed interest in applying for Phase 2.

Nearly six in ten of those surveyed were hoping to use a Phase 2 grant to expand or repurpose their existing facilities.

About one in ten organisations were interested in new modular buildings. Those interested in a modular building envisioned creating a local community hub which could be used rent-free by other local organisations and provide a consistent drop-in space for young people.

Organisations wary of bidding for a modular building were concerned about obtaining land ownership rights, the time investment required for a grant of this size, and the suitability of a pre-designed building to their local needs.

All organisations we spoke to collect administrative data and event-based qualitative feedback. Very few collect survey data to monitor long-term progress and satisfaction.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings on youth organisations' awareness and interest in applying for Phase 2 of the Youth Investment Fund, and the potential for youth organisations to collect data that could be used for an impact evaluation of Phase 2. The analysis draws on interview data from both successful and unsuccessful YIF Phase 1 applicants and the four case studies.

5.2 Interest in Phase 2 and modular buildings

Phase 1 grant recipients were asked about their interest in Phase 2 as part of the online survey and the interviews[6]. The survey results demonstrate a high level of interest in YIF Phase 2. Almost three quarters (72%) of grant recipients said that they are likely to apply (see Figure 6.1) and around one fifth (19%) had started drafting proposals.

The interview results similarly show a high level of initial interest in Phase 2, but many organisations that had expressed interest in the survey, and were enthusiastic about Phase 2 in theory, had some concerns about applying in practice or were unsure whether they would be eligible.

A few organisations we have spoken to were more confident about their application, and some were already establishing the local collaborations and working groups required for completing a Phase 2 application:

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[6] Research largely took place before the Phase 2 launch and therefore there was limited information available about what organisations could bid for in Phase 2.

We already established a working group for Phase 2. We have met our local DCMS representative. It is going to take a lot of time obviously, but the potential investment is in millions. The Local Authority will put as much time into it as [needed]. – Grant recipient

5.2.1 What organisations intended to bid for

Amongst those intending to bid for Phase 2 funding, around a third (36%) indicated interest in bidding for a new building. More than half (57%) were aiming to expand or repurpose their existing facilities. Organisations which were smaller and run by volunteers were less likely to say that they were intending to bid for a new building (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.1: How likely or unlikely is that your organisation will apply for funding through Phase 2 of the Youth Investment Fund?

■ Likely
■ Unlikely
■ Neither likely nor unlikely
■ Don't know
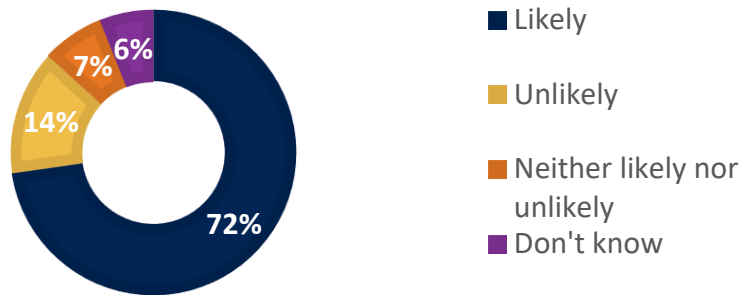
Source: Ipsos survey of grant recipients (June 2022). Base: All survey respondents (235).

Figure 5.2: What do you think your organisation might bid for?

Expansion of extension of existing facilities	**30%**
Repurposing existing facilities	**27%**
A medium new youth centre	**14%**
A large new youth centre	**11%**
A small new modular youth unit	**11%**

Source: Ipsos survey of grant recipients (June 2022). Base: All respondents saying they are likely to apply for Phase 2 (169).

Those who were interested in bidding for a new building hoped that it would provide a centralised hub for their and other local organisations' activities. With a rent-free centralised location, organisations could also reduce the running costs that they encounter with paying rent to store their equipment and organise events:

> **We would be interested in applying […]. Our current premises are very limiting and we are struggling with several aspects. We have 3 or 4 places dotted around [location] where we store equipment. Kayaks in one place, bikes in another. It would be great to have somewhere to store the kit, run the sessions, and go from there. Like a general hub. We are in the most deprived area in the region, we would want this space to be available for the community to use it.** – Grant recipient

In locations with high levels of deprivation, building ownership would further enable the organisations to have a consistent safe place for young people to drop-in at any evening in the week and on weekends:

> **We want to make sure that the young people are free to come in at any time they want to, without any limitation. We have just updated our computers. We would be able to train them how to use them properly. We would love to also have a lift, but we cannot do that because it is a rental. We cannot afford our own building. So people with disabilities cannot come.** – Grant recipient

Grant recipient organisations that were not considering using the grant for a new building typically assumed that they did not have the capacity to navigate the purchase or construction of a brand-new facility. Some of these organisations were not aware of the possibility of bidding for a pre-designed modular building which would remove the barriers of designing and constructing the facility. The lack of awareness about modular buildings was potentially driven by the timing of data collection, which was before the YIF Phase 2 guidelines became public:

> **[A new building] is just not something that we sort of considered. We are just looking at the stuff that is already built and can be refurbished for our purposes. But if, as you say, we can just buy it "off the shelf", that could be the way forward.** – Grant Recipient

A relatively small proportion (11%) of survey participants who were interested in Phase 2 said they were interested in a modular building specifically. This is three in ten (31%) of those who were interested in a new building of any kind. In the interviews, a few organisations voiced concerns over suitability of pre-designed buildings given the diversity of youth organisations and young people's needs. Organisations expressed concern that such pre-designed units would not fit local needs as they had been designed without the consultation of people on the ground[7]. For them, continuing with a less modern building that met the needs of local young people was more advantageous than getting a new building that would not be used:

> **I would love to have our own facilities that we can than hire out to other groups. Unfortunately, the developers who get asked to put a community centre in, have no idea what a community centre needs to look like. Some architect might put together a wonderful building but no one is going to use it, as we have found within the area of [city].** – Grant Recipient

5.2.2 Reservations about applying for Phase 2

The interviews also shed light on common concerns and reservations organisations had about applying. Some organisations had concerns about their capacity to apply for Phase 2 and others thought they would not be eligible. Common topics of concern included the capacity to apply for and/or manage the grant, availability of firms to do the construction work, and getting planning permission. During the interviews, small volunteer organisations were concerned about the time and resources required to apply

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[7] Please note that DCMS is currently piloting the use of modular buildings to make sure they are fit for purpose and meet youth organisations' needs: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/applying-for-the-youth-investment-fund-pilot

for Phase 2 and about the application being too burdensome for volunteers who run the youth activities in addition to working full-time:

> **"Phase 1 was so stressful, I would not put in another bid […] I cannot see how I could manage that capital funding with the team I have [...] There is a fear factor of how much time it would cost for working volunteers to apply".** – Grant Recipient

Concerns about the necessary time to complete the application have led some organisations to conclude that Phase 2 will be more feasible for large-scale rather than grass-roots youth organisations like themselves:

> **I would need to do a lot of homework [before thinking about applying]. There does not appear to be a local consortium and to me, it would be lovely but where do I start?... It's like a project which is a local authority size, it's not grassroots. For small organisations like us, it's a pipe dream because we just rent two rooms.** – Grant Recipient

Similarly, youth organisations which predominantly deliver mobile, rather than centralised, youth provision did not see this opportunity as a good fit for them:

> **During pandemic we have realised that we do not need a building. Everyone says we will get back to how we were, but actually, we have adapted now. We don't need a building. We just need a bus.** – Grant Recipient

Some organisations thought that they were not eligible to apply because they did not own their building or the land it is on. These organisations did not know how they would be able to go about getting approval for the land:

> **There is not land available in this area. You can only demolish and rebuild at this point.** – Grant Recipient

> **It gets quite complicated with owning the land, doesn't it? So perhaps with the technical bit, with planning, I would need help with something like that. It would certainly be more complicated than buying a minibus.** – Grant Recipient

5.3   Monitoring of progress and barriers to data collection

During the qualitative interviews we explored organisations' capacity to collect data for potential monitoring and evaluation of YIF Phase 2. Overall, capacity for data collection and ongoing monitoring varies greatly across grant applicants. Youth organisations seem to be consistently collecting administrative data: capturing event attendance numbers, and basic demographic data, such as members' gender, ethnicity, age, disability status, employment status, school, and parental contact details. In addition, organisations tend to regularly gather event-based qualitative feedback, in the form of group discussions, to improve their provision.

Very few organisations collect quantitative data to monitor outcomes for young people, such as skills development, or to assess their or their parents' satisfaction with the service. The few organisations that do hold this type of data tend to use comprehensive data management systems which store and combine all the data provided by young people over the years:

> **We use an online-based database. Every young person that signs up with us fills in a registration form, and that gets put on the system. Every time they use the service that register than adds to the system. [...] The system allows us to do qualitative reviews, which we can observe, or they can self-report. And we also do the surveys […] online, on the phone, or on paper. It is the most expensive system, but it is the best. This way we can show detailed data to our funders.** – Grant Recipient

Many organisations feel uneasy about collecting and storing large volumes of personal data due to the perceived complexity of navigating GDPR regulations related to data on children and young people, and parental concerns about this:

> **We only hold the data that we need at any time. It is only at the small group-level that we hold the data, even the districts do not hold that. It is actually the sub-sections at the group level that hold that. GDPR - don't we all love it! I would much rather not hold [any] data.** – Grant Recipient

Others reported experiencing difficulties in collecting data from young people, including:

- lack of interest from young people in taking part in long surveys
- the risk of detracting from the purpose of the youth club events, which is to socialise and have fun
- low literacy among young people.

> **Some young people are really struggling with reading and writing. So, you would have to support them with that. It is not a barrier that you cannot go around, but we have got a lot of young people for whom English is a second language, so we sometimes have to ask another young person to translate for us. [Also, we] don't want to make it feel like it is school.** – Grant Recipient

These issues were particularly common among organisations with a large number of drop-in events and irregular attendance.

Case study 4: 1871 (Rugeley) Squadron RAF Air Cadets

Needs of the young people and the role of the Squadron

1871 Squadron is an RAF Air Cadets group based in Rugeley in Staffordshire. Rugeley is a former coal mining town and many parts of the town experience deprivation and high unemployment. Young people and group leaders reported that there were fairly limited options for after - school activities in the town, particularly for older young people. The local youth centre closed down in the last few years.

"There's opportunities, but there's not options, it's not like you're spoilt for choice." – Cadet

The squadron borders a "left-behind" ward and works primarily with young people from wards eligible for YIF. Young people come from more than 15 miles away to attend, and from a wide range of local schools.

The group's current membership is 42 cadets aged between 12 and 19, with a further 15 young people on the waiting list. The group meets twice a week on weekday evenings and will typically have weekend activities as well. Activities include outdoor activities such as rock-climbing and kayaking, sport, training in engineering and cyber skills, and flying opportunities. Rugeley is close to Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which provides opportunities for camping and outdoor activities.

While there are some other uniformed youth groups in the area, young people explained that they attend this group because of the exceptional opportunities it provides to take part in life -changing activities such as flying and to develop their skills. As well as this, young people valued the structure and disciplined ethos of the group, which provided a welcome change from school where other young people could be disruptive. Adult volunteers explained that making young people responsible for particular aspects of the group helped them develop confidence and leadership skills.

"Everyone who comes here wants to be here, so it's a really nice environment." – Cadet

"We've got some with autism, some with anxiety, and they've come here and the parents say they're like different kids." – Adult volunteer

Young people also saw it as a good opportunity to make friends, especially if they had struggled to make friends at school, and to meet other young people from different parts of the UK through taking part in camps and events. They praised the group leaders for being supportive and constantly seeking opportunities for them to take part in.

"Ninety percent of the people at Cadets I'd trust with my life." – Cadet

Experience with the YIF and use of the fund

The squadron applied to YIF for funding for a new minibus and for IT equipment. They heard about the opportunity via the County Council's email newsletter, which regularly includes details of funding opportunities, and decided to apply as soon as possible. They reported that the application was straightforward compared to other funding applications, except for determining which of the surrounding areas were eligible for the fund: in the end they created a map of where each of the 42 cadets come from to determine the group's eligibility to apply.

Although the squadron already had a minibus seating 12, this was not sufficient for the number of cadets in the group, so when going on external trips the squadron had to either limit the number of young people attending, spend money on hiring additional buses (which also created logistical problems since they need a more specialist licence to drive), or ask parents to help transport young people. Moreover, the minibus was coming to the end of its life and frequently broke down.

Cadets work towards internal and external qualifications, such as leadership qualifications and BTECs. These courses are delivered by older cadets to the younger ones, and cadets requested better IT equipment (an interactive touchscreen and PCs) so that these courses could be delivered more effectively.

Group leaders expressed surprise at their application having been successful, particularly given the relatively large sums involved. They compared this with other funding opportunities which are typically capped at £10,000.

"We've never been able to apply for anything that big and we didn't think we'd get it. Rugeley never gets anything!" – Adult volunteer

The short timeframe to spend the funds had put some pressure on volunteers, but they had reduced this by seeking out and identifying potential suppliers in advance of hearing back about their grant award.

Early outcomes and long-term projections

Having a new bus will mean that more cadets can take part in activities beyond Rugeley, including outdoor activity camps, activities such as swimming, Duke of Edinburgh's Award expeditions, external courses and community volunteering projects. This means that more young people will be able to access training opportunities and take part in new activities and experiences they would not otherwise be able to.

Cadets described how the IT equipment made it easier for them to learn. For example, they can virtually take apart an engine in 3D and rotate the view to better understand how it works. It also means that the older cadets can prepare the training materials without needing access to the squadron building.

"We're teaching on brand new interactive screens so we can highlight things on the powerpoint – HQ provide us with powerpoints and we manipulate them to make them more fun and exciting for the cadets, so it's important to us. We used to have a hell of a lot of paper and notebooks which cadets would lose." – Cadet

The squadron has a waiting list of young people who want to join, but are constrained for space due to the size of their building, which is a wooden bungalow built in the 1960s. Although they are interested in applying for Phase 2 funding to extend or rebuild this building, they reported being told they were not eligible for funding this time around since the building itself is not in a "left-behind" ward.

Annexe: process evaluation questions

The process evaluation was intended to address the following questions:

What has worked well, and less well, in implementing YIF Phase 1?

1. Who applied for the fund? (both unsuccessful and successful organisations)

    a. number of applicants, total amount bid for

    b. type, size and location of organisations, types of youth provision they offer

2. What worked well and less well in relation to promotion/publicity around the fund?

    a. Were there any types of organisation who were less engaged?

3. What support did organisations need to submit an application? What support did they receive and how effective was this?

4. What worked well and less well about the eligibility criteria and their application?

    a. Left-behind areas

    b. Eligible organisations

    c. Eligible projects

5. What worked well and less well about the selection process for funding?

6. What were the views on the delivery of YIF Phase 1 from the organisations who received funding? What worked well/not well with the fund?

7. How does this compare to other similar funds?

8. What is demand for Phase 2 likely to be?

    a. How much demand is there for modular buildings in particular?

How far and in what ways did the YIF Phase 1 meet its objectives to create, expand and improve local youth facilities and their services?

9. Who was the fund provided to and what was its reach?

    a. number of grant awards made, total amount awarded

    b. type, size and location of grant recipient organisations, types of youth provision they offer

    c. how this aligns to the aims of the fund

10. How was the funding used by organisations?

    a. Number of staff/volunteers impacted

    b. Number and some characteristics of young people taking part in activities.

11. If organisations hadn't received the funding, what would they have done instead? Could they have applied for funding for this purpose elsewhere?

12. What were the perceived impacts for the youth organisations who received funding?

    a. This could relate to saving on overheads, the impact of any new equipment/works to the organisation, how many new activities the organisation is able to provide etc.

13. Are there any factors limiting the impact / potential impact of the funding?

14. Were there any perceived outcomes for the young people attending the youth organisations?

   a. This could include increases in attendance, the possible impact of any new activities/facilities on young people and the general perceived impact of the fund on young people.

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