

# NOTICING THE CHANGE

A Framework of Outcomes for Young People - *in practice*

March 2013

Mhairi Aylott, Bethia McNeil & Tessa Hibbert



# CATALYST CONSORTIUM

Catalyst is a consortium of four organisations working with the Department for Education (DfE) as the strategic partner for young people, as part of the Department's wider transition programme for the sector. The consortium is coordinated by the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS), who partner with The Young Foundation, the National Youth Agency, and Social Enterprise UK.

Catalyst has been working to deliver three key objectives over the two year period 2011-2013:

- strengthening the youth sector market;
- equipping the sector to work in partnership with Government;
- coordinating a skills development strategy for the youth sector's workforce.



# THE YOUNG FOUNDATION

We are The Young Foundation and we are determined to make positive social change happen.

We pioneered the field of social innovation with The Open University, UpRising and Studio Schools. We work closely with individuals, communities and partners building relationships to ensure that our thinking does something, our actions matter and the changes we make together will continue to grow.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the members of our advisory group who have worked alongside us throughout the process – Jon Boagey, the National Youth Agency; Chris Caroe, Department for Education; Tim Crabbe, Substance; Kate Duckworth and Anna Vignoles, Institute of Education; Rosie Ferguson, London Youth; Milla Gregor, Charities Evaluation Services; Steve Hillman, Foyer Federation; Tim Hobbs, Dartington Social Research Unit; Mat Ilic, Greater London Authority; Carol Jackson, Private Equity Foundation; Dean Johnstone, Carnegie Leaders; Olof Jonsdottir, Social Enterprise UK; Ian Keating, Local Government Association; Beth Parker, NCVS; Stephen Quashie, NCVO; Barbara Rayment, Youth Access; and Craig Tomlinson, BBC Children in Need.

Thank you to the National Youth Agency for their generous hosting of a residential to explore some of the thinking in this report.

We are deeply grateful to staff at the British Red Cross, Brathay Trust and London Youth for all their time, commitment and enthusiasm. Their openness in sharing their journeys and reflections has been fundamental in enabling this work to progress. In particular we would like to thank Gill Allbutt (British Red Cross), Karen Stuart (Brathay Trust) and Sam Grimstone (London Youth) for working alongside us, welcoming us into their discussions and giving so freely of their time and insight.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report contains an overview of the process and learning undertaken by three youth organisations which agreed to pilot an outcomes approach in their work with young people, as set out in The Young Foundation's 2012 report *[A Framework of Outcomes for Young People](#)*.

The Framework outlined a new way of thinking about planning, monitoring and evaluating work with young people in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for them, enabling providers of youth services to respond better to the increasing focus on outcomes from funders and commissioners. In a time of scarce resources and cutbacks, youth organisations are finding that evidencing the impact of their work is more important than ever before.

The report sets out the experiences of our three pilot organisations in order to help others who are just beginning their outcomes journey.

Based on their successes and challenges, we propose ten tips for implementing an outcomes approach within your organisation's thinking about planning and evaluation. We also consider wider implications for the sector as a whole.

# TOP TEN TIPS

1. Do consider which outcomes to measure before you decide how to measure them.
2. Do ensure that the outcomes you aim to achieve for young people are clear, understood, realistic within the time frame, defined, and succinct.
3. Do consider the [cluster of capabilities](#) proposed in the Framework of Outcomes and decide if they can provide you with a common language for the outcomes you aim to achieve.
4. Do be clear on the relationship between short term outcomes you can measure and long term impact for young people and society, drawing on the evidence base referred to in the Framework of Outcomes. Consider developing your [theory of change](#).
5. Do consider how young people are best involved in the process of defining and measuring outcomes.
6. Don't forget to involve staff from across the organisation, including fundraising and communications, in the consultation process.
7. Do refer to existing measurement tools (as contained in the [matrix of measurement tools](#) in the Framework of Outcomes) to see if any could act as a starting point for you.
8. Don't feel that one measurement tool has to work across all your projects. Different settings may require a different approach.
9. Do be realistic. The end result may not be perfect but it provides you with an approach that can be developed.
10. Do work together with other organisations to share good practice, materials and resources – and support small organisations or those who are new to this agenda.

# CONTENTS

<u>Background</u>	page 8
<u>The Framework of Outcomes for Young People – an overview</u>	page 9
<u>The Framework of Outcomes In Practice</u>	page 17
<u>Case Studies</u>	page 22
<u>Learning from the process</u>	page 38
<u>Conclusion</u>	page 49
<b>Annex 1 - <u>Glossary</u></b>	page 52
<b>Annex 2 - <u>Theory of change</u></b>	page 54
<b>Annex 3 - <u>Resources</u></b>	page 57

# BACKGROUND

In July 2012, the Catalyst consortium published a *Framework of Outcomes for Young People*. This document made the case for why social and emotional capabilities matter, and why funders, commissioners and investors should have more confidence in their value. It did this in three ways:

1. It clarified the key social and emotional capabilities that are significant to and for all young people – so enabling greater confidence and consistency in talking about, and measuring those outcomes.
2. It highlighted the evidence base that links social and emotional capabilities with the short, medium and longer term outcomes that commissioners seek, illustrating why funders, commissioners and investors should have confidence in services that strengthen them.
3. It outlined an approach for providers to seek to measure their impact on these capabilities in practice, including how they might identify relevant and useful tools.



# THE FRAMEWORK OF OUTCOMES

## PHASE 1 – AN OVERVIEW

# THE FRAMEWORK OF OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Framework of Outcomes was developed in response to challenges for the youth sector around evidence and impact. There were three main drivers reflecting the three major audiences for the work.

Not all youth sector **providers** are:

- Considering their impact as part of their core business; or
- Presenting outcomes in a consistent way.

The **sector** lacks a common language and good process for sharing knowledge.

Not all **commissioners** are:

- Specifying social outcomes in tenders, or
- Accounting for social impact in a 'smart' way when buying goods and services.

Not all **investors** are:

- Accounting for social impact in a way that is appropriate for the youth sector when making investment decisions, or
- Asking investees to report on their social impact.

# THE FRAMEWORK OF OUTCOMES HELPS YOU TO ANSWER FIVE KEY QUESTIONS

*1. What are we trying to achieve?*

To **build consensus** on the impact of our work with, and for, young people.

*2. What difference do services make?*

To **measure the change in outcomes** from services for young people.

*3. Why should someone commission, fund or invest in a service?*

To **articulate the value** of a youth service or programme.

*4. With limited resource, who and what is our focus?*

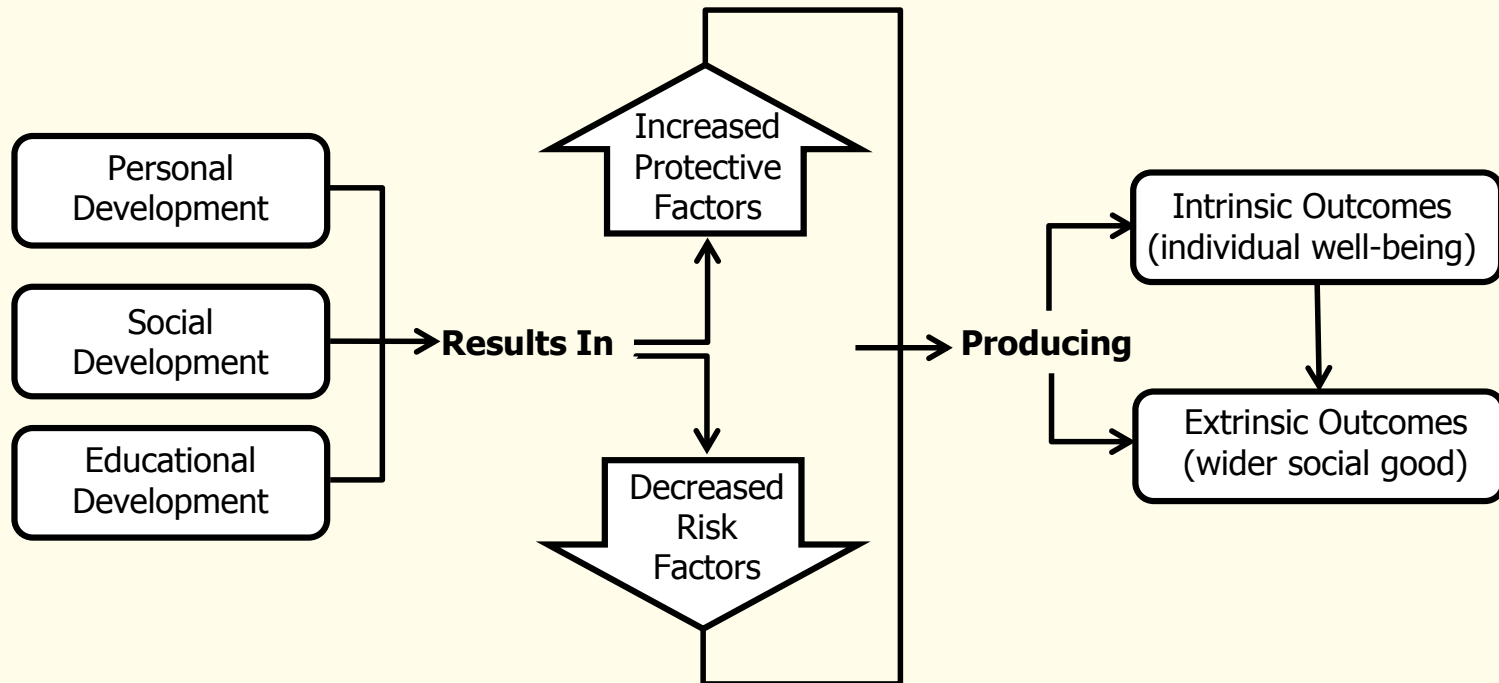
To **target and tailor support** for different young people.

*5. How can we make the biggest difference for young people?*

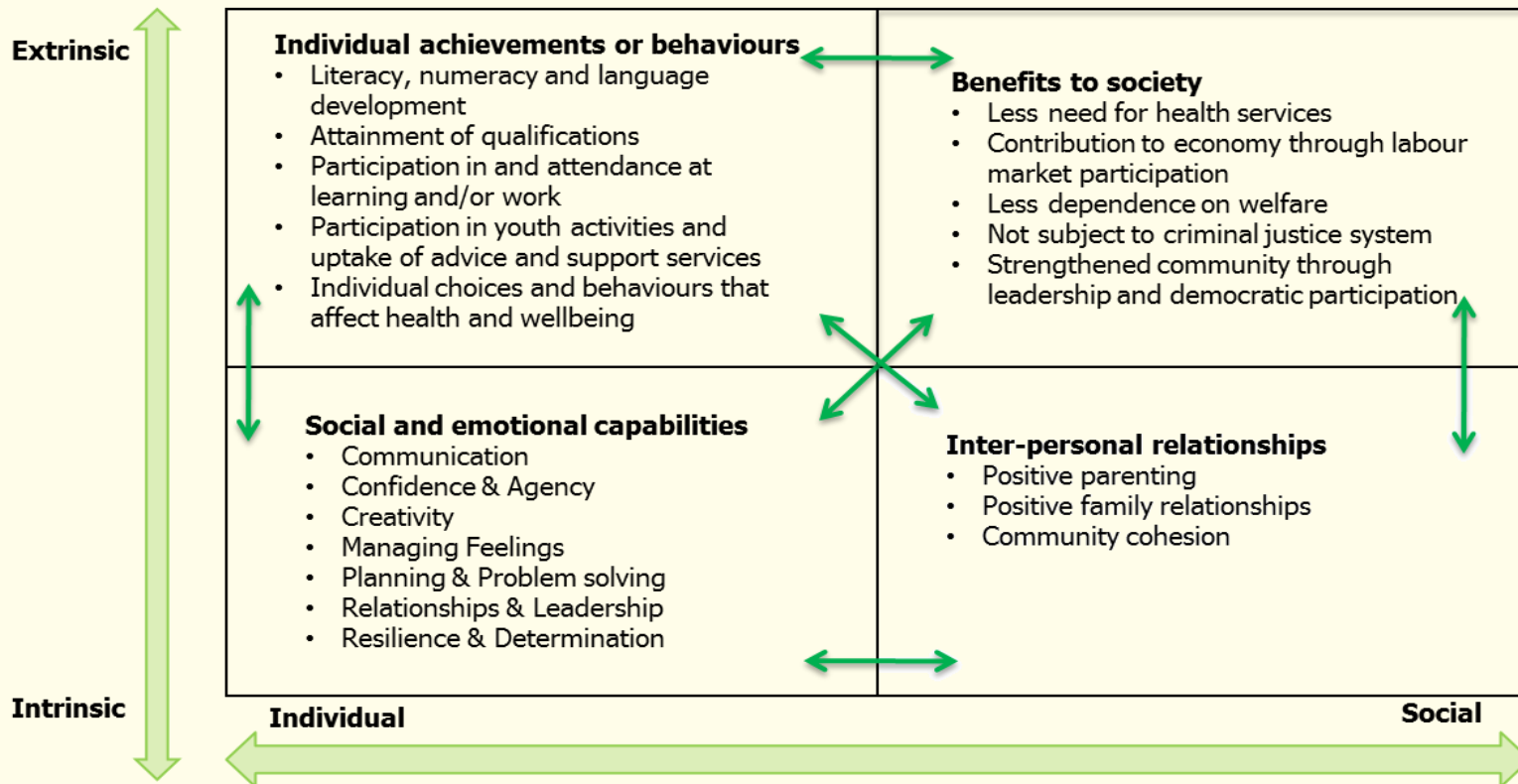
To **inform practice** and the sector's development.

# LINKING CAPABILITIES, INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC OUTCOMES

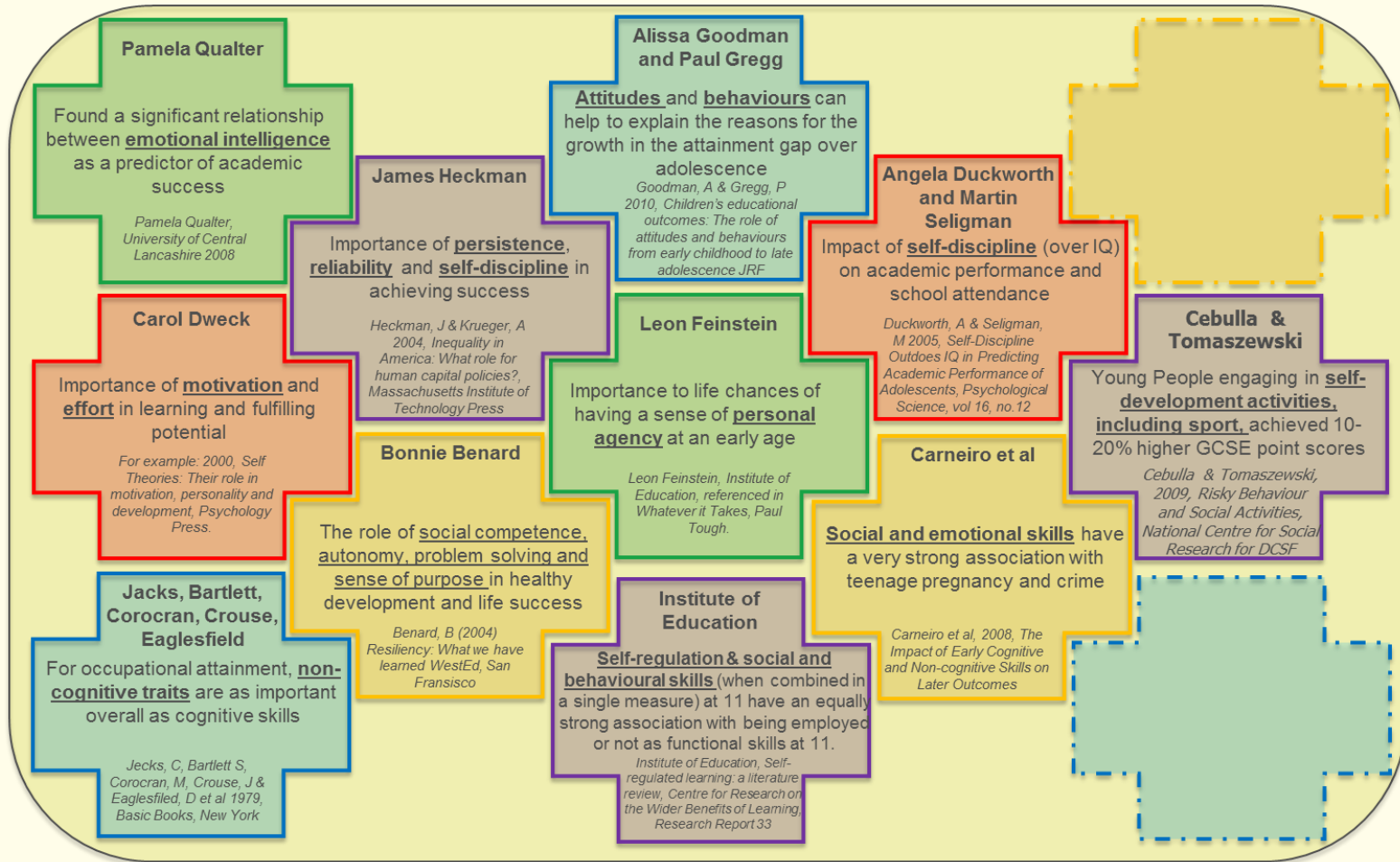
At the heart of the framework is an approach linking the process of youth work to eventual outcomes for young people.



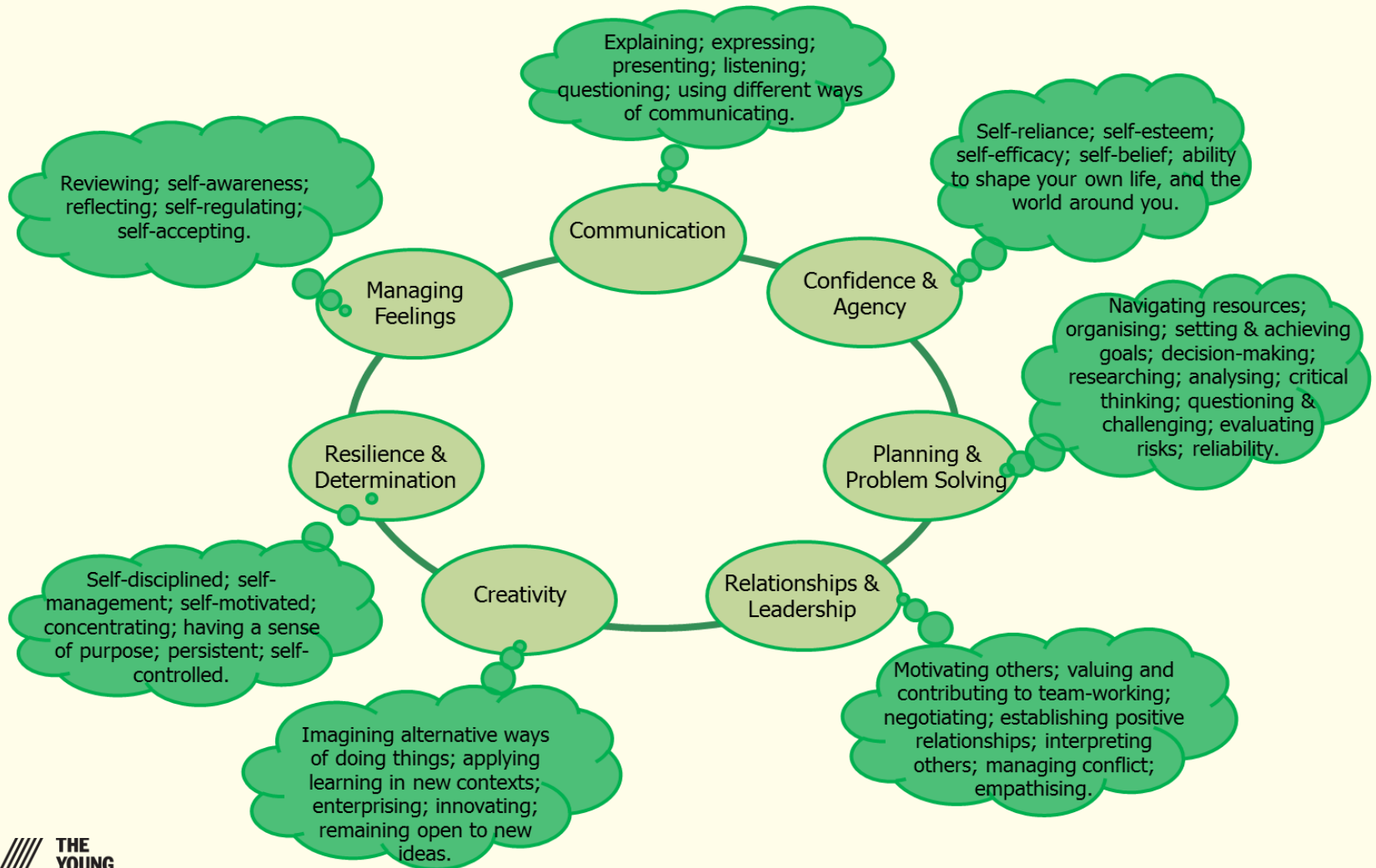
The framework summarised this as a relationship between social and emotional capabilities, the ‘bread and butter’ of working with young people, and extrinsic outcomes: outcomes which can be measured and valued by society, including educational achievement, literacy and numeracy, and good health.



The Framework argued that there is an emerging and compelling evidence base which supports this relationship, but more needs to be done to grow this evidence base.

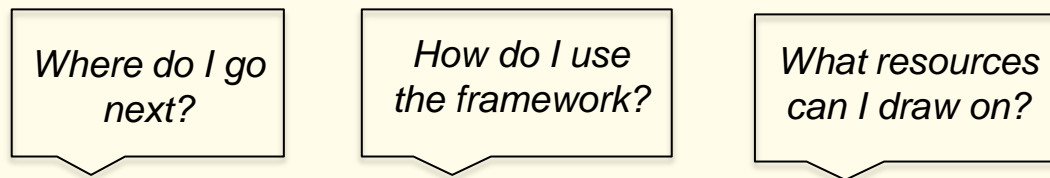


The Framework proposed a model of seven clusters of capabilities that are of value to all young people.



The publication of the Framework generated a high level of interest and engagement, and it was clear that many voluntary youth sector organisations and their partners were reflecting on their own ‘outcomes journey’. Local authorities, too, are increasingly developing their own outcomes frameworks, and thinking about how social and emotional capabilities should be supported through commissioning and the local offer.

The biggest questions we heard were practical:



As a consequence The Young Foundation, on behalf of the Catalyst consortium, extended its work around the Framework to shed some light on these practical issues.

During the second half of 2012, we worked with three organisations, each seeking to develop an outcomes focus in their work with young people. Our intention was to understand their journeys, challenges, and successes, and to share this learning more widely in the sector.



# THE FRAMEWORK OF OUTCOMES IN PRACTICE

# AIMS OF PHASE TWO

This second phase of activities, following publication of the Framework of Outcomes, had three aims:

1. To understand the journey of an organisation that is thinking about outcomes in its work with young people;
2. To explore how the Framework of Outcomes is being used in practice by youth sector organisations, their partners, and stakeholders;
3. To explore the wider implications for the sector in taking an outcomes focus in designing, developing and delivering services for young people.

# PARTNERS

We worked with three organisations from October 2012 to March 2013 - Brathay Trust, the British Red Cross and London Youth.

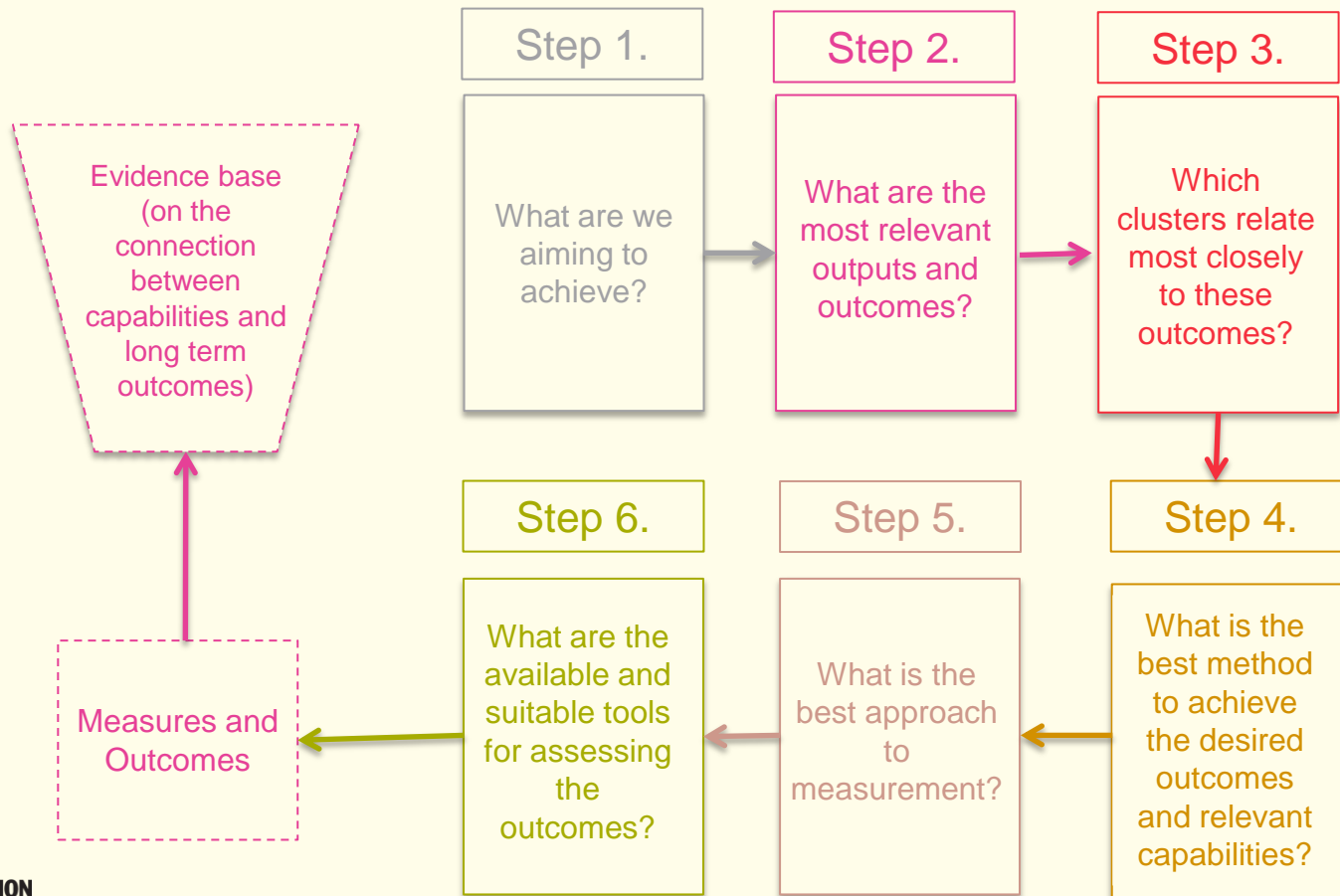
Each was already involved in developing their thinking and practice around outcomes. They wanted to talk to us about the journey they had been on in relation to developing their own outcomes framework.

We have worked alongside them in the last few months, and were pleased to be able to learn from them and share their stories.



# FOCUSING OUR WORK

The Framework of Outcomes introduced a six step process which can be used by service providers to shape programmes and build evidence of their value, and by commissioners and funders to develop defined and better-evidenced outcomes from services.



This second phase of work aimed to deepen our understanding of what each step of this process looked like in practice and how the sector could be supported to adapt and embed the process in their own work.

Many organisations in the youth sector are under pressure from funders and commissioners to provide evidence of their impact. As a result, there is a natural tendency by organisations engaging in an outcomes focus to gravitate straight towards an approach to measurement and measurement tools. However, our experience shows that, without clarity over **which outcomes to measure**, attempts to develop approaches to measurement are not likely to be fruitful.

The early stages of thinking about outcomes must be explored and understood **before** moving onto the final stages which look at measurement and selecting tools.

Although all three of our partners in this second phase of work - Brathay, British Red Cross and London Youth - were all at very different stages on their journeys, this context rang true for them.

# GOING ON A JOURNEY – CASE STUDIES

We worked with staff in each of the pilot organisations to understand their perspective on articulating outcomes and how to measure their outcomes. Discussions included a mix of management, delivery, and human resources staff, along with the individual leading the outcomes work in each organisation (not necessarily someone in senior management). Each of the organisations were at different stages of the process of developing and articulating their outcomes, measuring outcomes, and using the Framework of Outcomes.

Our research with the organisations aimed to establish the challenges and successes they had experienced, and identify their key learning.

# BRATHAY TRUST

## Background

Brathay Trust was established over 70 years ago, and offers a range of residential, outdoor, and community based youth work in Cumbria, Yorkshire and Humber, Sheffield and the North West.

Brathay primarily works with young people aged 10-25. The young people come from a range of backgrounds, including those at risk of engaging in anti-social behaviour; care leavers; those excluded from school; and those at risk of becoming NEET. The length of programme offered also varies, from short afternoon sessions to longer terms programmes.

Brathay Trust has an in-house Research Hub, created by a Knowledge Transfer Partnership – a programme launched by Government to encourage collaboration between businesses and universities. This Hub works across the organisation to develop thinking and practice around outcomes and evaluation. The Hub has been developing a “[meta model of youth development for social justice](#)” for the last two years.



Photo credit: Brathay Trust

## Their process

Brathay originally began to develop their “meta model” when the organisation realised that they did not centrally and uniformly collect data around the impact of their work. They were also responding to pressure from funders and commissioners to provide evidence of their impact. They had an organisational slogan of “*doing it the Brathay way*” however they were critical of the message this sent and there was confusion about what this really meant and how it fitted in with their mission statement to “*become a leading charity that inspires children and young people to engage positively in their communities*”

Their meta model takes into consideration the connection between “proximal” and “distal” outcomes, and incorporates the clusters of capabilities from our Framework of Outcomes. It led to the development of practitioner-led evaluation tools, building on the matrix of tools in our framework.

The organisation used a theory of change process to develop their outcomes and understand aspects of their practice - articulating what they do and why.

Throughout, the developing framework was shared with practitioners and staff from across the organisation. This was done informally and opportunistically with a diverse range of staff. Regular workshops were held to get feedback and help shape the models and tools developed, with learning incorporated into training and staff handbooks. At the end of this process Brathay tested the model out with young people, to ensure it made sense to them.

*“You can’t get away from a select committee finding. You may not want to evaluate, but if you don’t start, the Government will see no reason to re-invest. It is critical for the sector to do more and move forward. You can generate evidence in a way that fits with the value of the organisation. It’s about ownership of doing excellent work and creating your own ways of evidencing this.”*



## Successes

Having an in-house Research Hub to develop their model, with time, capacity and expertise, was felt to be essential. Making themselves available to support other organisations develop their evidence base, helped to make the research hub financially sustainable

The meta-model allowed staff to all *“speak the same language”* and be able to articulate the work they do and why they do it, increasing their confidence in their work.

The process highlighted how Brathay’s unique points, and how they *“fit in with the big picture of youth work”*. Using creative tools that support youth work and engage young people was critical to their success.

Connecting proximal and distal outcomes allowed Brathay to show the impact of youth work over the limited time window they work with a young person, and integrating our clusters of capabilities into their model gave focus to their discussion on outcomes.

Their meta model will act as a tool to shape delivery, but also as a tool for ‘sales’ to highlight the potential impact of their work to funders and commissioners.

The approach and mission to create their meta-model was at all times driven by a core set of Brathay values.

*“We can now make meaningful statements about impact”*

## Challenges

Brathay identified that there were a lot of potential outcomes that their work achieved – both proximal and distal. Many proximal outcomes were seen to be “airy fairy” and distal outcomes longer term – staff were concerned not to over-claim what could be achieved.

At times evaluation was challenging. Interviews highlighted that evaluation and measurement was not necessarily the number one priority of staff and the senior leadership team. The need to evaluate was met with resistance from some staff, “*it went against my youth work values to make explicit what I know works in my head*”.

Staff were also concerned that evaluation could show misleading negative results without context or explanation – when groups of young people, for one reason or another, are unable to reach the set outcomes. This should not automatically translate into a judgement that the programme has failed.

Other members of staff felt that if the organisation became too constrained by the outcomes agreed with commissioners, it could lose its ability to be flexible and adaptive to young peoples’ needs.

*“If we don’t develop our outcomes, then we lose our identity. We developed our values to differentiate ourselves from other organisations. We needed to focus on what makes us unique”*

## Key Learning

Brathay staff value their **Research Hub** and the capacity it brought to undertake this process. Organisations who do not have this resource in-house could look to involve a local university in a **Knowledge Transfer Partnership**.

Make sure **practitioners**, and those with a **delivery background**, are engaged in the process; it is important not to impose anything without consultation. Staff at Brathay felt this consultation was effective as it was **open** to all and not overly formalised or burdensome. To be a success, there must be **internal support** and buy-in on a senior level for an outcomes approach.

Developing a **theory of change model** was *“the most significant step”* – you must be able to articulate why you do what you do. This approach enhanced staff’s understanding of the relationship between short term and long term outcomes for young people and society, and how they are connected. Organisational **aims and outcomes** must fit together.

Any evaluation literature or materials must avoid jargon and use simple language. Learn from existing work as Brathay did, including the Framework of Outcomes. However Brathay engaged critically, adapting existing frameworks or models as necessary.

There must also be a connection between the person “delivering” and the person “selling” services so that **outcomes** “sold” are **achievable**. This evidence and focus on outcomes enables negotiations with commissioners who may be making unreasonable requests.

Learn by doing: *“keep doing this and it will be shaped by your practice and learning”*.

# BRITISH RED CROSS

## Background

The British Red Cross (BRC) is a volunteer-led humanitarian organisation that aims to equip people with the skills to cope in crisis, whoever and wherever they are. Although BRC is not specifically a youth organisation, a wide range of programmes are run in schools and youth groups to enable young people to understand, cope with, and respond to crisis.

BRC wanted to adopt an outcomes focus for their humanitarian education strand of work. This work ranges from hour long educational classes and assemblies in schools, to longer term, six week programmes.

BRC's aim was to be able to articulate externally and internally what the outcomes of humanitarian education are. To do this, they needed to achieve a commonality of language within a robust framework.

Over the last two years BRC has developed an [outcomes framework](#) and [programme evaluation framework](#), within a national organisation-wide evaluation framework, covering all of their programmes.



Picture Credit: Matthew Percival, British Red Cross

## Process

BRC began a consultation and created an “outcomes group” working with over 60 colleagues across the organisation, engaging a mix of managers, practitioners and volunteers. Within this they created an outcomes working group, led by a champion in the organisation.

Their starting point was understanding “*what we are doing*”, and understanding what good humanitarian education looks like. From this they worked to articulate the outcomes of humanitarian education, and developed indicators to show when the outcomes were achieved.

Staff took part in a series of webinars, focus groups, residentials and consultations to develop their outcomes framework, working cross departmentally at all times. This was externally facilitated. BRC felt this was a key success factor.

BRC used the Framework of Outcomes as an external tool to help stimulate and frame their thinking. The next stage of work is to pilot the framework along with a range of measurement tools.

*“It has been marvellous to be part of the outcomes journey and to see it all mapped out in a way we can share with others internally and externally”*

## Successes

There was strong, cross organisational involvement in developing the framework, which was instrumental in achieving buy-in for the approach. A range of views and experiences were included to make the framework usable in practice.

Staff believe that the framework will help make BRC more accountable to the young people it works for. It is anticipated that the framework will be used to help design and inform the delivery of sessions, making them as effective as possible for young people.

It has helped them articulate what they do and given them renewed enthusiasm and motivation. As one staff member commented, it *“puts steam back into what we do and why we do it.”*

The process helped locate the important role of Humanitarian Education within the wider organisational strategic aims.

*“The theory has united everyone under a shared vision which will be most effective for beneficiaries”*

## Challenges

The length of time of the process took was an issue – some felt that the process took too long and did not maintain momentum. Co-ordination of staff was also difficult, getting the right people in the room to get decisions made.

Although outcomes and have now been agreed, some staff felt there was a focus on *“too many outcomes”* and there should have been a narrower focus from the offset.

It was challenging to sift through all existing models and literature in order not to *“reinvent the wheel”* but essential this was done. The Framework of Outcomes was useful here.

Getting the language right was a barrier – deciding common language and definitions which were not too *“jargon heavy”*.

Throughout there were worries around how and what to measure. Many were concerned about the fact that *“some outcomes can’t be measured on a day to day basis”*. Respondents also queried what could reasonably be measured in fairly short humanitarian education lessons, and whether it would impact on delivery because of *“too much form filling.”*

*“We are now better able to deliver, demonstrate, and communicate the impact of our work”*

## Key Learning

Keep it **simple!** Keep language, and the process, simple with a shared understanding of priorities. Make sure goals aimed for are **achievable**.

Make sure the process is **not too time consuming**; it is important that staff have capacity to be involved and momentum is kept up.

If **materials** are provided, make sure they are digestible for all audiences and colleagues, and that sufficient time is given to this stage of the process. Some respondents commented that information was theoretical and overwhelming. This includes our Framework of Outcomes as well as other materials.

Use **external models** to stimulate initial thinking, as it can give a good starting point. Respondents commented that the Framework of Outcomes was useful here.

Throughout the consultation period an **external facilitator** was used. This was felt to be essential by all staff.

Make sure a **mix of staff** are involved, including those who deliver programmes, to make sure what is developed is useable “on the ground”.

Build in time for **young people** to be involved in your process.

The end result may not be perfect but can be **road tested** and developed as you learn.



# LONDON YOUTH

## Background

London Youth is a network of over 400 diverse community youth organisations where young people choose to go. Their mission is to support and challenge young people to become the best they can be. They do this in London through programmes covering youth action and youth leadership, sports development, employability, the environment, youth work training, the London Youth Quality Mark, and at their two residential centres, Hindleap Warren and Woodrow High House.

London Youth began a new approach to its annual planning framework from February 2012. Teams completed top line thinking on their work for the next three years, planning each programme on the basis of the outcomes they wished to achieve for young people, with the aim of evidencing progress towards these outcomes by Christmas 2013.

Because of the breadth of programmes they offer, London Youth decided to focus on three particular projects as pilots, looking to strip them back, understand their intended outcomes, and what activities would help attain these. Our work has focused primarily on understanding the journey of these three London Youth programmes; Hindleap Warren Outdoor Education Centre, Urban Nature, and Athan 31.

Having decided on their outcomes, London Youth are now engaging in a process of deciding what outcomes evidence should be collected, rather than simply collecting the data requested by their funders.



Photo credit: London Youth



## Their Process

Teams identified programme-specific outcomes for the young people taking part in their programmes, responding to the outcomes agenda. This was done on a project by project basis, using teams' expertise and knowledge to articulate the outcomes they believed their programmes achieved. Outcomes were to use "change language" about the impact of the programme on young people. Outcomes were to be SCAA – Simple, Clear, Achievable by the programme, and About the change to young people.

They used our Framework of Outcomes to challenge their thinking: *"It made us deep dive into our assumptions and how we think we make these changes in the young people we work with."* They also used our clusters of capabilities to create a framework to capture their outcomes, commenting *"the outcomes framework was a breath of fresh air, it was understandable, the clusters fitted in with our programmes – I felt like we had been waiting for it for a long time."*

Programmes used a Theory of Change model to help refine their outcomes, assumptions in delivery, and activities needed to reach these outcomes.

London Youth is now in the process of thinking about how they can measure their outcomes, and what tool would be appropriate for each of their programmes. They have recruited a Head of Learning to take this forward.

*"This is the suck it and see year, we are having bash and using it as a learning experience"*

## Successes

Embedding outcomes at the planning stage is helping to bring about a cultural shift.

Including all staff in the discussion on outcomes is delivering a practitioner-led approach.

Staff commented that creating outcomes as part of their planning process felt like a “*crystalizing moment*” where they personally felt like they made a leap forward in articulating the value and meaning of their work.

The use of a Theory of Change has helped the organisation understand what they want to achieve, how much they can reasonably offer, and be more reflective and push practice. *“Articulating our Theory of Change has allowed us to challenge our assumptions of what works, to look at our contribution and to find a practical route to evolving our practice.”*

The Theory of Change has given them the ability to explain to funders what they do concisely, *“we use less adjectives and our language is sharper.”*

*“this approach shows why we get out of bed in the morning – to make a difference to young people. We all have anecdotal information, but this helps us do it in a more grown up way.*

## Challenges

There was an awareness that integrating an outcomes focus would require significant culture change; both time and resource are required.

Bringing academic thinking to bear alongside operational imperatives is a challenge.

Staff were cautious not to “over claim” the impact of their work, and were keen to understand what could be attributable to their programme. The lack of a common language around outcomes across the sector meant they had to define their own parameters.

There was appetite for the development and introduction of a measurement tool, but this had previously resulted in confusion and disagreement about the right tool to use. There had been internal drive to create and use a bespoke tool, but this was met with challenges due to time constraints in tool creation and implementation.

Issues were raised when thinking about practicalities of a measurement tool, particularly in relation to safeguarding and whether the nature of questions asked would be suitable in an open access environment.

What level of evidence constitutes “robust enough” is a question London Youth are grappling with now.

*“What is important is that throughout this we are being true to ourselves, not doing this just to help with funding, doing this to learn how to better do what we think we do. Although hard to fit into organisational lives, people want this.”*

## Key Learning

It is important to have a planned **process** for an organisation to articulate outcomes, however, staff commented that their approach was shaped successfully as their journey evolved.

London Youth were cautious not to over think the process, or attempt to spend too much time perfecting it, for fear of it losing **momentum**.

It is important to convey the **long term picture** and goal to staff involved to gain buy-in, and important not to be too “top down”, tokenistic, or hierarchical in your approach.

When evaluating programmes, it is not unusual to receive some negative results and feedback, but this should be used to **shape practice** and delivery.

Further, expecting all outcomes to be achieved by all participants is too idealistic, its often about making steps toward achieving these outcomes and being on a **journey**.

Although outcomes were developed for five pilot projects separately, London Youth saw **commonalties** and overlaps of outcomes and project aims. It is important that outcomes do not become fragmented, they must be able to sit within organisational aims.

Due to the **diversity** of projects offered, some will fit more easily within an outcomes framework than others.

It is beneficial to **trial something** even if it is not perfect; it gives something to work with.

# LEARNING FROM THE PROCESS

# COMMON EXPERIENCES

All three organisations have been on different journeys. However, there are some common experiences which suggests learning for the sector.

## The need to consult and collaborate

- **Consultation and buy-in** – In all three organisations, a mix of staff were involved, including managers, practitioners, human resources, fundraising and marketing. This mix was essential for success in the process, ensuring buy-in and usability.
- **Involvement of young people** – organisations recognised the importance of involving young people, but there were questions around when the right time for this was and how to fit this into the process. Questions were also raised about whether young people should have a role in evidencing outcomes, for example by self assessment.

## Time and Capacity

- **Capacity** – consideration needs to be given to ensuring that staff have sufficient time to be involved in the process, so that involvement does not become burdensome or impact on work commitments.
- **Time** - whilst it is clear that this is not an overnight process, organisations felt that too long a programme loses momentum.

## Organisational Culture

- **Values** – to be successful an organisation needs to be open, but with a strong hold on beliefs and values.
- **Change management** - An outcomes focus is not just about adding on new processes to existing programmes of work. A change management approach is needed to change the culture of organisations.
- **Competing priorities** – organisations talked about balancing the needs of an internal, self evaluation and quality assurance process, and responding to a commissioner and funder-driven agenda.
- **Trial and Error** –there is no one size fits all solution. Organisations were keen to learn from others, taking into account existing research and frameworks, but would then trial an approach which could be tweaked and adapted in practice.

## Articulating value

- **Articulating value** – all three organisations felt that a focus on social and emotional capabilities was critical in articulating their organisational impact.
- **Common language** – the language of outcomes was often a source of confusion and debate for the organisations. The Framework for Outcomes provided them with a common language, which was unambiguous and digestible.
- **Theory of change** – all three organisations used a theory of change in their process to articulate their outcomes and impact, finding it to be a useful tool.



## Evidencing impact

- **Evidence** – there are challenges in evidencing different types of work with young people, from targeted, to open access, to capacity building programmes. There needs to be agreement on whether evidence should be collected at a project or organisational level.
- **Measurement** – there is a danger of a “rush to measurement”, which can artificially separate outcomes and measurement from practice. In such a rush, organisations fit their outcomes around available tools, and can end up measuring skewed outcomes.

# ORGANISATIONAL BENEFITS

## Impact on delivery

- **Shaping practice** – organisations we worked with told us how their outcomes frameworks will help shape programme design and delivery, which in turn will enhance the experience and potential outcomes for young people.
- **Long term planning** – the creation of an outcomes framework and use of a theory of change helped the organisations clearly articulate the outcomes of their work, which in turn identified potential service gaps.

## Leadership – within the sector and with funders

- **New agenda** – this work is innovative and progressive; *“this is cutting edge stuff, and is where we should be as an organisation” (London Youth)*. Our organisations felt responding to this agenda will help separate their work from the crowd, and show leadership within the sector.
- **Changing landscape** – in the new funding climate, with initiatives such as payment by results, organisations commented that articulating and proving outcomes is key.
- **Challenging funders’ and commissioners’ thinking** – having convincing models linking intrinsic and extrinsic outcomes pushes back against the drive towards long term outcomes which may not capture the full value of youth work.

## Confidence as an organisation and as individuals

- **Articulating what they do** – respondents commented they were better able to articulate clearly what they do and why they do it. They found commonalities between different programmes delivered throughout their organisation as a result of their shared language.
- **Proving existing theories** – staff commented that often their practice is based on what they know works, but has been hard to evidence. Applying a theory of change model has confirmed these theories and ‘proven’ what they already thought worked. The evidence supported external communications and fundraising.
- **Drive and motivation** – an outcomes focus gives practitioners confidence about what they do, why they do it, and the impact it has on young people. This has been a reaffirming process for staff within organisations we have worked with.

# COMMON CHALLENGES

Despite the many organisational benefits highlighted by our pilot organisations, there were still many challenges which had to be overcome.

## Collaboration with the sector

- **Working in isolation** – organisations felt a sense of isolation, both as an organisation and as a sector. Many felt there was a need to raise the profile and status of youth work for their impact to be taken seriously, and there is a need to advocate its value and contribution to society.
- **Shared learning** – there is a temptation to dismiss existing frameworks and tools as not relevant. But this could lead to duplication. Use available materials as a starting point.

## Choosing the right outcomes

- **Articulating outcomes** - the articulation of outcomes is a tricky but pivotal step, which organisations find difficult, or sometimes miss. This means they often pick outcomes which are not achievable for their activities, or are too high level.
- **Selecting outcomes** – all organisations spoke about the difficulty of selecting the “*right outcomes*”. Outcomes should be clear, understood, realistic but ambitious, defined and succinct.
- **Language** – it is crucial to build consensus around terminology.

## Evidencing outcomes

- **Selecting a tool** – respondents talked about the difficulty in selecting the right tool to measure desired outcomes. Important criteria to be considered are: whether there is a suitable tool in the public domain, whether it is sufficiently standardised and robust, or whether something bespoke is needed.
- **Measurement** – measurement must not compromise practice. Staff must have time to measure outcomes, and the means of evaluation must be appropriate in a youth work setting.

# REFLECTIONS AND LEARNING

## Outcomes based commissioning and funding

Historically the need to monitor and evaluate programmes was driven by outputs: the things or services provided. Increasingly now organisations are being asked to articulate outcomes for young people, and evidence the impact that they make. This change in emphasis is partly down to policy drivers around evidence based practice, as well as the increasing difficulty for funders of making decisions about how to spend scarce resources. This applies equally to local authorities, where youth services must evidence their impact against the overall area priorities.

The outcomes sought by commissioners and funders need to be realistic. Some long term outcomes such as successful, stable employment cannot be realised and evidenced following a short term intervention. However there are interim outcomes which **can be evidenced**: these could include increased confidence or self control, or an immediate movement into education, employment or training. The Framework of Outcomes showed how these interim outcomes can be linked to long term impact by drawing on the evidence base. Organisations need to be really clear about the interim outcomes that result for young people from their interventions, and how these are linked to long term impact. An overall model is needed to understand what is an interim outcome (achievable within the timescale of the intervention), and what is longer term and therefore lies in the future. The link between these outcomes must be articulated through a theory of change.

Organisations we worked with felt frustration that **intrinsic** outcomes are not recognised and valued by funders and commissioners as significant. Locating them in a theory of change can help to prove their value. Funders and commissioners need to be ready to accept the contribution these intrinsic, interim outcomes make towards their desired long term outcome for young people.

# REFLECTIONS AND LEARNING

## Measurement

Measuring outcomes is not a simple task. There are challenges around choosing which outcomes to measure and choosing the correct tool to measure the outcome. The organisations we spoke to were in different stages in their measurement journey, however there were some shared challenges and approaches.

Organisations felt concern that measurement would not capture true value of programmes. Choosing one outcome to measure means that other, spontaneous outcomes for young people are not captured. Different cohorts of young people present differently, with their own individual starting points. One of the key skills of youth work is starting where young people are at. Without context, a pass or fail indicator can present a misleading picture about the effectiveness of the work. The challenge is to find a way of measuring that takes account of young people's starting points.

Respondents were also cautious not to over-claim outcomes and changes in the young people. Young people could be using many youth programmes or extra curricular activities, and it would be too idealistic and simplistic to attribute their change to the one session or programme that they participated in. They argued that their programmes helped a “**movement**” towards an outcome, but isolating the impact of their programme was a difficult task. Organisations need to be really clear about the level of contribution they claim from intermediate to long term outcomes and draw on the **evidence base** to support this.

On a practical level, our pilot organisations talked about the short term nature of some of their programmes, and how it was difficult to fit in time or a structure to measure outcomes, particularly in the case of one off, short sessions. Any measurement tool must be suitable for the programme, and some feel it may need to be developed in house, or adapted from an existing source.

# MOVING FORWARD

This work was illuminating and demonstrated genuine progress and commitment, highlighting that the organisations involved really wanted to effect change.

But this is a big agenda, and organisations need to work together to maintain momentum and drive forward this process for the sector. The more organisations work together to support an outcomes focus in the sector, the clearer the message will be to policy makers and funders

More work needs to be done to understand how impact through different youth work settings – both open access and targeted – can be evidenced.

In all this, there needs to be an acknowledgement of smaller organisations, or those with little resource, who need support to take on an outcomes focus.

*“I want to encourage people to see this as a never ending journey. Don’t rush the process as it will take you longer in the long term, but evidence the journey well and share with others so you know what help you need from them. People picking up your work can see its history – the reason for your decisions.”*

*(Gill Allbutt, BRC)*



# CONCLUSIONS

Within this report, we presented an overview of the learning of three organisations who agreed to pilot an outcomes approach in their work with young people, using the Framework of Outcomes as a guide. This overview provided:

- Insight into the **journey of an organisation** that is thinking about outcomes in its work with young people.

We have seen that an effective process means getting outcomes right at all steps in the process – in design, delivery, measurement and communications. It is critical that an outcomes focus is embedded within planning and evaluation, rather than tacked-on to respond to an externally imposed agenda. An effective **change management process** needs to be in place to convert hearts and minds and realise the significant benefits that result.

- An opportunity to explore **how the Framework of Outcomes is being used** in practice.

The Framework of Outcomes provided a common language for discussions about outcomes which was a critical success factor for the organisations we worked with. The value placed on social and emotional capabilities as part of a theory of change argued by the Framework was

of real value to organisations in articulating their impact within the timescale of the interventions provided. Using the Framework as a starting point, organisations were able to explore the approach to outcomes that worked for them, recognising that there is no one right answer for which outcomes should be achieved through youth work. It is a journey and an adaptive learning process for all.

- An assessment of the **wider implications for the sector** in taking an outcomes focus in designing, developing and delivering services for young people.

We have seen that there needs to be support for organisations within the sector who are going through their own process. Organisations should make connections with each other and share learning. The more organisations work together to support an outcomes focus in the sector, the clearer the message will be to policy makers and funders about the impact of youth work for young people and for society as a whole.

# ANNEXES

- Annex 1 – Glossary
- Annex 2 – Theory of Change
- Annex 3 – References, further reading and resources

# ANNEX 1 - GLOSSARY

- *Clusters of Capabilities* – our research for the framework of outcomes found a consistent core set of social and emotional capabilities that are of value to young people. These capabilities can be grouped into seven interlinked clusters, each of which is supported by an evidence base that demonstrates its importance and links to success in extrinsic outcomes
- *Distal outcomes* – outcomes which are measured and valued by other people, and are further away from the young person and will take several proximal outcomes to achieve. This includes success in education, career success, being healthy, having positive relationships
- *Extrinsic outcomes* – outcomes which can be measured and valued by other people, including educational achievement, literacy and numeracy or good health
- *Impact* - broader or long term effects of a project's or organisation's activities, outputs and outcomes
- *Inputs* - refers to the time, resources and expertise that will be put into a project to ensure that the aims and outcomes are achieved
- *Intrinsic outcomes* - outcomes which are valued by and relate primarily to individuals, such as happiness, self-esteem and confidence

- ***Meta model*** – a model which defines the language and processes from which a model is formed
- ***Matrix of measurement tools*** – our research for the framework of outcomes surveyed a range of agencies to establish a matrix of tools and techniques that are commonly used to measure and evaluate the impact of services on social and emotional capabilities.
- ***Outcomes*** - the change that results from what an organisation or project does, offers or provides
- ***Outputs*** - products, services, or facilities that result from an organisation's or project's activities
- ***Proximal outcomes*** – outcomes that are close to the young person and quicker to achieve, including communication, managing feelings, resilience
- ***Theory of change*** – a method used to articulate an organisation's causal pathway, which links inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact
- ***Social and emotional capabilities*** – the ability to function in important ways, to create valuable outcomes, and to navigate choices and challenges
- ***Storyboarding*** – storyboarding is a process of creating a series of sketches to illustrate a process

# ANNEX 2 - THEORY OF CHANGE

## What is a theory of change?

- A theory of change aims to show a charity's path from needs to activities to outcomes to impact
- It is a process that aims to create a causal pathway – links inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact
- Explains the “*how*” of what an organisation does
- Defines the change you (or your funders) want to make
- Defines the steps needed to make change happen
- Depicts the assumptions or evidence underpinning your approach
- Shows where and how you can measure impact
- Shifts thinking from “*where are we now?*” to “*where do we want to be?*”
- Checks your activities make sense
- Help to show the outcomes partially or entirely within your control, and where you contribute to others

*“If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there”*





# CREATING A THEORY OF CHANGE

1.

Step one: Identify your goal

*The goal must be clear, understood, realistic but ambitious, defined and succinct*

2.

Step two: What needs to happen for this to be achieved?

*Think of the last change that needs to happen before reaching the ultimate goal - what are the most immediate preconditions?*

3.

Step three: Aligning activities with outcomes

*What needs to be done to achieve the outcomes? What do you do/need to do to achieve the outcomes set out?*

4.

Step four: What else is needed?

*Does this approach make sense? What are you assuming is in place? Is there anything that you are taking for granted?*

5.

Step five: What do we want to measure?

*What outcomes should be measured? They must be measurable (by you), defined, controllable and unique to your work.*



# ANNEX 3 - RESOURCES

## Further reading


- New Philanthropy Capital (2012) [Theory of change, The beginning of making a difference](#)
- The Aspen Institute, [The Community Builders Approach to theory of change, A practical guide to theory development](#)
- Organisational Research Services, [Theory of change: A practical tool for action, results and learning](#)
- Grant Craft, Mapping Change, [Using a Theory of Change to Guide Planning and Evaluation](#)
- National Youth Agency (2013) [The future for outcomes: A practical guide to measuring outcomes for young people.](#) Leicester: NYA.

# BRATHAY TRUST

1. [Brathay's Model of Youth Development](#)
2. Brathay's [Meta Model of Youth Development for Social Justice](#) (diagram)
3. Brathay's [Meta Model of Youth Development for Social Justice](#) (explained)

# BRITISH RED CROSS

1. Click [here](#) to view a storyboard depicting the process the organisation went through developing an outcomes focus
2. BRC's [Objectives Wheel](#): depicting outcomes that enable young people to understand, cope with, and respond to, crisis
3. BRC's [6-step Education Process Framework](#)
4. BRC Education, *Building Resilience through Education* (available in Spring 2013)



# **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

[youth@youngfoundation.org](mailto:youth@youngfoundation.org)

[@the\\_young\\_fdn](#)

[@\\_YF\\_Applied](#)