



## What mattered ten years on? Young people's reflections on their involvement with a youth participation project

Alison Body & Eddy Hogg

### Why this research?



- Voluntary organisations are hugely important to individuals and communities (CAF, 2014)
- Being supported to participate and volunteer as a young person can open the door to a lifetime of engagement
- There is little research which seeks to explore the life journeys of beneficiaries



- After social services, sport and recreation organisations make up the biggest chunk of charities
- Plus all the non-charity clubs
- It is the most common field for volunteering – 50% of volunteers engaged in sports and recreation organisations in 2015-16 (NCVO, 2017)
- 15% of people are members of a sports club (NCVO, 2017)

### What do we already know?



- Young people aged 16 to 25 are the most likely to volunteer of any age range (NCVO, 2017)
- Transitioning teens: from family to independence
- Beyond the market and the state
- Youth engagement also has future benefits – early experiences are vital



### What we did

- Partnership with a housing association
- We talked to over 20 participants and formally interviewed 10
- Each interview lasted approximately 1 hour
- We transcribed and analysed the results looking for themes, patterns and tensions in the data

## Overview: Participants pathways



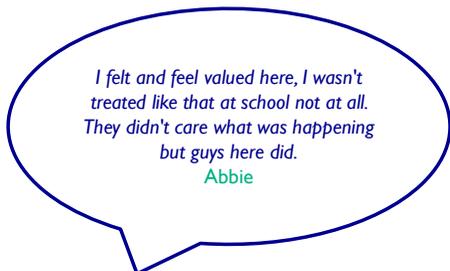
### The key outcomes were:

- Young people taking control of their activities and communities
- Linked to increased confidence levels
- A desire to support others
- A strong desire to 'give back'

## The key ingredients: Relationships



- Ongoing support and relationships are key
- The relationship with key individuals enabled young people to feel safe and able to share their ideas, thoughts and feelings
- Relationships with individuals resonate more than with clubs or schemes



*I felt and feel valued here, I wasn't treated like that at school not at all. They didn't care what was happening but guys here did.*

Abbie

## The key ingredients: Having a voice



- Focus on giving young people a voice
- This emphasis has a clear lasting impact
- Participants expressed strong sense of achievement in their accomplishments
- Young people who felt they had had a voice continued to use it in young adulthood



*I only have to look out of my window and I can see the skate park that we got the funding for and we helped build – we did that.*

Chris

## The key ingredients: New experiences



- Young people love new experiences!
- Ranged from being something they felt proud of and enjoyed, to identifying key and life changing experiences
- All the participants identified trips as significant events in increasing their confidence and giving them new opportunities

*There is no way I would have done some of things I've been able to do, my Mum is a single parent, it was tough for her. I got to do things I would never otherwise would have had the opportunity because we couldn't afford it.*

Katy



### Lasting Impacts for Individuals

- Participants identify their time with the organisation as life changing
- Participants demonstrated a strong inclination to help others and support young people to 'grow and develop'
- Other lasting impacts identified included:
  - Increased confidence, self awareness, pride and ambition
  - Employment, volunteering and training opportunities
  - Constructing identity and 'who I wanted to be'

*It changed my life... if it wasn't for them then I wouldn't be half the person that I am now.*

Danielle



### Lasting Impacts: Volunteering

- Young people aged 16 to 25 are the most likely to volunteer of any age range
- Majority spoke of a recognition and desire to 'give back' to their communities
- There was a strong recognition of social responsibility

*It ... made me become more independent and want to more volunteering with other kids, you know 'give something back'*

Danielle



### Lasting Impacts: Citizenship

- Young people's involvement in voluntary organisations encourages them to be involved in community activities
- Majority of the participants continued to advocate strongly for their and others right and beliefs
- They can enable young people to speak out on behalf of their communities and to affect change for themselves and others

*I'm working with some others at the moment to get funding for a new football ground in this area, we need it and the council won't help*

**Frankie**

## Moving On...



- Area that was least consistent across participants
- A good proportion of participants still feel 'part' of the organisation:
  - Some volunteer or are employed by it
  - How are departures managed?
- Young people moved on for a variety of reasons:
  - Took on new opportunities
  - Became too old for its provision
  - "Drifted away"

*I felt really bereft when I was too old for [the organisation] it was like I had to move out of home... it was like losing my family.*

**Becky**

## Moving on....



- Voluntary organisations need to consider how they support exit strategies
- Majority of research interviewees wanted to remain in touch in some way
- Exit strategies need to exist at both organisational level and individual relationship level

## Implications for Policy and Practice



- Relationships with coaches and other volunteers are essential for young people
- Ensure that young people are given a voice and aren't simply passive consumers
- Support positive transitions, e.g. from youth player to player-coach. Don't just abandon people, your club may mean more to them than you realise!



# Thank You!

ali.body@canterbury.ac.uk  
E.Hogg@kent.ac.uk