



THE
MERCERS'
COMPANY

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The Mercers' Company Transitions Special Initiative

Causeway Education
Year 6 Evaluation Report



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Executive summary

Introduction

The Mercers' Company's Transitions from Secondary Education Special Initiative began in July 2019 to support young people to make successful post-secondary transitions. The Initiative has funded 15 partner organisations ('partners'), with a particular focus on work that supports young people across London to expand their knowledge and experience of different pathways that build the skills valued by future employers. The work of the third cohort of seven partners in the final year of Phase 1 of the Initiative is explored in this report.

Each individual partner is evaluating the impact of its own Mercers'-funded work. Causeway Education is evaluating the impact of the Transitions Special Initiative as a whole and drawing together the key lessons learned from delivering these projects.

Programme Data

Causeway Education explores trends in the partners' quantitative programme data, across the following areas:

- delivery
- overall satisfaction
- self - and organisational - efficacy
- aspirations
- pathway awareness
- destinations

Delivery

Across the sixth year of the Transitions Special Initiative, the seven partners worked with 825 young people; 39 schools, virtual schools, or colleges; and 43 employers. Several programmes engaged high proportions of students who are from Black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, those eligible for free school meals (FSM) or those who are care experienced. In some cases, all students on a partner's programme fell into one or more of these categories.

Overall satisfaction

Among the organisations for which we have data, young people, school staff, and employers expressed high levels of satisfaction with the partners' programmes. Across all stakeholders and programmes, satisfaction rates were above 70%.

Self - and organisational - efficacy (how the partners develop young people's life and workplace skills)

The Transitions Special Initiative had a strong impact on participating young people's soft skills, with around three quarters and above of the young people on the partners' programmes saying they had acquired new soft skills from taking part. The proportion of young people who said they had acquired new workplace skills from the programmes was slightly lower, but for most partners it was still a majority of their students.

Aspirations

Available data from partners suggests that their programmes influence the aspirations of many of their young people and makes them feel more positive about their future. However, the proportion of young people who report feeling more positive about their future varies across programmes, ranging from 60% to almost 90%.

Pathway awareness

Partners' data provides strong evidence that programmes positively influence young people's awareness of different pathways into further education, training, or work, to varying degrees. Available partner data also suggests that most of the programmes positively influence young people's professional networks.

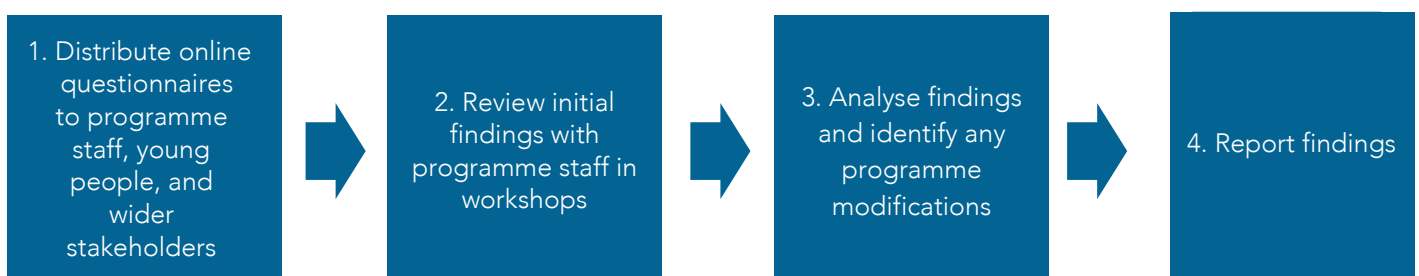
Destinations

Data collected by the partners on young people's destinations suggests that following participation in the funded programmes, many participants stay in school, go on, or intend to go on, to further education, training, or employment.

Theory of Action

Following on from previous years, Causeway Education has continued to use a methodology rooted in the 'Theory of Action' (ToA) approach, described in Professor Chris Brown's article, ['Using theories of action approach to measure impact in an intelligent way: A case study from Ontario Canada'](#).

Causeway Education's work this year followed the same structure as last year, shown below:



Successes

The Theory of Action process highlighted the following successes this year:

- Powerful partnerships and relationships with different stakeholders
- Sustained positive relationships with schools
- Some retention of business partnerships
- Transformative trusted relationships with young people
- Positive role models with lived experience
- Wider support for basic needs
- Flexible, responsive and personalised support
- Improvements in young people's soft skills
- Exposure to a range of different pathways
- Meaningful events
- A more integrated approach
- Effective cocreation

Challenges

Feedback highlighted the following challenges with programme delivery:

- Lack of support from some schools for planning and timetabling
- Coordinating funding can be tricky
- Young people prefer activities to be interactive
- Some young people continue to want more personalization
- Delivery can be very difficult without the right support from key stakeholders
- Survey fatigue affects response rates
- Young people are not motivated to provide longer term feedback

These issues were discussed with programme staff in the feedback workshops. This section summarises themes arising from these discussions.

Cohort 3 partners' reflections on progress against 2023-24 targets

Reflecting on the recommendations made in the 2023-24 evaluation report, Cohort 3 partners described how their delivery has changed. Each partner highlighted different levels of success adapting their delivery, which are set out by organisation in this section.

How the Cohort 3 partners can refine delivery in the future

Individual targets have been identified by each partner for optimising their own programme delivery in the future, with reference to the following themes:

1. Planning and timelines
2. Session structure and delivery
3. Programme content
4. Evaluation
5. Programme resources
6. Pastoral support

Recommendations - whole cohort areas for improvement

In addition to individual targets identified by each partner for how they aim to improve delivery going forward, there are four final cohort-level recommendations for refinements, building on the work of previous years. Cohort 3 partners should:

1. Consider recruiting school staff as programme ambassadors
2. Ensure young people are consistently encouraged to build robust and meaningful networks while taking part in programmes
3. Explore opportunities for backwards mentoring as a way to consolidate improvements in confidence and other soft skills
4. Consider how to further embed qualitative evaluation processes into existing monitoring and evaluation processes

Introduction

The Transitions Special Initiative structure

The Mercers' Company's Transitions from Secondary Education Special Initiative began in July 2019 to support young people to make successful post-secondary transitions. The Initiative has provided funding to 15 partner organisations ('partners'), with a particular focus on work that supports young people across London to expand their knowledge and experience of different pathways that build the skills valued by future employers. The first cohort of four partners completed their work with The Mercers' Company in 2022, and the second cohort of four partners in 2023. The work of the remaining seven Cohort 3 partners in their final year of funding is explored in this report.

Think and action-tank The Centre for Education and Youth (CfEY) evaluated the work of the partners from 2019-2025, and from Spring 2025 this work passed on to UK social mobility charity Causeway Education when CfEY ceased operations. Causeway Education supports young people from low-income backgrounds to access competitive universities, apprenticeships, and careers by providing guidance and training, making its work highly aligned with the goals of the Transitions Special Education Initiative.

The Initiative's timeline of evaluation support is shaded in purple in Table 1.

Table 1: Timeline of evaluation support for the Transitions Special Initiative

Cohort	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
1						
2						
3						

The partner organisations

Details of the seven Cohort 3 partners are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Cohort 3 partner organisations

Organisation	Organisation type and focus
Blueprint for All	A charity that aims to build careers, enrich society, and support communities through a range of programmes. Blueprint for All supports young people aged nine to 30 from underrepresented backgrounds by providing careers advice, supporting skills development, and offering opportunities to achieve qualifications, among other activities.
Envision	A charity that helps young people from less-advantaged backgrounds build their Essential Skills by delivering social action projects in their schools and communities. They do so by partnering young people from Key Stages 4 and 5 with Envision Programme Coordinators, and mentors from local partner businesses who support skills development and help advance social action projects.
In2scienceUK	In2scienceUK is a social mobility charity dedicated to helping young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds all over the UK gain access to STEM degrees and careers. Through their First-Year University Mentoring Programme, they support young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds as they transition to university to do their undergraduate STEM degrees. The programme matches young people with a near-peer mentor, a young person in their second year of university or beyond, who supports the mentee in their first year at university. This year, they are supporting an increased number of first-year students as they embark on their university careers.
Making the Leap	Making The Leap is a social mobility charity that aims to transform the futures of young people from less-advantaged socio-economic backgrounds. They provide training to raise young people's aspirations, to develop their skills, confidence, and outlook, and give them the chance to succeed in their chosen career. In addition to their direct delivery, Making the Leap use what they learn to raise awareness of the importance of social mobility among UK businesses and organisations, and encourage them to take action to improve it.
Power 2	Power2 unleashes the power of children and young people so that they can build happy and fulfilling lives. With its support, they improve their wellbeing, re-engage with school and learning, build networks and access opportunities. Its Power2 Advance programme supports young people in the care system to improve their wellbeing and develop independent living and employability skills. Its Teens and Toddlers programme supports young people to develop key transferable skills important for employability and gain crucial work experience, by spending 16 weeks mentoring a toddler in a local nursery.
Street League	Street League uses the power of sport to tackle poverty and give young people the opportunities they need to succeed in life and the workplace. Through a range of programmes, staff support young people to overcome practical and personal barriers to employment.
XLP	XLP operates in nine boroughs around London, working with 4,000 young people each year through education, mentoring, employability, community youth work, sports, and the arts. Its mission is to create positive futures for young people growing up in inner-city communities in London. Some of these young people may struggle daily with issues such as family breakdown, unemployment, and educational failure, and may be living in areas that experience high levels of anti-social behaviour and gang violence. Through positive, long-term relationships, XLP hopes to restore young people's trust in people, nurture the belief that things can change, encourage positive goal setting, and the drive to achieve those goals.

Evaluation framework: aims and structure

Each individual partner is conducting its own evaluation of the impact of its Mercers'- funded work. Causeway Education is evaluating the impact of the Transitions Special Initiative as a whole.

Evaluation framework

The partners involved in the Initiative deliver very different programmes. In collaboration with The Mercers' Company and the four Cohort 1 partners, CfEY previously designed an evaluation framework against which to report the partners' impact. It explores the Initiative's impact in relation to the following five areas:

1. **Delivery** (which activities the partners deliver, when and with whom).
2. **Self- and organisational- efficacy** (young people's life and workplace skills).
3. **Aspirations** (young people's aims for the future and where they see themselves).
4. **Pathway awareness** (young people's knowledge and understanding of different academic and vocational pathways into work).
5. **Destinations** (young people's post-programme places in education, training, or work).

This framework has enabled some comparison of findings across the programmes, while also considering the partners' different modes of delivery and impact. Causeway Education has continued to use this framework for the evaluation in 2024-25, in particular in structuring our analysis of the partners' quantitative data.

Evaluation aims

Causeway Education has upheld the following aims originally set by CfEY in its work with The Mercers' Company and the partner organisations. We are seeking to:

- describe and capture the partners' (very different) work
- explore the work that partners are doing individually, while ensuring we can talk about the initiative from a 'bird's-eye view'
- compare outcomes across the years.

This evaluation does not seek to provide detailed information about each individual partner's impact, as the partners share this separately with The Mercers' Company themselves. Instead, this report aims to capture the impact of work underway across the Initiative, providing The Mercers' Company and the partners with a picture of impact in the round, and implications for the partners' future work.

Evaluation structure

As in previous years, our evaluation has followed the structure presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Evaluation structure



Meetings and workshops

Causeway Education began this year's new evaluation cycle for Cohort 3 with a kick-off workshop in which we brought the partners together to remind them of each other's programmes and their work. We reviewed the journey so far, reminding them of the Theory of Action approach (detailed below), and discussing their experiences of last year's evaluation. The partners were briefed on next steps, and had the chance to share any questions, thoughts, or problems.

After the data collection process through Spring and Summer of 2025, Causeway Education held a Reflections Workshop in September where Cohort 3 partners met to look back on the year, share their progress, troubleshoot problems and plan for the Autumn Learning Symposium together.

In November 2025, Causeway Education and The Mercers' Company held a Learning Symposium at Mercers' Hall in London, to celebrate the work of Cohort 3 from 2022-23 to 2024-25 and share their learnings with attendees from across the education and youth sectors.

The event included three panel discussions on 'Care and Connection: supporting wellbeing and relationship building with young people', 'What next? Sustaining the Transition' and 'Youth voice in action: co-creating with young people'. Alongside programme staff from each of the Cohort 3 partner organisations, a mentee from In2scienceUK and Youth Board Trustee from Envision, panellists also included staff and young people from former grantees Career Ready and Construction Youth Trust, and an apprentice and representative from Channel 4. Attendees received a booklet with discussion prompts to encourage them to share ideas with other between the panel presentations and the opportunity to ask questions.

Data collection

Throughout the 2024-25 academic year, Causeway Education collected data using two methods:

Individual data submissions

As in previous years, the partners submitted their own, internal evaluation data to Causeway Education. We then synthesised the partners' data to present overarching findings about the impact of the Transitions Special Initiative. This year, we permitted the partners to submit any additional, relevant data they wanted to share with us, if they felt it did not fit into the categories already specified in the spreadsheet. Some of the partners were still unable to submit complete datasets this year; Causeway has reported on the information provided.

Theory of Action

We continue to use a methodology rooted in the 'Theory of Action' (ToA) approach, as detailed in previous years' reports. The approach follows the structure outlined below:

Figure 2: Theory of Action structure



- **In Phase 1** we reviewed last year's online questionnaires and then shared them with the partners, to be answered by their programme staff, young people, and wider stakeholders such as school staff, employers, or mentors. Respondents provided open text responses about their participation in and experiences of the programmes.
- **In Phase 2** we convened one-to-one feedback workshops with programme staff from each of the partner organisations, where we reviewed findings from Phase 1 and reflected on what these mean for future delivery. In these sessions, we also gathered feedback from the Cohort 3 partners about their progress on the areas for improvement from last year's ToA work.
- **In Phase 3** we analysed the findings from the questionnaires and workshop discussions and identified possible programme modifications for each of the partners and made overarching recommendations for the whole cohort.
- **In Phase 4** we produced our end of year report to The Mercers' Company, summarising our findings and detailing how the partners might move forward with their work in their final year of Transitions Special Initiative funding in 2024-25.

All participants gave informed consent to engage with the research.

Ongoing evaluation support

Across the year, Causeway Education also offered the partners individual support and ad-hoc guidance in relation to their own evaluations throughout the year, as required.

Reporting (interim and final)

Causeway Education provided an interim report in February, before this full end of year report, summarising the findings from this cycle of evaluating the Transitions Special Initiative.

Reflections on Theory of Action

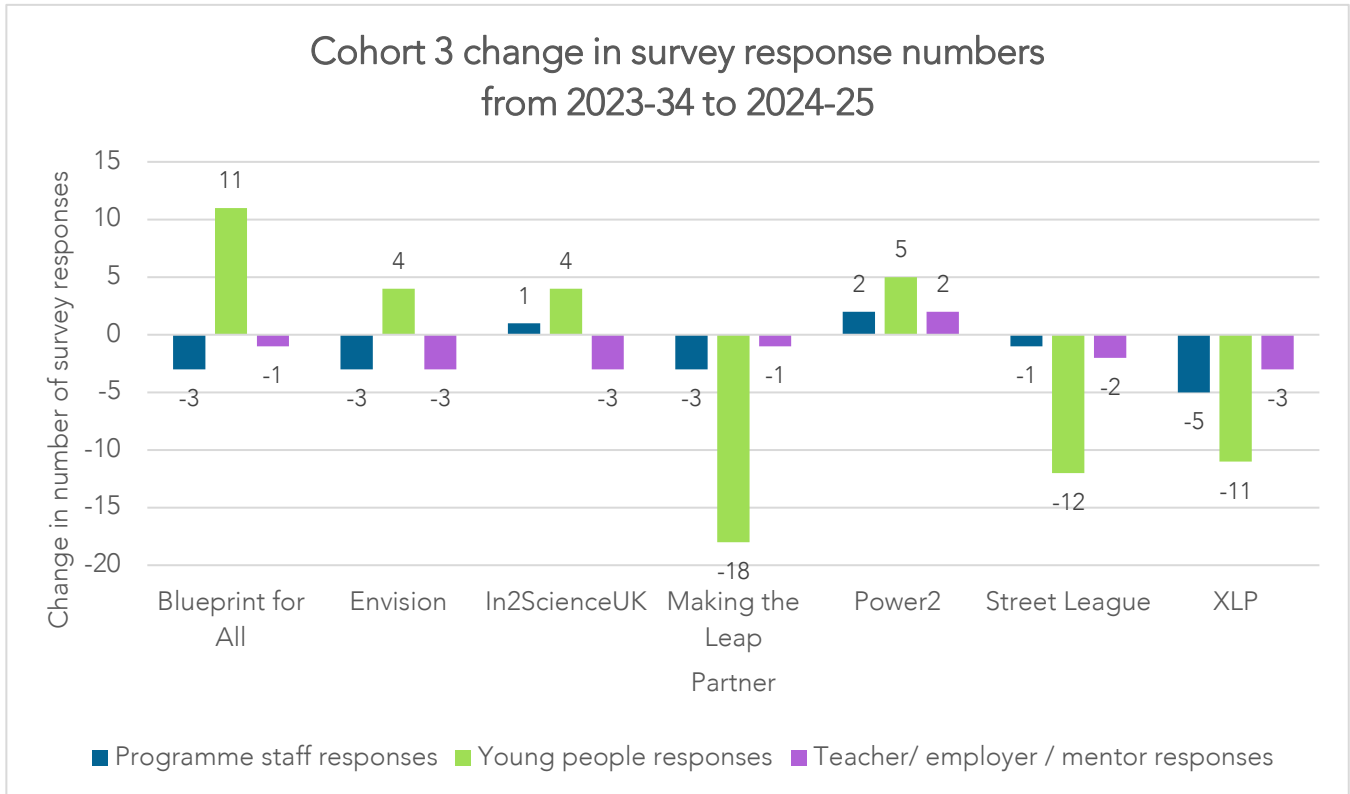
Online consultation forms

We received 69 of responses to the online questionnaires this year, down from 108 last year. This included feedback from 37 young people and 20 programme staff. As in previous years, we received fewer responses from other stakeholders such as teachers and employers (12 responses). The numbers of questionnaire responses gathered varied across the partners, and some were unable to secure any responses or had very few responses at all this year.

As shown below in Figure 3 below, Making the Leap saw the greatest fall in their responses from young people, but this was only because their numbers were disproportionately high in 2023-24, due to particular success in reaching young people. Their numbers of responses were in line with what was requested this year rather than over and above, and Making the Leap explained that their delivery team had found gathering so many in the past very time consuming and so for this report had focused more on delivering activities to the young people instead. Street League and XLP also gathered fewer responses this year. Street League experienced reduced support from school staff to facilitate young people completing surveys in 2024-25, which limited opportunities to gather feedback during sessions. In addition, they explained that a period of staff changeover within the team had disrupted continuity of delivery and evaluation processes. Together, these factors contributed to lower response rates, rather than reduced delivery or impact. XLP had similarly faced challenges with staffing during this period, as well as a time consuming and difficult migration to a new software system across the work of the organisation.

Blueprint for All, Envision, In2scienceUK and Power2 managed to increase some of their response rates this year.

Figure 3: Change in number of survey responses gathered by partners from 2023-24 evaluation to 2024-25 evaluation



Feedback workshops

The feedback workshops again proved a valuable space for discussion of progress, successes, and challenges. It should be noted that the structure of the one-to-one feedback workshop for XLP was adapted this year in the same way as for Power2 last year, as they were unable to gather any feedback via the questionnaires. Instead of reflecting on feedback in XLP’s workshop, we structured the session to focus on the successes and challenges that staff felt they had faced in delivering their programmes this year, as well as exploring what they felt they had learned from their experiences, and what they planned for the future.

Reporting

In the reporting process, Causeway Education has aggregated the quantitative data provided by the partners, and synthesised themes from the survey responses and the partners’ feedback workshops. We conclude with Cohort 3’s suggestions for how they might further refine delivery of their programmes beyond the end of Phase 1 of the Initiative, as well as offering some recommendations for the whole cohort going forward.

Programme data

In this section, Causeway Education explores trends in the partners' quantitative programme data, across the following areas:

- delivery
- overall satisfaction
- self - and organisational - efficacy
- aspirations
- pathway awareness
- destinations

As in previous years, Causeway Education gathered programme data from the partners regarding their Mercers'-funded delivery and impact in 2023-24. The partners each collected this data at different points throughout the academic year and shared it with Causeway Education in late August.

The partners shared with Causeway Education the data that they had available and have submitted more detailed individual evaluation reports to The Mercers' Company directly. The following sections provide an overview of programme performance across the cohort. However, it is important to note that not all partners were able to submit data for each area. In most cases, where a partner has not provided data across one or more areas, it is due to the specificity of the data not matching the partners' existing data collection frameworks. It is also important to acknowledge that although some broad comparisons are drawn between the partners' work in this report, each organisation works differently, with different cohorts of young people and using different evaluation systems and therefore, these comparisons are not like-for-like and should be considered with the appropriate caveats. This year, partners also submitted data that they collect as part of their existing monitoring and evaluation activities that falls outside of the standard reporting categories above. A summary analysis of this data is integrated into the relevant sections below.

Delivery

Section summary: Across the sixth and final year of the Transitions Special Initiative, the seven Cohort 3 partners worked with 825 young people; 39 schools, virtual schools, or colleges; and 43 employers. Several programmes are targeting and engaging high proportions of students who are from Black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, those eligible for free school meals (FSM) or those who are care experienced.

During the 2024-25 academic year, the seven Cohort 3 partners engaged with 825 young people (up 26 from 799 in 2023-24); 39 schools, virtual schools, or colleges (up one from 38); and 43 employers (up one from 42)¹.

The number of young people engaged by the cohort overall this year was again slightly short of the targets that the partners had set themselves at 92.6% (891 young people in total). The number of schools, virtual schools or colleges engaged fell further from the target of 49, at 80%, but the number of employers engaged exceeded the target of 30 by 43%.

Cohort 3's programmes targeted young people from ages 15 to 21 years. The most common age range was 16 to 18 years old. Power2 worked with the youngest students, as their Teens and Toddlers programme begins with 11-year-olds, while In2scienceUK and XLP's programmes both extended to 21-year-olds.

Participant data on gender was provided by all partners. As last year, the cohort worked with slightly more female students (56.7% of the total) than male students (41.9%). The partners reported working with 11 students (1.3% of the total reached) who selected the 'non-binary, gender fluid, genderqueer, agender, bigender, other or undisclosed' option for gender.

Of the seven partners, only Street League had a larger male-identifying cohort, at 60.3% (47). XLP had one more male-identifying young person on their literacy and numeracy tutoring programme, and four on their job creation scheme internship programme (with no female identifying young people on this programme at all), but the five more female identifying young people on their Young Leaders programme meant that overall, they had reached an equal proportion of each gender.

The greatest proportion of young people who selected the 'non-binary, gender fluid, genderqueer, agender, bigender, other or undisclosed' option for gender was seven young people on the Making the Leap programme (7.1% of their cohort). The In2scienceUK programme and Power2's Teens and Toddlers programme had the highest proportions of female-identifying young people, at 69.5% and 69.4% respectively. As with last year, for In2scienceUK this highlights their ongoing commitment to encourage more women into STEM fields, where they are currently underrepresented.

¹ While 881 young people were fully enrolled on the partners' programmes this year, a further 406 young people were reached in total – including an additional 252 who attended Blueprint for All's assemblies, and 154 in Envision's Graduate Network.

Table 2: Percentage of young people's self-reported gender across Cohort 3 during 2024-25

Organisation name (no. of programmes for which data was submitted)	Percentage of students identifying as male	Percentage of students identifying as female	Percentage of students identifying as non-binary, gender fluid, genderqueer, agender, bigender, other or undisclosed gender
Blueprint for All (1/1)	40.0%	60.0%	0%
Envision (1/1)	42.6%	56.8%	0.6%
In2scienceUK (1/1)	27.1%	69.5%	3.4%
Making the Leap (1/1)	42.4%	50.5%	7.1%
Power2 (2/2)	31.2%	68.1%	0.7%
Street League (1/1)	60.3%	39.7%	0%
XLP (3/3)	50.0%	50.0%	0%

According to the programme data we have available, several programmes continue to target and engage high proportions of students who are from Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, eligible for free school meals (FSM) or care experienced. The programme with the greatest proportion of BAME students was Blueprint for All with 89%, followed by the Making the Leap programme with 88%. Notably, all four apprentices on the XLP programme were from BAME backgrounds, and many on the XLP's LAN programme were migrants or refugees. Power2 and XLP had the highest proportion of students eligible for FSM, at 100% on the Power2 Advance programme, 91% on the Teens and Toddlers programme, and 100% for all XLP young people who were in school. Furthermore, 100% of young people on the Power2 Advance programme and 100% of young people on XLP's LAN programme who were attending school were care experienced.

Overall satisfaction

Section summary: Among the organisations for which we have data, young people, schools, and employers expressed high levels of satisfaction with the partners' programmes. Across all stakeholders and programmes, satisfaction rates were above 70%. This did, however, reflect a decrease of 10 percentage points compared to 2023-24.

The table below sets out which organisations provided satisfaction data from different stakeholders on each of their programmes.

Table 3: Number of programmes providing satisfaction data

Organisation name	Number of each partners' programmes that submitted satisfaction data from the following stakeholders:		
	Young people	Schools	Employers
Blueprint for All	1/1	1/1	1/1
Envision	1/1 ²	1/1 ³	1/1 ⁴
In2scienceUK	1/1 ⁵	N/A	N/A
Making the Leap	1/1	1/1	1/1
Power2	2/2	2/2	N/A
Street League	0/1	1/1	N/A
XLP	3/3	2/3	3/3

Young people's satisfaction with the programmes

Where data has been provided, partners reported very high levels of satisfaction amongst young people taking part in their programmes. While the satisfaction rate across the cohort was lower than last year, changes at individual partner level were mostly insignificant.

Blueprint for All saw the greatest decrease in satisfaction rate at 18 percentage points, while Envision and In2scienceUK saw their satisfaction rates slightly increase⁶. XLP and Power2 also reported satisfaction rates of 100% on one of their programmes each (Power2 Advance and XLP Job Creation Scheme), but slightly lower rates across their other programmes.

² Envision reported the proportion of graduates from the 2023-24 programme who "would recommend Envision to a friend or peer".

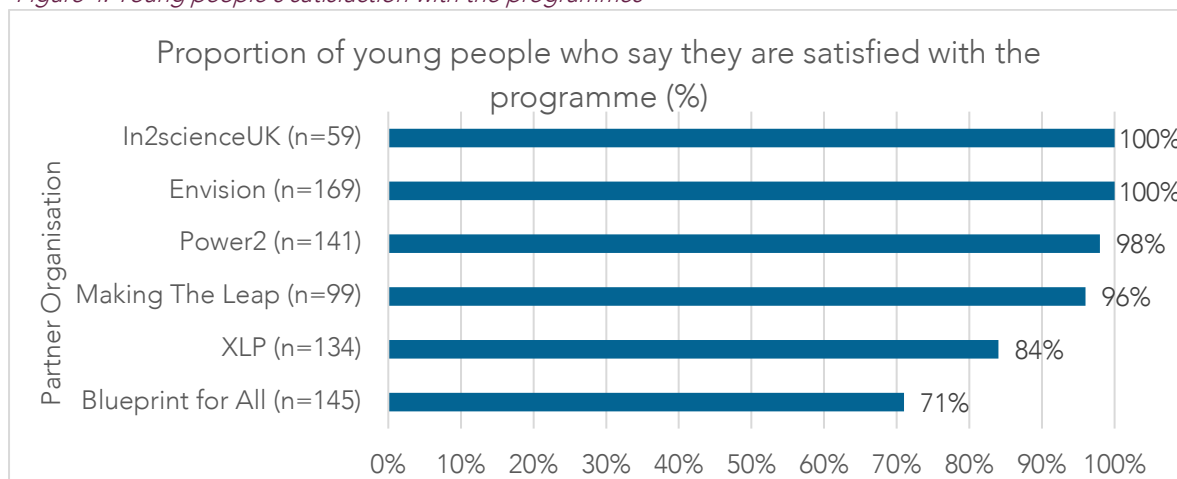
³ Envision reported the proportion of teachers surveyed that reported that the programme "had supported their pupils to develop their essential skills, confidence, and active citizenship".

⁴ Envision reported the proportion of mentors who "feel proud that their employer partners with Envision".

⁵ In2scienceUK reported the proportion of young people who said the programme "was valuable to them".

⁶ For both Envision and In2scienceUK this was the largest increase it was possible to achieve, as they reported a 100% satisfaction rate from young people in 2024-25.

Figure 4: Young people's satisfaction with the programmes



Schools, virtual schools, and colleges' satisfaction with the programmes

Schools, virtual schools and colleges reported extremely high levels of satisfaction with all programmes where data was provided by partners. For partners where data is available, (Blueprint for All, Making the Leap, Street League, Power2's Power2 Advance programme, and XLP's LAN and Job Creation Scheme programmes) 100% of schools reported satisfaction with the programmes provided by partners and 100% of schools reported that they would support the programme again in the future

For Envision, 86% of teachers surveyed said that they would recommend the Envision programme to other schools or colleges and 100% reported that the Envision programme supported their pupils in developing their essential skills, confidence, and active citizenship.

For Power2's Teens and Toddlers programme, the schools' satisfaction rate was also high at 91%.

Employer or wider stakeholders' satisfaction with the programmes

Employer satisfaction rates were also high for those programmes where data was provided, at over 80%.

Employer satisfaction rates were 100% for the Blueprint for All programme and XLP's LAN and Job Creation Scheme programmes. For XLP's Young Leaders programme, employer satisfaction rates were 90%, bringing the organisation's overall employer satisfaction rate to 93%. Making the Leap reported an 83% satisfaction rate from its employers.

Envision reported that 100% of its mentors felt proud that their employer partners with Envision, and all would also recommend Envision to a colleague.

Self- and organisational- efficacy

Section summary: The Transitions Special Initiative has had a strong impact on participating young people's soft skills and has helped them to develop new workplace skills.⁷

The table below sets out which organisations provided data on the development of soft skills and workplace skills amongst their programme participants.

Table 4: Number of programmes providing data on soft skills and workplace skills

Organisation name	Number of programmes with data on young people's soft skills	Number of programmes with data on young people's workplace skills
Blueprint for All	1/1	1/1
Envision	1/1	1/1
In2scienceUK	1/1	N/A
Making the Leap	1/1	1/1
Power2	2/2	1/2
Street League	0/1	1/1
XLP	3/3	3/3

Improvements in soft skills

Across all funded programmes the majority of young people from whom we have data reported new or improved soft skills as a result of their participation.

Almost all the young people surveyed by Envision, In2scienceUK and XLP on their programmes reported improved soft skills (between 84% and 96%), suggesting that these programmes had a particularly strong positive impact. Although figures were slightly lower for Blueprint for All, Making the Leap and Power2, a majority of survey respondents (between 74% and 78%) also reported that participating in their programme had resulted in them acquiring new soft skills. This marks an improvement for the whole cohort on 2023-24's figures, which ranged from 59% to 95%.

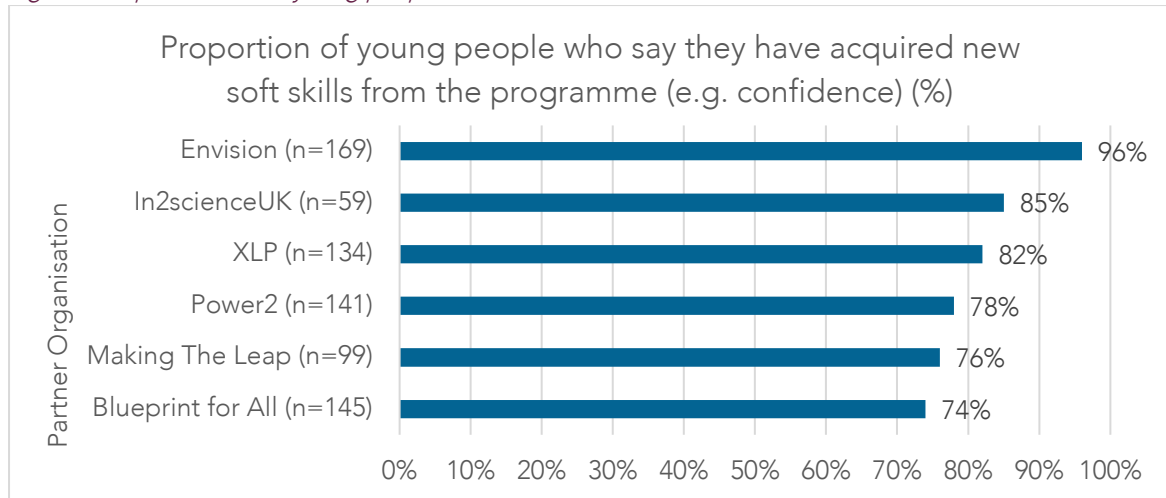
In2scienceUK specifically reported high levels of confidence in communication and organisational skills amongst participants. A total of 75% of their respondents said that they felt confident in their communication skills (an increase of 28% compared to before the programme), and 84% said that they felt confident in their organisational skills (up 19% compared to before the programme).

Although Street League don't collect specific data on soft skills development, they do offer the opportunity for participants to achieve a Level 1 award in Developing Personal

⁷ Some of the partners do not collect data on soft skills or workplace skill development. Causeway has reported on the data that was made available.

Confidence and Awareness. This year over 80% of the young people on the programme achieved this (64/78), more than doubling the target Street League had set.

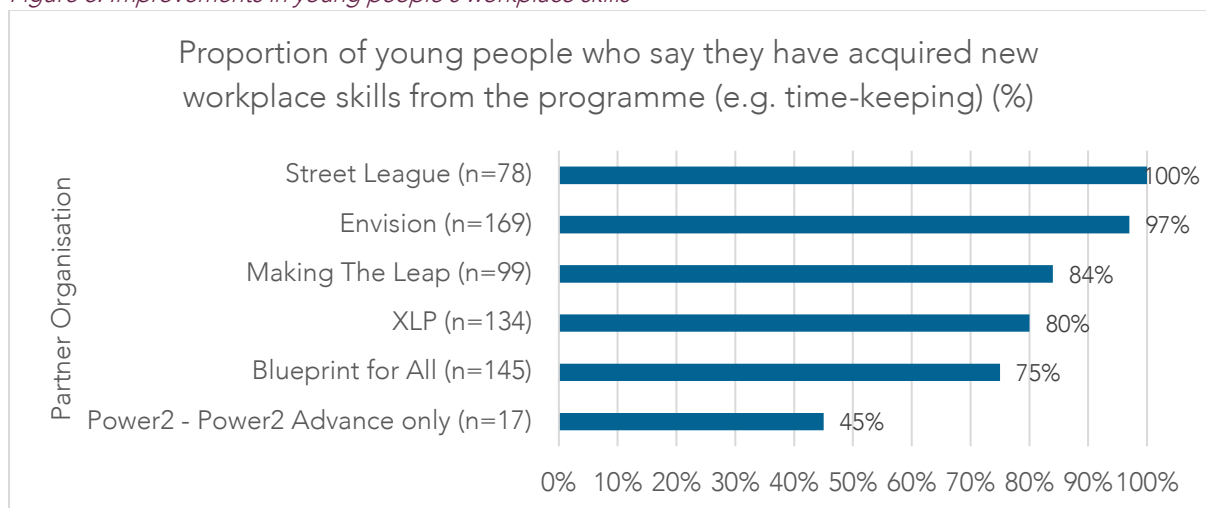
Figure 5: Improvements in young people's soft skills



Improvements in workplace skills

On Street League's programme and one of the three XLP programmes, 100% of young people said that they had acquired new workplace skills as a result of their involvement. Figures were slightly lower for Making the Leap and Blueprint for All, with 84% and 75% of respondents respectively reporting that they had acquired new workplace skills because of taking part in the programme. Envision reported on a proxy measure for workplace skills, sharing that 97% of young people demonstrated improvement in the essential skills that will help them succeed in the future. Across the cohort as a whole these figures were comparable with data from 2023-24, though Blueprint for All had seen a marked improvement in their results for this measure, with a jump of 24 percentage points.

Figure 6: Improvements in young people's workplace skills



While this is a partial sample of partners, programmes and participants, the available data suggests that partners' programmes generally have a strong positive impact on soft skills and workplace skills for most young people involved.

Aspirations

Section summary: Available data from partners suggests that their programmes are positively influencing the aspirations of many of their young people, by making them feel more positive about their future. However, the proportion of young people who report feeling more positive about their future varies across programmes, and some do not collect this data.

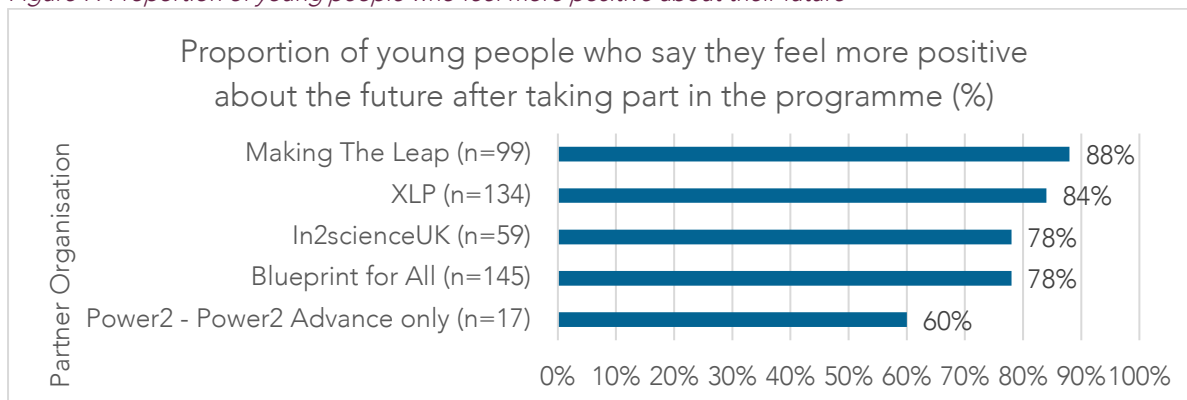
In exploring young people’s ‘aspirations’, we refer to their aims for the future and the confidence they have in pursuing these goals. The table below sets out which organisations provided data about whether young people felt more positive about their future after taking part in their programmes.

Table 5: Number of programmes providing data on young people who felt more positive about their future

Organisation name	Number of programmes with data on the percentage of young people who felt more positive about their future following their involvement in the programme
Blueprint for All	1/1
Envision	0/1
In2scienceUK	1/1
Making the Leap	1/1
Power2	1/2
Street League	0/1
XLP	3/3

Young people’s reported positivity about their future varied across the partners who provided data, ranging from between 60% and 88% following involvement in the partners’ programmes. While an average of 84% of young people across all three of XLP’s programme felt more positive about the future, it is notable that all four of their apprentices on the Job Creation Scheme programme reported this improvement (100%). Across the whole cohort these figures were comparable to 2023-24, though In2scienceUK in particular had improved their results for this measure by 26 percentage points.

Figure 7: Proportion of young people who feel more positive about their future



Pathway awareness

Section summary: Partners' data provides evidence that programmes positively influence young people's awareness of different pathways into further education, training, or work, to varying degrees. Available partner data also suggests that the programmes positively influence young people's professional networks.

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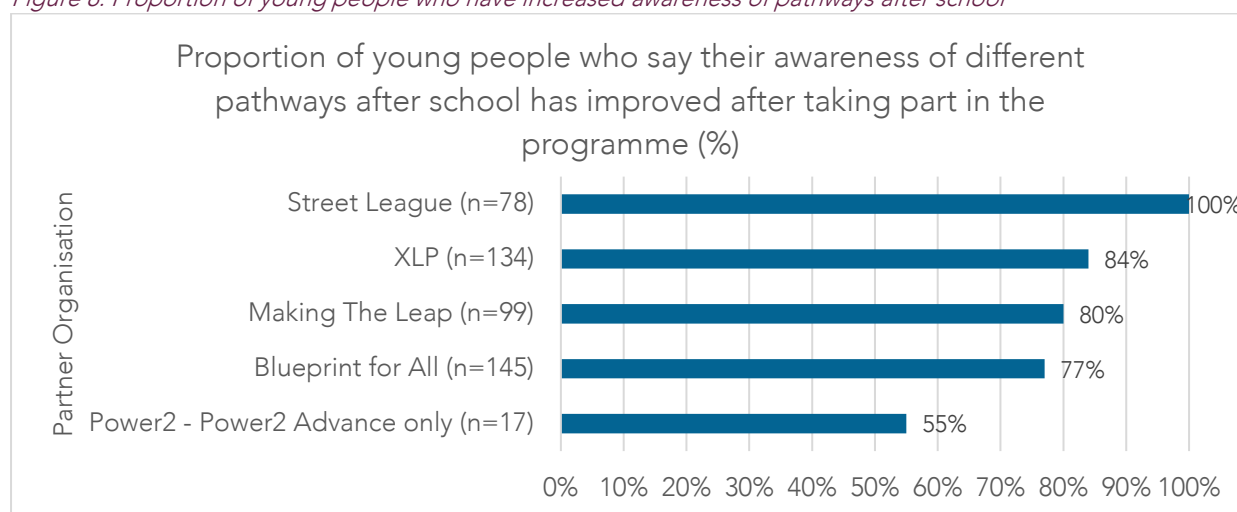
'Pathway awareness' refers to young people's knowledge and understanding of different academic and vocational pathways into further education, training, or work. The table below sets out which organisations provided data for each of their programmes.

Table 6: Number of programmes providing data on young people's pathway awareness

Organisation name	Number of programmes with data on the percentage of young people who have a greater understanding of pathways after school	Number of programmes with data on the percentage of young people who have grown their network
Blueprint for All	1/1	1/1
Envision	0/1	0/1
In2scienceUK	N/A	1/1
Making the Leap	1/1	1/1
Power2	1/2	2/2
Street League	1/1	N/A
XLP	3/3	3/3

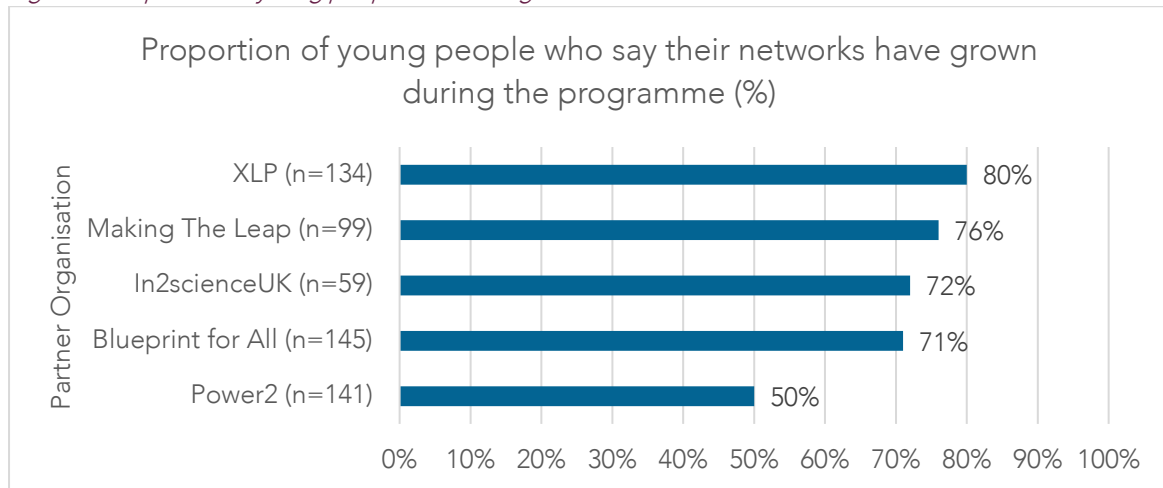
Data from partners evidencing young people's pathway awareness was generally strong, with Street League, XLP, Making the Leap and Blueprint for All reporting that 77% and above of young people had a greater understanding of pathways after taking part in their programmes. This figure was lower for the Power2 Advance programme, at 55%, but still represented a majority of the young people taking part.

Figure 8: Proportion of young people who have increased awareness of pathways after school



In addition, data showed that the majority of young people across the cohort felt that they had grown their professional networks following their involvement in their programme. For Power2, half the young people on both programmes reported that they felt their networks had grown while taking part.

Figure 9: Proportion of young people who have grown their networks



Destinations

Section summary: Data collected by the partners on young people’s destinations following their involvement in the programmes suggest that following participation in the funded programmes, many participants go on, or intend to go on, to further education, training, or employment.

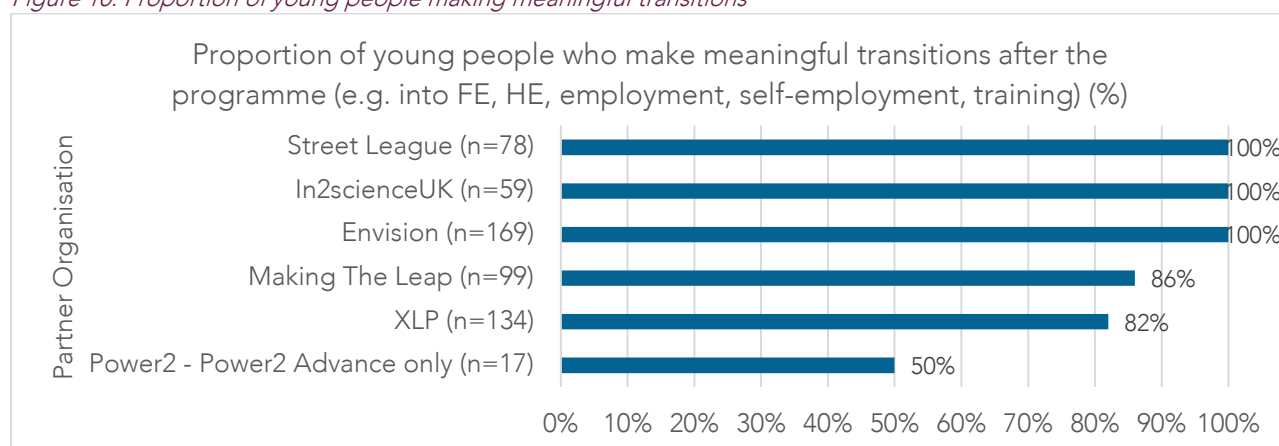
‘Destinations’ refers to young people’s subsequent trajectories in education or work. Partners’ approaches to collecting this sort of data vary. The table below sets out which organisations provided data from each of their programmes at the point of data collection.

Table 7: Number of programmes with data on the percentage of people making meaningful transitions after the programme

Organisation name	Number of programmes with data on the percentage of young people making meaningful transitions after the programme (e.g. into FE, HE, employment, self-employment, training)
Blueprint for All	Planning to gather this data 12 months after the programme.
Envision	1/1
In2scienceUK	1/1
Making the Leap	1/1
Power2	1/2
Street League	1/1
XLP	3/3

Data on young people’s destinations following their involvement in the programmes was strong. The proportion of young people who made successful transitions following their involvement in the programmes ranged from (75% to 100%). All the young people on three programmes - In2scienceUK, Street League and XLP’s Job Creation Scheme programme - made meaningful transitions after taking part⁸. Envision reported that 100% of graduates from the 2023-24 programme shared plans to transition into education, employment or training in the coming year.

Figure 10: Proportion of young people making meaningful transitions



⁸ Street League reported that their age 14-16 years cohort all remained in school engaging with compulsory education.

Programme data: conclusion

Quantitative data collection by the partners was more consistent this year than in previous years of the evaluation. The results showed that the partners' programmes continue to reach high numbers of disadvantaged young people and remain very popular with stakeholders. Links to schools have remained relatively stable though employer engagement has been more challenging for some partners. The programmes are positively influencing young people's self-reported progress with soft skills in particular, but also their workplace skills, aspirations, and pathway awareness. Positive post-programme transitions were high and had slightly increased since last year.

Theory of Action

In this section, Causeway Education explores themes from the online questionnaires with programme staff, young people, and wider stakeholders, and the subsequent feedback workshops with the partner organisations. This section sets out findings in the following areas:

- Successes
- Challenges
- Reflections on progress since 2023-24
- Areas for Improvement (individual and cohort level)

Causeway Education analysed Theory of Action reflections and categorised them into the six themes that the Cohort 3 partners identified last year as key areas for refinement. These are: planning and timelines, session structure and delivery, programme content, programme resources, pastoral support, and evaluation. We also added new category - 'relationships and partnerships' - to reflect the prominence of this theme in this year's discussions.

Successes

Section summary: This section summarises positive themes from the questionnaires and feedback workshops and some individual examples of the partners' successes. The Theory of Action process highlighted the following successes this year:

- Powerful partnerships and relationships with different stakeholders
- Sustained positive relationships with schools
- Some retention of business partnerships
- Transformative trusted relationships with young people
- Positive role models with lived experience
- Wider support for basic needs
- Flexible, responsive and personalised support
- Improvements in young people's soft skills
- Exposure to a range of different pathways
- Meaningful events
- A more integrated approach
- Effective cocreation

Partnerships and relationships

Powerful partnerships and relationships with different stakeholders

The most common positive theme to come out of the Theory of Action process with the Cohort 3 partners this year was the strong partnerships and relationships they had developed with their schools, employer partners, and most of all their young people. Across the cohort there was strong retention of existing partnerships with schools, employers, and mentors, which marked an improvement on the challenges of last year. Delivery team members also received strong positive feedback about the roles they were playing in young people's lives.

Sustained positive relationships with schools

Blueprint for All, Envision Making the Leap, Power2, Street League and XLP reported positive links with schools this year. Envision, for example, achieved 87% retention of schools in 2024-25, meaning there was minimal need for them to re-recruit. Staff also explained that their understanding of how colleges operate had improved, supporting their ability to partner effectively with them.

"We know what is needed for success and how we set that up, compared maybe a few years ago when we were quite new to working in FE colleges."

Programme staff, Envision

Power2 staff highlighted that their good reputation and relationships with schools in certain areas had resulted in long-term repeat partnerships, as well as referrals to other schools within the same trusts or local networks. Street League staff shared that a particular teacher

who was previously highly supportive of their programme had moved schools and chosen to promote Street League's offer in their new place of work.

"For a teacher to just say 'I'm going to promote this to the head of year, I'm going to promote this to the head teacher. I really want the Mercers' programme to come and impact our students' - that was fantastic."

Programme staff, Street League

They added that having the personal phone numbers of teacher contacts this year had helped to smooth their communication, enabling them to liaise directly rather than going through the school reception. XLP staff had also been proactive in their communication with school staff – their regular updates about students' progress were positively received by teachers.

Some retention of business partnerships

Some of the partner organisations reported that they had now managed to retain partnerships with businesses over multiple years. Blueprint for All staff explained that their efforts to build consistent and positive relationships with facilitators had led some to return throughout the three-year cycle, because they had enjoyed the experience and wanted to "give back". This positive relationship building meant Blueprint for All now has access to a loyal and reliable pool of facilitators.

"[The mentors are] often quite new every year, but then we have some who will just do it again and again because they love it and they say it's the best part of their week. So, it's kind of a combination of new and returning."

Programme staff, Blueprint for All

Similarly, Envision staff reported strong retention of business partnerships, saying that they "very rarely" partner with a business for just one year now, as "they often come back for more". By pairing local businesses with schools nearby, Envision was able to create a low commitment mentoring arrangement, where mentors could dip out of their work to support students without too much disruption to their day.

"They leave their computer; they go into the boardroom. They're facilitated in a session by one of us for two hours. They have that impact. It's very digestible, very accessible, and very minimal time out of their busy day."

Programme staff, Envision

One business supporting the Envision post-16 programme feedback that within half an hour of sending out an email to recruit volunteers, the spaces were fully booked, because Envision's reputation as a partner was so strong across the company. Furthermore, this year, 96% of Envision mentors reported that they felt that they had made a positive difference, while 94% said they felt more connected with their colleagues. Envision programme staff felt this was especially valuable, as the programme often brings together senior and junior colleagues who do not usually work side by side.

Transformative trusted relationships with young people

In the 2024-25 Theory of Action process, the power of the trusted relationships that the partner organisations have built with young people came through even more than in previous years.

Power2, Making the Leap, and XLP staff had all built strong relationships with young people who were finding their education journeys challenging. For young people working with Power2 this support was crucial in helping to improve the young people's wellbeing.

"The young people learn how to build solid, trusting relationships. They learn that adults can be constant in their lives and that their needs are important enough for someone to care and help them to manage their difficulties and challenges."

Programme staff, Power2

"The mentoring offered creates a safe space for our young people to talk and have guidance on making positive choices. They are supported to think about life goals, how to build confidence, develop social skills."

School staff, Power2

Staff described how building in a three-way meeting between Power2, the young person, and their social worker or virtual school lead at the start of the programme for care-experienced young people has helped to improve relationships and build trust, which in turn has improved engagement.

At Making the Leap, their partner schools had unexpectedly requested to continue the support for students with a new cohort of incoming Year 12s. Programme staff noted that they found it helpful to be able to sustain relationships with young people through Year 12 and into Year 13, because many of the young people they worked with had found A-levels a difficult and stressful period. The Youth Career Leads (placed in schools by Making the Leap last year to improve communication) had now established strong, trusted relationships with young people.

"The bonds that the youth career leads had with the young people were really strong ... They would go to them as someone that they trusted ... it was just like another person that they could rely on."

Programme staff, Making the Leap

Young people on the In2scienceUK and Envision programmes built stronger connections to their peers and their school, college, or university as a result of taking part in the programme.

"[The programme] made me more encouraged to be engaged in the activities, as it's helped me feel comfortable with the people I am with."

Young person, Envision

Envision had also seen growth in their graduate network from 258 to 357 young people, through which they share opportunities, events, and bulletins.

XLP reported that they had provided opportunities to sustain relationships with young people post-programme, for example through mentors and volunteers offering support with apprenticeship or job applications, up until the transition into employment.

Pastoral support

Positive role models with lived experience

Feedback on the work of Blueprint for All, In2scienceUK and Power2 highlighted their success in providing positive role models for young people. Blueprint for All provided exposure to professionals of diverse heritage who were noted to be “relatable” for the students on the programme, while Power2 staff similarly had lived experience of being disengaged with education then reengaging in later life, which helped them to connect with young people. In2scienceUK mentors reported that they felt the value of “giving back” and being able to share their enthusiasm for their university subject with their mentees. The mentees felt positive about how they had been matched with mentors and said that it was helpful to speak to someone working in a similar area of interest. A number of mentees shared that they felt inspired to go on and become mentors themselves.

Wider support for basic needs

In some cases, the programmes had gone beyond basic pastoral support to help ensure that young people in especially challenging circumstances were able to continue engaging. XLP for example, had supported one homeless young person on their apprenticeship programme to secure housing.

“She just got her flat through the Council for the first time, so she was living in temporary accommodation and she is working in an additional needs school, she stayed with the youth work and that’s just been a massive achievement ... it’s not just that kind of transition for them into the working world, but also the wider support.”

Programme staff, XLP

Session structure and delivery

Flexible, responsive, and personalised support

A number of the partners made changes to the structure or delivery of their programmes which had resulted in improvements this year. Blueprint for All, In2scienceUK, Street League and XLP described, for example, how their teams had been highly flexible in order to achieve their aims in supporting young people.

Blueprint for All staff had pivoted to delivering some sessions to students in tutorial time when the school had struggled to bring together the whole cohort in one room for an assembly, and at times had also delivered some sessions online instead of in person. In2scienceUK had combined a flexible structure for mentoring alongside a guide to help with discussion points and activities. Young people appreciated this opportunity for the mentors to tailor support to their needs.

"The help, it isn't strict, it's flexible, whatever you need help with. Whether it's tests, exams, assignments, finding internships. Very broad and therefore whatever you need. If I've had a problem with balancing work-life balance I've been able to talk about, he's helped me to plan my time and reassure me."

Young person, In2scienceUK

At Street League programme staff said they felt delivery had been smoother this year than last. In discussing their responsive delivery, they explained how they had provided more intensive support one-to-one with students who required it, for example with one young person of gypsy heritage who had very low levels of English and was struggling to complete the written booklet they had been given.

"[A staff member] spent a lot of one-to-one support with that individual ... and their English ability also developed through doing the Mercers programme, which is something that we didn't even think of at the time ... for that young person to be able to develop their written skills, but also their verbal skills through the programme was absolutely fantastic."

Programme staff, Street League

One staff member had also arranged to return to schools and provide additional one-to-one sessions with students who has poor attendance, been ill or excluded, or for other reasons had not completed the qualification they were working towards. This enabled them to complete their work after the programme finished.

XLP had worked to differentiate delivery to suit the young people they were supporting this year, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For example, the team had worked with one student who is mute, and had dedicated time to identifying how to best support them using different methods of communication.

On the Literacy and Numeracy programme, XLP staff had also pivoted from a strong focus on helping students with English and maths to more of a mentoring role, when it became clear that this was an essential in supporting wider learning.

"The literacy and numeracy was almost like an added extra to the to the kind of relationship building that was going on ... for so many of the young people it wasn't that they couldn't do it, it's just they didn't have the confidence and they hadn't got an adult around them to encourage them or to give them that sort of level of ambition."

Programme staff, XLP

Improvements in young people's soft skills

Feedback from young people this year again showed that the work of the partners continues to positively impact the soft skills necessary to make successful transitions into education, training, or work. Confidence again stood out as a key area of improvement, and was mentioned by programme staff, school staff, and young people.

"[The programme] made me more confident about my future as I know that even if something goes wrong, I can always make it to where I want to be."

Young person, Blueprint for All

"[The programme] has helped me build my confidence greatly and has made me understand the importance of social action."

Young person, Envision

"It has helped with my confidence and verbal communication."

Young person, Power2

"[The most important thing I've learned during the programme is] to engage with people more and use my voice with confidence."

Young person, Street League

"I could see confidence grow over the sessions. They seem more confident asking questions. I'm still in contact with my mentee from last year. They feel like it's ok to ask for help and they aren't alone."

Mentor, In2scienceUK

"I went to two days of the BNP Paribas work experience that some of the young people were on, and it was really amazing to see how they interacted with professionals. There was one activity where they had a networking session, and they had one-on-one conversations ... they just did fantastically, and it was just amazing to see how they handled themselves with such confidence ... it's developed over the last couple of years."

Programme staff, Making the Leap

Other improvements in soft skills observed by young people or the adults around them included resilience, curiosity, motivation and increased in engagement with activities.

"[The programme] helped me to better develop my soft skills specifically with communication and to gain a better understanding of what it's like in the workplace."

Young person, Making the Leap

"The impact it has had in the short term has been high engagement from students at each session, as well as a lot of curiosity."

School staff, Blueprint for All

The Street League team described how they had introduced a variety of games that matched young people's interests to help develop soft and interpersonal skills, in a fun and engaging way that catered to the needs of the young people on the programme this year.

"I'm really pleased with what we set out to do. We genuinely did achieve with getting the young people to develop their confidence, start thinking about their next steps in terms of employability or apprenticeships or courses, but then also just developing their skills in general. We were working with some of the hardest to reach young people and to see that their engagement levels at school had increased based off of the programme that we delivered ... for me like that's the best takeaway for sure."

Programme staff, Street League

Programme content

Exposure to a range of different pathways

The Cohort 3 partners' programmes continue to provide young people with exposure to a variety of different pathways and opportunities after school. This helped to broaden their horizons and positively influenced their aspirations for the future.

"A lot of the speakers delivered presentations that contained information that I wasn't aware of, so I learned a lot. For example, I learned about the steps that need to be taken to secure an apprenticeship or learn more about them."

Young person, Blueprint for All

"These activities have given me an insight into the work life, something students hardly see. It allowed me to view life differently outside of school and gain a better understanding of what I aspire doing in the future."

Young person, Making the Leap

Meaningful events

Some of the organisations had introduced more events into their programmes this year. Envision, for example, had success with a new in-person competition launched in week three of their programme.

"It really helped the young people set up for success in their projects. It really made sure that actually they all had smart, clear, achievable goals for what they wanted to achieve in their colleges and their schools, but it also really helped with the engagement and retention of our young people on the Post 16 programme."

Programme staff, Envision

Staff at Street League and Power2 found value in delivering graduation ceremonies for students, to help young people to transition out of their programmes. These acted as a way to mark the end of the support they had received, but also to ensure their achievements were properly recognised.

"We would have a bit of a ceremony. So, we took the Street League banner, we got a personalised Mercers/Street League cake and some snacks. We obviously partnered up with Nike, so they all got a Nike t-shirt as well. We made them little graduation gift bags, did a bit of a ceremony at the school, and then took the young people off to do a physical activity as a way to end the programme and celebrate them. It was a really, really lovely way to get

all the young people together - in one of the schools we did it with the three cohorts together."

Programme staff, Street League

Power2 staff felt their long-running end of programme ceremony had reassured young people that they were capable of seeing work through and having success, especially as it was a new experience for some to receive praise for their achievements.

"Sometimes it's a first kind of award or thing they felt like they've achieved so far ... And they might not be used to getting positive praise ... So, they've got to recalibrate in order to take that positive praise because they might be used to the other end of the spectrum."

Programme staff, Power2

Planning and timelines

A more integrated approach

XLP shared how they had established a much more integrated approach this year – enabling young people to dip in and out of different XLP programmes, to keep them engaged with the charity long term. XLP tracked attendance across its programmes using online registers, and youth workers were able to bridge gaps in support by promoting different projects to students, to avoid young people dropping off the radar when their involvement in a particular piece of work ended. They described moving from “thinking about projects in siloes” to working on their organisational Theory of Change in a way that built journey for young people through the different kinds of support they offer, including the opportunity for them to go on to become apprentices when they are old enough.

"The gaps for young people are getting wider and wider, between whether it's school and work or school and home ... anything that we can put in place, which is a kind of like a lily pad, a stepping stone from one to the other ... you're going to get much less chance of losing them. I think this transition stuff has been a real game changer in terms of bridging some of those gaps."

Programme staff, XLP

In2scienceUK were also looking at to strengthen their long-term impact by improving their alumni support, offering dedicated guidance after each programme to help alumni progress into a range of STEM degrees, qualifications, and careers.

Programme resources

Effective co-creation

There was less emphasis on programme resources this year than in previous years, but Power2 programme staff noted that they are updating their Teens & Toddlers workbook, which was co-created with young people who have taken part in the programme.

"This has allowed us to use lived experience in a crucial way to develop programmes better suited for young people."

Programme staff, Power2

Challenges

Section summary: Feedback highlighted the following challenges with programme delivery:

- Lack of support from some schools for planning and timetabling
- Coordinating funding can be tricky
- Young people prefer activities to be interactive
- Some young people continue to want more personalization
- Delivery can be very difficult without the right support from key stakeholders
- Survey fatigue affects response rates
- Young people are not motivated to provide longer term feedback

These issues were discussed with programme staff in the feedback workshops. This section summarises themes arising from these discussions.

Planning and timelines

Lack of support from some schools for planning and timetabling

For Blueprint for All and Street League, timetabling and the logistics of planning sessions around schools' other commitments remained a challenge this year.

Blueprint for All staff explained that successful timetabling was often dependent on schools and teachers, especially senior leaders with authority. Where senior leaders prioritised the programme and other teachers had availability to support with aspects of delivery such as behaviour management, it was much easier to delivery sessions smoothly. Programme staff highlighted that connections to the right members of staff was important, as for example school Careers Leads might be enthusiastic about the work but not have the authority to influence timetabling, arrange access to facilities, or brief staff members allocated to support sessions. Similarly, staffing changes were highlighted as a factor that negatively affected planning.

"I definitely think it depends on who is ... the Careers Lead or the education lead or the deputy head - people that we end up speaking to and coordinating with ... It's hard as well when that one person that we have a great relationship ends up leaving or changing."

Programme staff, Blueprint for All

Street League raised similar problems with coordinating the necessary "infrastructure" in schools - including staffing, facilities, and resources - to deliver their programme as smoothly as they would have liked.

"I don't think we managed to get that click with the school in terms of timetable availability, facilities availability, all that sort of stuff, I don't think we quite got that over the line ... that sort of constant change and constant upheaval just meant that you always had one hand tied behind your back. You were never able to probably make the progress at the pace that you wanted to make it ... and that's before you take into account young people's barriers and learning styles."

Street League staff

They felt some schools were still not fully aligned with the programme's aims and requirements, noting the example of one school that had expected them to deliver sessions in the changing rooms instead of a classroom. In contrast to Blueprint for All staff who had found challenges with working with school Careers Leads, Street League staff commented that they felt their work was insufficiently integrated into schools' careers teaching processes, as their contacts tended to be Heads of Year or Heads of PE due to the charity's focus on young people's sports.

Coordinating funding can be tricky

Power2 programme staff had encountered difficulties in matching up funding with demand, especially when the financial support was restricted to delivery in one London borough, while demand was higher in another. Furthermore, they had served some young people who lived in one borough but attended school in another, which added another layer of complication. When virtual schools referred young people to their services, they sometimes referred a group who were all in one school and sometimes referred young people in schools scattered across a borough. This made it difficult to coordinate bringing young people together for the programme in a way that met funding requirements.

At XLP, it was more challenging to deliver the Literacy and Numeracy programme this year because a source of funding had ended, meaning they had to reduce delivery staffing from four members to only two.

Session structure and delivery

Young people prefer activities to be interactive

Feedback from some Blueprint for All young people this year called for sessions to be more interactive and practical. In reflecting on this, staff acknowledged that some sessions felt information heavy, and that facilitators could benefit from more feedback on how to involve the young people in effective and consistent ways.

"I feel that the trip workshop could of been more interactive, like separating us into smaller groups to learn about the aspects we are most interested in within that company. For example, the art department, the finance department, the engineering, the human resources department and more."

Young person, Blueprint for All

"Some of the things probably can be information heavy, like for example higher education or university, it's a lot of information thrown at you ... it's an objective that facilitators have a bit more oversight ... and maybe to provide feedback on what they're going to share ... it's that striking that balance between information and activity."

Programme staff, Blueprint for All

At Street League, programme staff found the focus of their work had changed from what was expected – with more emphasis on keeping young people engaged with the school system, than on providing careers and progression guidance.

XLP had encountered a similar issue with their volunteer tutors. They had initially planned for a strong academic focus for the tutoring, but found the students actually needed an approach that focused more on their wellbeing and was more like mentoring or talking therapy.

"The volunteer tutors started off thinking 'Right, I need to help you with your English. I need to help you with your maths,' and it was almost too task-orientated, rather than relationship building. And so the tweaks we actually made from that wasn't about the volume of online tutoring, it was more about the volume of tutoring with the literacy and numeracy workers, because they were the trusted youth worker ... those youth workers took on a cohort of tutees and that really flew because they already had that relationship, because they're already in the schools ... I think the heart is not the quality of the tutoring, it's the quality of the relationship."

Programme staff, XLP

Programme content

Some young people continue to want more personalisation

As in previous years, some of the partners continued to face some challenges with young people wanting the programme to match more closely with their individual interests. Some schools were very specific about what they wanted, and some young people said would like the programme to cater more to their particular plans for the future and the industries they thought they would like to enter.

"I think they could be more catered to the students. For example, before we have speakers maybe the students could fill out forms about what career paths they are interested in."

Young person, Blueprint for All

"I think they were directed to more Business/Finance sectors, and I'm not necessarily intrigued by those roles, however it's made me realise the different jobs you can do within the sector and also its importance."

Young person, Blueprint for All

Blueprint for All tried to meet these needs as much as possible, for example by providing a workplace visit to Sony for a school where students were very interested in entertainment and digital industries, but as mentioned in previous years of the evaluation, covering the interests of all young people is not always possible. Staff also noted that it was important to try to broaden young people's horizons with the opportunities they made available.

Street League staff were surprised to find some young people still reporting that they wanted more sport sessions, despite the charity increasing provision in response to the same feedback in previous years.

"I was quite shocked to hear that the young people were still feeding back they wanted more sports sessions when we'd essentially doubled the amount of sports sessions that we

were doing ... some weeks, we'd alternate between classroom delivery and sports sessions, and they had a lot of ownership about what they wanted the sessions to entail."

Programme staff, Street League

They added that pressure to complete a certain number of guided learning hours for the programme's qualification had squeezed out opportunities for other types of delivery, such as including guest speakers, which they felt disappointed about.

Partnerships and relationships

Delivery can be very difficult without the right support from key stakeholders

Two of the partners noted that without key relationships, delivery became significantly more challenging. Programme staff at Street League observed that even when they set up a service agreement with schools that outlined basic requirements for the programme, delivery remained challenging if they did not have the full support of school staff.

"Really what you need is more kind of delivery level when you've got those teachers that are on the ground that can truly support with the day-to-day delivery of the programme."

Programme staff, Street League

Power2 had faced a more acute version of this experience, after the sudden death of a valued colleague. Programme staff recognised that his excellent work in building trusted and meaningful relationships with young people meant that some were unable to continue with the programme without him.

"We have an annual graduation ceremony where we invite all the young people who've been through our programmes ... but we also do four individual awards and we did one this year which was in memory of this person ... we had young people come up and spoke about him and it was so fantastic and so moving ... he had that impact because of what an amazing person he was, but also the impact of his death on everybody ... that grief is going to be with us for a very long time."

Programme staff, Power2

Evaluation

Survey fatigue affects response rates

Some of the partners commented specifically on evaluation-based challenges this year. Survey fatigue and low responses rates from teachers and employers was an ongoing struggle.

"We regularly survey these groups, so there is an understandable survey fatigue. We are constantly looking for new ways to engage through surveys."

Programme staff, Envision

Young people are not motivated to provide longer term feedback

For Blueprint for All, the key evaluation challenge was how to obtain feedback in the longer term, for example six months after their programme finished. They noted that not only is it

sometimes difficult to access the young people after this length of time, for example if they have left school, but also that they were unlikely to prioritise providing feedback after finishing the programme.

“Once they hit year 13, a lot of them are very focused on their exams and they're not really looking into their emails for this sort of feedback ... some of them do it, others they don't really prioritise it.”

Programme staff, Blueprint for All

Cohort 3 partners' reflections on progress against 2023-24 targets

Section summary: Following last year's individual and general recommendations, Cohort 3 partners reflected on how their delivery has changed. Each partner highlighted different levels of success, which are set out by organisation in this section.

Individual programme refinements

The Cohort 3 partners have each made progress against their 2023-24 targets for refining delivery, and we explore their work in these different areas below. Targets are rated green where they have been fully met, orange when partially met, and red when the partner has not addressed the area yet or no longer intends to.

Table 8: Partners' performance against 2023-24 targets

Partner	Theme	Target	Progress	Detail
Blueprint for All	Planning and timelines	Begin recruitment earlier to secure school participation before the summer holidays	Green	Programme staff are connecting with schools before summer break to get the ball rolling in advance and sort out timetables before they are booked up.
		Aim to recruit multiple groups within individual schools	Green	The team have done this but also expanded beyond Tower Hamlets and Newham to work with schools across London.
		Ensure schools are clear on the communication expectations	Orange	The team have followed up on calls with schools by providing a document for them to sign, which clearly sets out the commitment required to take part in the programme.
	Session structure and delivery	Tailor programme content to students' needs and interests	Orange	Programme staff have worked to match workplace visits to students interests as much as possible, for example securing a visit to Sony for one school where students were interested in entertainment and digital industries.
		Widen recruitment pool for speakers at career talks	Green	More speakers have been engaged this year and covered diverse topics, including new themes such as entrepreneurship.
	Programme content	Consider how to use content from sixth form programme in Mercers funded work	Orange	This is ongoing.
		Consider how to adapt programme content to cover more practical and employability skills	Orange	Blueprint for All have developed workplace visits for secondary schools (introduced in September).
	Evaluation	Create a process to collate verbal feedback on a regular basis	Orange	Programme staff have gathered some verbal feedback from delivery sessions on a more relaxed and informal basis, week by week.
		Create a process to collate anecdotal feedback on a regular basis	Green	

<i>Envision</i>	General	Embed work this year to ensure it is sustainable for future years		The programme is embedded into the curriculum in 15 schools, enhancing their post-16 offer and supporting skill development.
	Planning and timelines	Consider programme length		The team introduced a closing session called 'Beyond Envision' where young people do a final reflection session with mentors.
	Programme content	Consider longer term engagement with young people to increase sustainability of social action project		The 'Beyond Envision' session acts as a celebration/graduation moment where young people can reflect one-on-one with their mentors on their work and consider skills for the future.
<i>In2scienceUK</i>	Planning and timelines	Promote programme more widely to schools, universities, and societies		Recruitment is reaching a wide network, including STEM university societies at London universities.
		Consider accessing students through freshers' fairs/other existing avenues		The programme is not using freshers' fairs specifically at present.
		Consider how recruitment can be adapted to overcome external factors and timelines		The team has settled on beginning the programme at the start of the university term, which requires some flexibility as not all universities start at the same time.
		Consider and decide upon moving the programme start date back		
	Session structure and delivery	Refine programme introductory process		
	Programme content	Maintain enhanced in person event offer		In2scienceUK have introduced more coffee catchups and informal networking opportunities.
		Maintain enhanced online portfolio		Online content has been well received.
	Programme resources	Maintain enhanced resources that are available outside mentoring sessions		
	Pastoral support	Support additional opportunities for in-person meet-ups for mentors and mentees		The team arranged more coffee catchups.
		Continue to build a sense of community		Mentors and mentees noted a strong sense of community.

<i>Making the Leap</i>	Planning and timelines	Begin delivery planning earlier for business insight and work experience activities		Not addressed this year.
	Session structure and delivery	Recruit more businesses to attend in school days		Making the Leap wanted to recruit more businesses and more diverse sectors to come into schools but found it tricky to onboard them.
	Programme content	Collaborate proactively with employers to secure engagement		Staff are working well with employers to create opportunities for young people.
		Increase the range of employer activities		Making the Leap introduced a simulation of assessment centre training for young people.
	Pastoral support	Create a process to enable ongoing contact with young people		Programme staff have linked delivery for young adults to existing schools' programmes, in order to support students in a more intensive, ongoing way during their education and then beyond.
	Evaluation	Develop case study approach to report on students' experience of Pathways		Making the Leap have an evaluation team to capture comprehensive data and develop case studies. They have also learned about the necessary infrastructure for a new CRM.
		Develop and implement further retrospective evaluation with the first cohort of students		
<i>Power2</i>	Planning and timelines	Broaden target cohort		This was achieved through the Teens and Toddlers programme.
	Programme content	Develop group learning curriculum and sessions		This was achieved through the Teens and Toddlers programme.
	Programme resources	Prepare EYFS curriculum		All Teens and Toddlers groups use the EYFS curriculum.
		Prepare educational games		Ongoing – a new member of staff oversees the development of programmes with the organisation's co-creation groups.
	Evaluation	Ensure approach to feedback and evaluation is more consistent and robust		The capture rate for survey was 87%.

<i>Street League</i>	Planning and timelines	Plan for changes to programme that aligns with Street League's strategy		The team has achieved better alignment through a clearer structure to the programme, new scheme of work and resources.
		Consider extension of programme to Y10 and Y11		This was challenging due to the exam cycle and timetabling – Street League are considering introducing some more employability skills support and guidance right at the end of school journey, when young people are considering college, university, training, or work.
		Improve logistical planning discussions with schools.		Changes to resources and delivery framework have been successful and referenced in school and young people's feedback.
	Programme content	Ensure there is more of a careers focus within the programme		Street League is embedding more digital literacy/skills thanks to new IT equipment and has also introduced a wider range of activities.
		Embed improvements from 23-24		Street League have worked to consolidate improvements.
	Evaluation	Further develop monitoring and evaluation approach		This work is ongoing.

XLP	Planning and timelines	Increase the volume of online tutoring offered		XLP pivoted from increasing the volume of tutoring to changing the focus of it instead, in order to better suit students' needs. Many needed a trusted adult who had confidence in them, more than they needed English and maths support. Youth workers provided additional support with relationship building.
		Consider how to amalgamate individual project offerings into a more rounded experience for individual young people		XLP has developed a more integrated offer and approach. The average time a young person is with XLP is five to six years, dipping in and out of activities. Some young people have now grown through the programme to become apprentices.
		Consider how to use marketing approaches to reach more schools and communities		Due to the team shrinking and staff being at capacity, the two LAN workers ended up acting as ambassadors for the programme. However, this was quite successful.
	Session structure and delivery	Consider how to join up different strands of delivery		A key achievement from this year, resulting in a clearer journey mapped out for young people.
	Programme content	Tailor trips to young people's interests and needs		Not part of XLP's original proposal, but the team are now taking young people away for a week to see unfamiliar scenery. These trips have been integrated into the programme, to ensure they are not used as a reward only Young Leaders also experience half term trips geared towards careers development, including one on broadening horizons and knowledge as well as trip to see a business.
		Ensure literacy and numeracy work is differentiated according to student need		The team have incorporated differentiation for students with English as an additional language, special education needs and/or disabilities, and social emotional or mental health needs, using specific techniques.
	Programme resources	Develop differentiated literacy and numeracy resources		
	Evaluation	Ensure new processes and systems for evaluation are fully embedded		The team faced challenges migrating onto the Salesforce platform this year, but are making progress now this is done.

How the Cohort 3 partners can each refine delivery in the future

Section summary: This section details the individual targets identified by each partner for further optimising their own programme delivery going forward, with reference to the following themes:

1. Planning and timelines
2. Session structure and delivery
3. Programme content
4. Evaluation
5. Programme resources
6. Pastoral support

Partners identified several individual programme refinements across the theme areas that they will aim to implement in the future, beyond the end of the Mercers' Transitions Special Initiative.

Table 9: Partners' plans for future programme refinements

Theme	Partner	Target	Details
Planning and timelines	Blueprint for All	Provide students with a briefing before workplace visits	Teacher feedback highlighted some young people would benefit from a briefing before their workplace visit, to help to set expectations and give them each a goal to work towards. Staff agreed this could help to ensure young people get the most out of the experience.
	In2scienceUK	Consider staggered start dates	Staff believe that this may help to get the balance right between recruitment and delivery.
	Making the Leap	Explore ways to extend support post-programme	Staff felt that the young people would benefit from even more contact time with Making the Leap, if possible, after they transition into apprenticeships or in the first few months of university or work, to help them settle in.
	Power 2	Sustain new focus on intensity of support rather than reach	Power2 intends to continue to focus support for care experienced young people on high levels of input for wellbeing and building independent living support, rather than reaching large numbers through its programmes.
	Power 2	Consider developing a two-tier system of programmes for care experienced young people	These would begin with support for wellbeing and basic skills, then encourage young people to graduate onto support for employability skills when they are ready.
Programme structure and delivery	Street League	Further pursue conversations about careers fairs in sixth form colleges	Staff intend to continue to explore this opportunity that came from conversations with schools about whether delivery was still possible after the Mercers' funding came to an end.
	Street League	Incorporate additional training for staff	Staff would like to include a self-awareness qualification supporting staff to conduct safeguarding conversations with assurance.
	Street League	Explore how to provide support to Year 11s	This would involve working around the challenge of GCSEs and exam pressure, for example by supporting students at the very end of their school journey.
Programme content	Envision	Continue to offer regional and national events for youth advisory group	Staff intend to sustain these networks and communication across them.
	In2scienceUK	Include an in-person event	Mentees and Mentors requested an in-person networking event to meet each other. In2scienceUK is looking for an organisation that could help by

			offering a venue for future events. This is an area where The Mercers' Company could potentially provide future support.
	In2scienceUK	Consider a Year 13 programme	The In2scienceUK team are considering introducing a more focused and targeted alumni support offer for Year 13s/S6 students, to support transitions from the current In2STEM programme (which concludes in the summer of Year 12) before participants apply for post-16 qualification, training and careers.
	Making the Leap	Increase interaction with corporates	The Making the Leap team plan to add corporate volunteering to their new programme 'Career Horizons'. They would like their young people to have more exposure to the working world and a variety of different industries.
Programme resources	Blueprint for All	Explore options for measuring impact of resources and adjust based on evaluation findings	Blueprint for All staff noted that young people often request more resources, but the team are unsure what to offer them. They currently provide a booklet at the end of the programme, which includes a QR code to a platform that continues the relationship with young people, but they do not know how useful this resource is in practice. They would also like to know whether students prefer a physical or digital copy of this resource, whether they would prefer to write in it, and whether it would be more useful to offer it at the start of the programme. They should aim to gather more detailed feedback on this issue, perhaps through a focus group, to understand the impact of this resource and how it could be improved.
		Ensure the referral framework for the partners at virtual schools or local authorities is fit for purpose	The team plan to continue to tweak this resource to ensure the programme is reaching the right young people, and they received the correct support leading up to it to ensure they can engage effectively.
	Power2	Review and update the Teens and Toddlers workbook	Power2 continues to cocreate resources that work best for young people.

Evaluation	Blueprint for All	Use an online platform to track impact over the longer term	Blueprint for All is trying to sign up students to their platform to track their progress in the future. They felt they could do more with the platform.
	Envision	Review mentor session format to ensure maximum value	The team want to assess and enhance the impact of the time that young people are in the workplace and doing activities with mentors. This is something that Causeway Education could support with in the future.
	Envision	Maximise use of graduate network	The team wants to ensure they are getting as a much as possible out of their graduate network and therefore should evaluate its efficacy. This is something that Causeway Education could support with in the future.
	In2scienceUK	Gather more feedback on group vs. 1-1 mentoring and use it to inform In2scienceUK's future offer	Young people gave mixed feedback to In2scienceUK on group mentoring, with many enjoying sharing ideas but others feeling unable to open up as much, or that one mentee dominated sessions. Some also requested more sessions while others wanted fewer. In2scienceUK should look to explore these issues further, for example with a series of focus groups, in order to determine the best way to proceed with mentoring sessions. This is something that Causeway Education could support with in the future.
	Making the Leap	Examine and compare the impact of different activities and adjust delivery accordingly	Making the Leap delivered many group activities, but the team found that mentoring and one-to-one support was more impactful. Delivering bespoke one-to-one sessions and activities outside the school timetable, in partnership with school leads, could improve the impact on young people.
	XLP	Maximise use of Salesforce	Now the migration to the new CRM is complete, the XLP team are looking at how to use data more effectively as a learning tool. This is something that Causeway Education could support with in the future.
Make more strategic use of qualitative data		XLP has a wide range of engaging stories of young people, which the team could capture more efficiently and use to promote their programmes. This is something that Causeway Education could support with in the future.	

Recommendations - whole cohort areas for improvement

1. Consider recruiting school staff as programme ambassadors

Partners who work with schools have highlighted that support from school leaders and teachers is a game changer for the successful delivery of their programmes. In light of this, they may wish to consider inviting school staff who they have especially positive relationships with to act as programme 'ambassadors', who can support the promotion of their work within their own schools and across others educational institutions. This could be through actions such as:

- providing testimonials
- sharing experiences or progress data for case studies
- highlighting alignment with school goals
- being open to joining introductory phone calls or online meetings with other school leaders or teachers who are considering getting involved
- sharing resources and information within their own networks, school social media, or newsletters
- inviting programme staff to have a presence at events
- working with school leaders to integrate the programmes into school improvement plans, careers strategies or approaches to pastoral care

The partners could explore the possibility of these ambassador teachers gaining recognition for this work as part of their continuing professional development (CPD), for example if they are looking to build leadership skills. In2scienceUK could adapt this idea to have a network of ambassador mentors across different universities, ideally those who had previously been mentees themselves and can promote the programme from both angles.

2. Ensure young people are consistently encouraged to build robust and meaningful networks while taking part in programmes

This year's evaluation highlighted the importance of relationships for young people's success. At the 2025 Learning Symposium, the panel discussion on 'What next? Sustaining the Transition', built on this by exploring the importance of young people's networks for both successful transitions *into* education, employment or training, and also *out of* the programmes themselves. These networks provide support that lasts beyond the programmes, opening doors to other opportunities and ensuring young people feel they can still access help and guidance when they need it. Going forward, the partners should consider how they are encouraging young people to actively build their networks while they are taking part in the programmes, and whether this can be improved, to ensure that successful transitions are sustained into the future.

3. Explore opportunities for backwards mentoring as a way to consolidate improvements in confidence and other soft skills

Over the past six years the Transitions Special Initiative has highlighted the value of mentoring in supporting young people's transitions, particular in a post-COVID-19 context where many young people have faced challenges and experienced a negative impact on their wellbeing. At the 2025 Learning Symposium, partners and attendees touched on the value of backwards mentoring in the panel discussion on 'Youth Voice in Action' – an approach where a young person takes on the role of mentor for an adult: perhaps a university student, employer, or school careers lead. Where the partners' programmes are using mentoring to improve young people's soft skills, they may wish to consider following this experience with backwards mentoring as a way to consolidate what young people have learned. The opportunity to take part in backwards mentoring has the potential to cement improvements in soft skills such as in confidence, resilience, communication or motivation, while also positively strengthening young people's workplace skills such as leadership or organisation.

4. Consider how to further embed qualitative evaluation processes into existing monitoring and evaluation processes

Last year, CfEY recommended that the partners should consider how they can collate further qualitative data within their existing monitoring and evaluation processes. This year's evaluation showed little evidence that this recommendation was taken forward, though there had been acknowledgement that some methods of data gathering, such as surveys, were not delivering the desired results. Considering this, Causeway Education would like to restate this recommendation for the partners' future work and extends the offer to discuss this further with any team members who would like additional guidance on how to approach it.

Theory of Action: conclusion

The Theory of Action approach has worked effectively in gathering both quantitative and qualitative data from the partner organisations that have received funding through the Transitions from Secondary Education Special Initiative over the past four years. It has enabled the partners to reflect on their progress, examine and unpick challenges, and set their own targets, as well as being guided by those of the evaluator. The partners have also shared learnings and advice with each other and built positive relationships that will hopefully last into the future.

The Cohort 3 partner organisations have continued to refine and improve their programmes this year, while sustaining the delivery of their activities to significant numbers of young people. While some challenges have recurred, this has often been due to the context the partners are working in, such as the significant pressure on school timetables and budgets, or the scarcity of long-term funding for their own work.

Causeway Education would like to thank the partners for embracing the evaluation process despite their busy schedules and engaging so openly with it. We congratulate them on all their achievements - their work has been fascinating to explore and represents crucial opportunities for disadvantaged young people in a context where support is often stretched, inconsistent or absent altogether. We wish them the best for the future.

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