Tackling Loneliness with Transport Fund

Engaging Young People with Community Rail

Evaluation Report

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N.B – *Dr Ricci is now a freelance evaluation consultant*

1. Introduction

This report presents the evaluation approach and results of the project Engaging Young People with Community Rail, funded by the Department for Transport's Tackling Loneliness with Transport Fund[1].

The project engaged with young people aged 15-24 to achieve the following aims:

- to reduce the risk of loneliness and isolation for this age group;
- to enhance their propensity and effective ability to use rail to travel sustainably to destinations and access life opportunities;
- to build an evidence base and for wider, more effective engagement of this age group with transport, in particular community rail;
- to identify lessons learnt and best practice from the experience of project partners and other organisations involved in project delivery.

Whilst loneliness can be experienced by anyone throughout the life course, there is now an increasing body of evidence[2] showing that that young people are:

- disproportionately likely to report feelings of loneliness;
- commonly at risk of mental health conditions, which not only increase risk of loneliness but create mutually reinforcing patterns of perpetuation;
- particularly exposed to loneliness and isolation as a result of the pandemic.

Loneliness and social isolation are often used interchangeably, however there is a subtle difference between these two concepts. Social isolation can be measured objectively and is related to the quantity of people in a person's social network. Loneliness is more subjective, and can be defined as a negative and unwelcome feeling that occurs when there is a gap between a person's actual and desired social relationships, and when the quality or quantity of these relationships does not meet their expectations.

Existing evidence suggests the risk of loneliness among young people is linked to:

- individual factors, such as: socio-economic characteristics, health, ability and propensity to socialise, confidence and self-esteem, and
- context-related factors, such as: their sense of belonging to communities and places, quality and quantity of their social relationships versus expectations, trust in others, and access to opportunity.

To mitigate loneliness, and reduce the risk of loneliness, the evidence suggests that successful interventions don't need to be 'about loneliness', which in some cases can be unappealing and counter-productive, but should be focused on developing meaningful social connections and relationships. Approaches need to be tailored to the specific participants and contexts, and can include some or all of the following aspects:

- Making it more acceptable to discuss loneliness and reducing the stigma;

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-loneliness-with-transport-fund

[2] For a broad overview of all the loneliness research evidence mentioned in this report, see: Ricci M. (2022) Loneliness: What it is, how it affects young people, how it can be tackled, and the role of transport. UWE Bristol. Available at: https://uwe.worktribe.com/record.jx?recordid=10889666

- Encouraging positive use of social media;
- Involving participants to co-design and provide input to the interventions;
- Creating opportunities for meaningful social connection through shared interests and group activities (e.g. art-based projects, experiences…) and social action;
- Promoting and using local assets and community spaces for activities;
- Developing participants' personal skills and confidence in a safe and supported environment.

Transport can help tackle loneliness. Research shows that people who report using different transport modes are less likely to feel lonely. Experience within community rail, and youth organisations, suggests that independent, confident access to transport is a crucial enabler of social connections and life opportunities, yet is often lacking.

The project was designed with this evidence base in mind and comprised three pilots with varying focuses, contexts, and cohorts, led by community rail partnerships (Severnside CRP and Gloucestershire CRP in Bristol/Gloucester and Lancashire CRP in Blackburn) and Catch22 (in Newcastle/County Durham), the lead delivery organisation for the National Citizenship Service.

A common thread ran through the pilots: they all engaged young people, some of whom from particularly disadvantaged backgrounds, in group activities that had a transport element, such as journey planning workshops, art-based projects with a transport theme, and rail (and metro) experience days. All the initiatives delivered through the project used transport, and rail in particular, in different ways:

- as a **means** of reaching a particular destination, visiting places, and taking part in group activities at the destination;
- as a **place** where social interaction, developing new friendships and participating in group activities could take place in a safe and supported way, e.g. at the station and on the train;
- as a **personal development resource**, for example as an inspiration for developing original poetry and music, and as an educational and confidence-building activity such as journey planning.

The rest of the report is organised as follows. The next section presents and discusses the evaluation approach and methodology. The findings are presented in three separate sections. Section 3 presents an overview of the socio-economic and travel-related characteristics of the participating young people, to provide the context underpinning the results. Section 4 summarises the evaluation of the outcomes for participating young people. Section 5 discusses the lessons learnt from the experiences of pilot leads and the external organisations and professionals involved in delivery (e.g. teachers, creative practitioners, youth workers…). Section 6 concludes the report and outlines recommendations for future projects.

2. Evaluation methodology

Whilst the funder (Department for Transport) had appointed an external evaluator to carry out an overall evaluation of all the funded projects across the country, an in-house evaluation has also been undertaken to allow more in-depth exploration of the outcomes achieved by each pilot, as well as specific lessons learnt that will assist in delivering further work of this kind in community rail. The evaluation methodology, co-ordinated by Miriam Ricci (UWE Bristol), was developed collaboratively with pilot leads and David Littlefair (Community Rail Network). The evaluation was informed by participatory and action research approaches, and involved the following steps for each pilot:

- Step 1: Participatory co-design of each pilot's Logic Model;
- Step 2: Identification of suitable Evaluation Questions (EQs);
- Step 3: Development of an appropriate Data Collection/Generation Plan to answer the EQs.

Logic models and Theory of Change

A logic model logic is "a systematic and visual way of presenting the key steps required in order to turn a set of resources or inputs into activities (or outputs) that are designed to lead to a specific set of changes or outcomes."[3] Logic models are also referred to as 'logic maps', 'outcome maps', 'intervention logic' etc. and are the basis for developing a Theory of Change of an intervention, which describes in detail all the mechanisms by which an intervention (e.g. a project or programme) is expected to produce the desired changes in the short, medium and longer term.

Logic models are very useful tools because they help to 1. intentionally design the intervention with specific aims and objectives in mind, and 2. to evaluate its effectiveness in achieving such objectives and to understand the underlying mechanisms of change.

A simplified example of the project's Logic Model is included below:

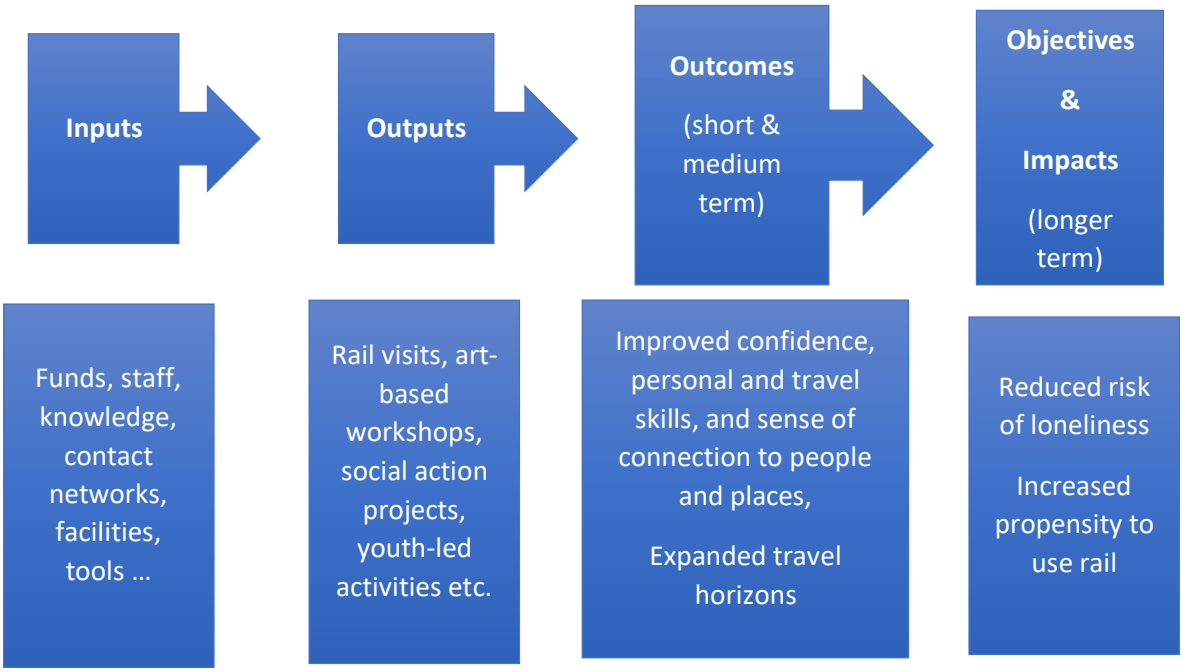


Figure 1: *Simplified Logic Model of the project*

[3] See https://www.tavinstitute.org/projects/report-guide-to-logic-mapping/ and https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/programdevelopment/logic-models/

Step 1 (Logic Model co-design) involved developing an overview of each pilot, illustrating the available resources or Inputs, the Outputs and Participation (i.e., what is going to be delivered and to whom) and the logical links between these and the Outcomes that are expected in the short, medium, and longer term. The three logic models are illustrated in **Figure 2**, **Figure 3** and **Figure 4**.

The Theory of Change of the project is a description of how the changes illustrated in *Figure 1* are expected to occur:

- **Impacts:** Overall, the project aims to reduce the risk of loneliness and isolation for young people aged 15-24, and to enhance their propensity and effective ability to use rail to travel sustainably to destinations and access life opportunities. These impacts are expected to occur after the conclusion of the project and cannot be measured or evaluated in this report.
- **Short and medium-term outcomes:** To achieve the impacts in the longer term, the project engaged with young people in three different areas of the country to produce specific changes in the short to medium term. The existing evidence suggests that these short and medium-term outcomes can lead to the desired impacts:
    - Young people have positive shared experiences taking part in the project activities and events, such as rail experience days.
    - Young people have better knowledge of rail services and destinations accessible from their local station, including those promoted by community rail partnerships, and develop a sense of belonging and ownership towards their local station, railway, and community.
    - Young people feel more confident about rail travel, are more aware of the opportunities and risks of travelling, feel able to plan a journey and travel by train independently and/or with others.
    - Young people have wider travel horizons and value spending time outdoors or at sites of socio-cultural development, engaging in nature-based, cultural and/or physical activities (depending on the specific pilot under consideration).
    - Young people develop and improve a range of artistic and/or personal skills, such as leadership, teamwork, communication, problem solving, creativity.
    - Young people have greater confidence in their skills and abilities, feel more empowered and have better self-esteem.
    - Young people develop and strengthen connections to others (peers, activity leaders, youth workers and anyone involved in project delivery on the ground).
    - Young people feel less isolated, more connected to others, and willing to spend time with others.
- **Outcomes for project partners and external partner organisations/professionals:** To deliver the project activities, pilot leads relied on various external organisations (e.g. schools, colleges, charities etc.) and professionals, such as creative practitioners and nature-based experts. Some of these had already collaborated with the pilot leads, but the project was also an opportunity to create new collaborations and engage with a wider network of partner organisations and professionals working with young people. Expected outcomes include:

- Pilot leads strengthen existing connections and develop new connections with external organisations and professionals working with young people.
- Pilot leads and external organisations and professionals have better knowledge of each other's services and opportunities, in particular better awareness of how community rail can support and work with external partners and young people.
- Project partners further strengthen their experience and ability to engage effectively with young people to foster meaningful social connections and prevent loneliness.

- **Outputs:** The project engaged young people in several distinctive group activities, which varied across pilots, which included rail experience days, sessions on loneliness and isolation, youth-led artistic and social action projects (e.g. poetry, music, dance etc.).
- **Mechanisms of change:** For the project outputs to produce their intended outcomes, it was necessary to:
  - Create a safe and supportive environment for participants to engage in group activities and projects, explore new places, feel a sense of achievement, and enjoy themselves in the process;
  - Build relationships based on trust with all the partner organisations;
  - And to be mindful of the specific social contexts in which participants lived when planning and delivering the activities.

Evaluation Questions and Evaluation Plan

Step 2 comprised a participatory exercise involving all project partners to identify appropriate Evaluation Questions (EQs), which set the scope and depth of the overall project evaluation, and also more specifically for each pilot. EQs guide the process of deciding what data needs to be collected/generated, in what form, and at what point in time in the project. Generally, EQs need to be proportionate to the resources available to carry out the evaluation, to the requirements of the funders, and the needs of the project partners.

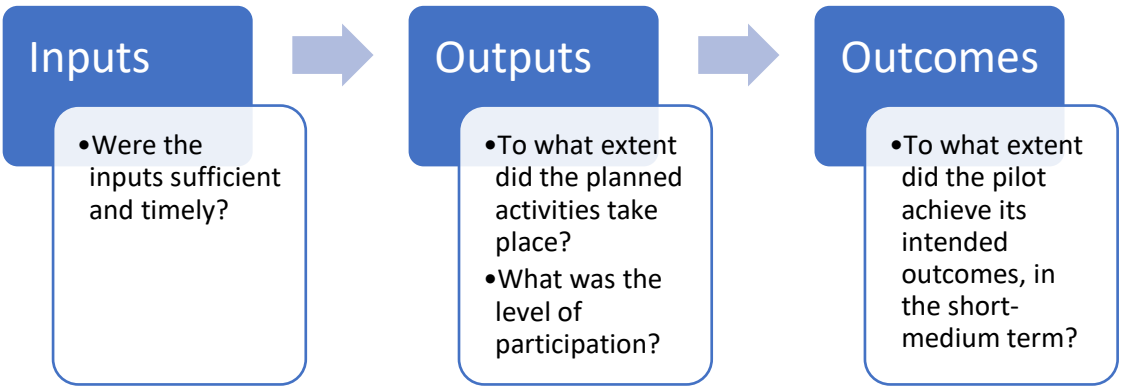


Figure 2: Example of evaluation questions

Step 3 identified what data needed to be collected and/or generated to answer the EQs and 'measure' the extent to which the pilots had produced, or contributed to, the desired changes illustrated in the Logic Model and detailed in the Theory of Change.

These three steps involved a series of online one-to-one and team meetings, as well as regular communication by e-mail. This process helped the whole project team (Community Rail Network, pilot leads and UWE) agree what evidence could realistically be gathered during the course of the project to best capture its value and contribute to the high-level evaluation carried out by the external evaluator.

Figure 2: Logic Model for Pilot 1 - Movement

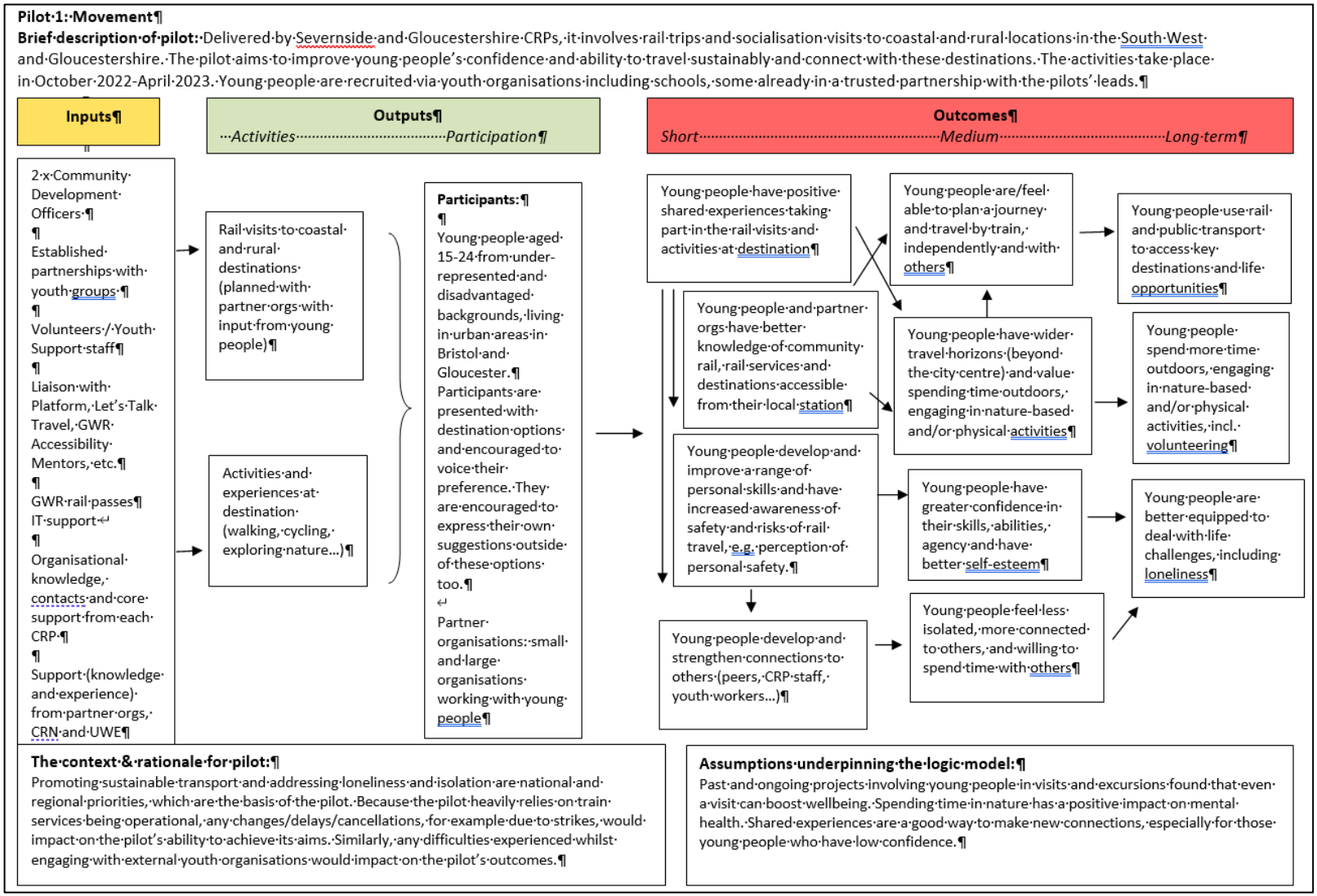


Figure 3: Logic Model for Pilot 2 - Making Connections

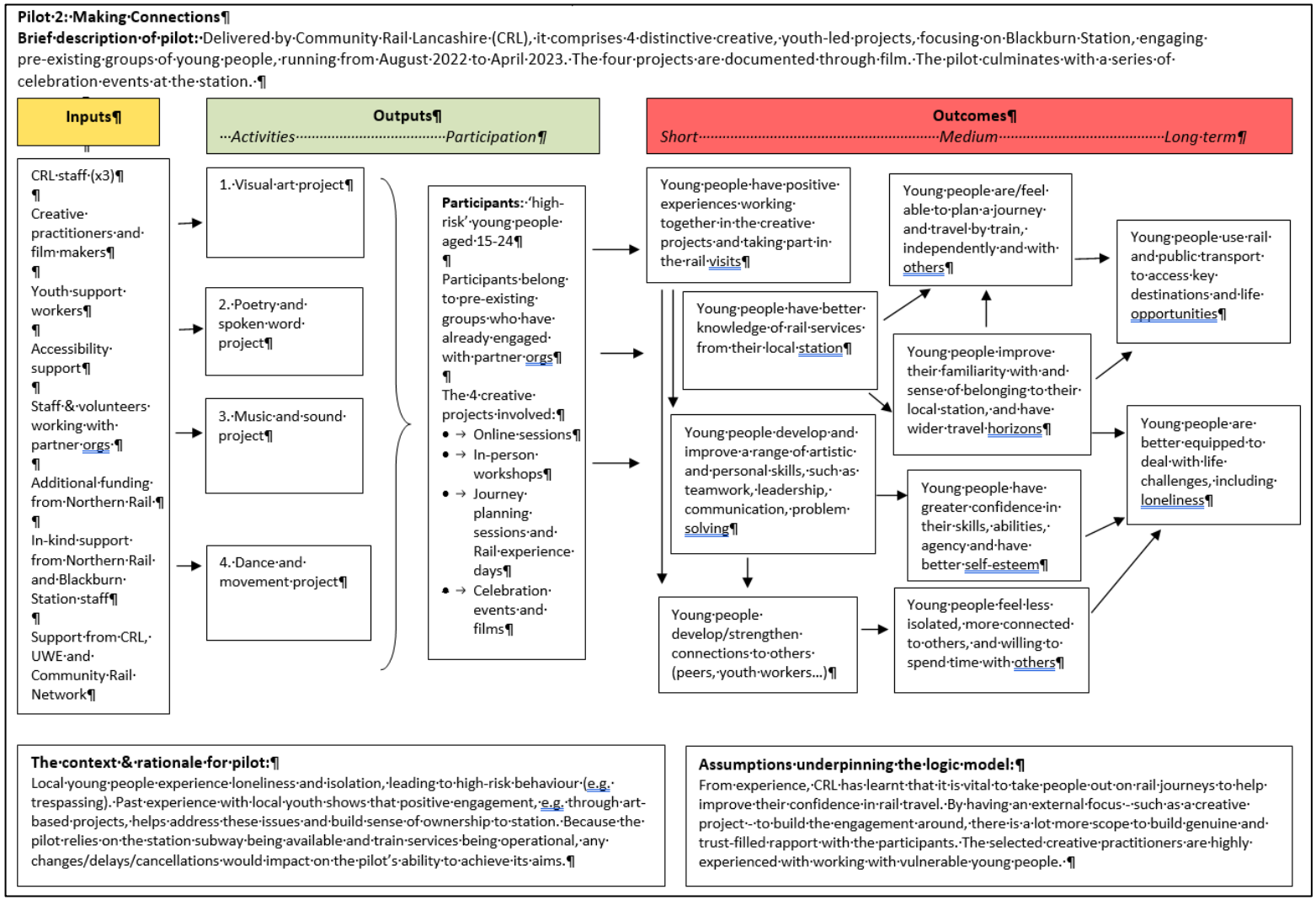


Figure 4: Logic Model for Pilot 3 - C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D

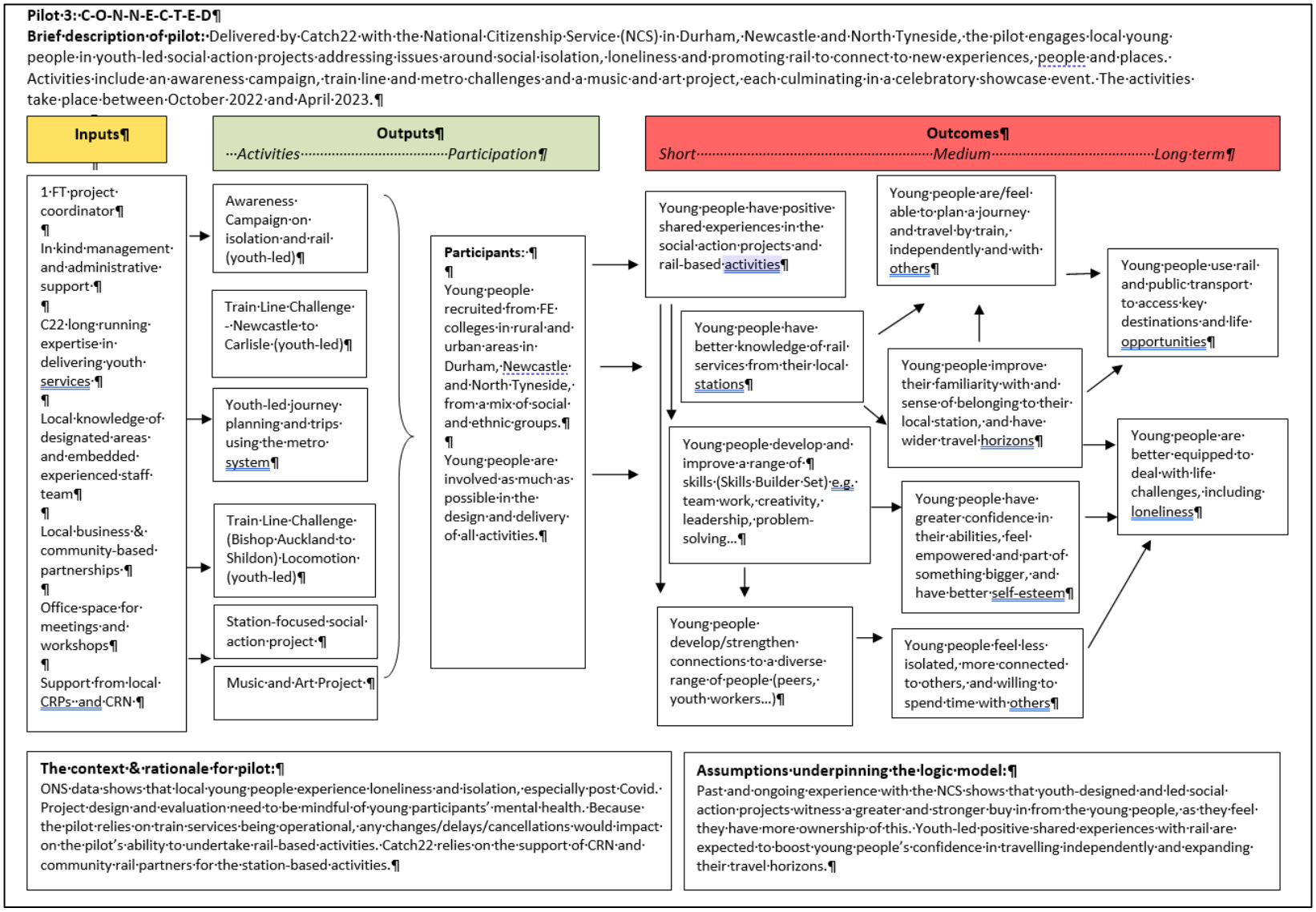


Table 1: Evaluation plan: Evaluation questions, indicators, and data collection

Evaluation questions	Indicators	Data collection & generation methods – how to measure indicators	Timing – when to measure
Inputs: 1. Were the inputs sufficient? 2. Were the inputs timely? 3. Were there changes in delivery partners involved?	• % Funds used • Timeline of receiving funding • Additional funds requested • Staffing expected vs actual	• Records kept by pilot lead	During the pilot
Outputs – activities: 1. To what extent did all the planned activities take place? 2. Were there changes to the delivery plan? 3. Were there any other unplanned activities that took place as part of the delivery? 4. What worked well/less well in delivery and engagement with partner organisations?	• Activities that took place vs planned • Number and description of additional planned and unplanned activities that took place • Quality of the delivery and engagement experience	• Records kept by pilot lead • Interviews/workshop with pilot leads • Interviews with activity leaders	During the pilot
Outputs – participation (attendance & satisfaction): 1. Did the pilot engage with the desired target groups? 2. Did participation/attendance levels match expectations? 3. Why? Why not? What does this mean? 4. Did any participants drop out (of activities/project/pilot)? If so, why? 5. How much were participants satisfied with the activities/project? Why? 6. What worked well/less well for young people, pilot leads and partner organisations?	• Participants' socio-demographics and baseline travel behaviour • Number or % dropouts • Reasons/context of dropping out • Expectations vs participation/attendance levels • Individual motivations/expectations for taking part in specific activities/sessions/ and/or in the pilot • Level of satisfaction with activities	• Attendance recorded by activity leader/pilot lead • Observations recorded by activity leader/pilot lead • Questionnaire surveys, interviews, workshops (with participants as well as pilot leads and activity leaders)	• Attendance recorded at every activity/session/visit • Post-activity • End of project (within pilot) • End of pilot
Outcomes – short/medium term: To what extent did participants, pilot leads and partner organisations achieve the intended outcomes detailed in the Theory of Change, as a result of taking part in the activities/pilot?	• % Participants achieving a specific outcome • Qualitative perceptions and examples evidencing outcomes	• Observations recorded by activity leader/pilot lead • Questionnaire surveys, interviews, workshops (with participants as well as pilot leads and activity leaders)	• Post-activity • End of project (within pilot) • End of pilot

Data collection/generation and Analysis

The Evaluation Plan outlined in **Table 1** shows what Evaluation Questions (EQs) have been identified for each component of the Logic Model (inputs, outputs, and outcomes), the associated indicators that help answer the EQs, and the data collection and generation methods that have been employed to measure such indicators. This process is necessary to gather the evidence that underpins the evaluation of the pilots.

Different types of research tools were employed to gather quantitative and qualitative evidence:

- Pilot leads kept records of resources (inputs) and delivered activities (outputs).
- Pilot leads and activity leaders recorded observations about the activities and participants' engagement and behaviours.
- Questionnaire surveys were administered by pilot leads and/or activity leaders to participants at the end of an activity (such as a rail experience day). The questions were co-designed collaboratively by the project partners and the co-design process was led and facilitated by Miriam Ricci (UWE). A list of all the questions is provided in Appendix 1. Only a selection of questions was included in the surveys and each pilot lead adapted the wording of some questions to reflect their specific activities. The survey included agree-disagree type of questions as well as open-ended questions allowing for free text answers. All responses have been anonymised.
- Evaluation workshops were held with groups of participants from Pilot 2 and 3, to gather richer qualitative data about their experience in taking part, and comprised distinctive group activities to explore:
    - Expectations and motivations for taking part;
    - Any improvements in their confidence and ability to plan a rail journey - this was achieved by a group activity where participants had to create a storyboard illustrating how they would organise a rail trip with their friends;
    - Any improvements in their sense of connection to others;
    - Future intentions regarding rail travel.

  The activities were co-designed with all project partners and the co-design process was led and facilitated by David Littlefair (Community Rail Network). The workshop schedule and activity outline are presented in Appendix 2.
- Regular project meetings with partners (pilot leads, Community Rail Network project manager and UWE) were used to gather qualitative evidence about delivery. In addition, an evaluation workshop with all project partners was held in Birmingham on 17th April 2023, to discuss the experiences of delivery and identify lessons learnt.
- Qualitative research interviews were undertaken by pilot leads to gather richer qualitative data about activity leaders' experiences of delivery and their views on participants' engagement and behaviours. The interviews were held remotely or in person using an interview guide developed by Miriam Ricci (UWE) with the input of pilot leads. The interview guide and questions are provided in Appendix 3.

Quantitative (numerical) data from questionnaire surveys have been analysed using Excel. The analysis is based on 354 completed survey forms, broken down as follows for each pilot:

Movement:	91 completed forms
Making connections:	148 completed forms
C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D:	115 completed forms

Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by a professional transcriber. Notes from meetings and workshop activities were also transcribed for analysis. Where audio recording was not possible, interview questions were answered in written form by interviewees. Together with comments and free text answers provided by participants in questionnaire surveys, these qualitative textual data have been anonymised and analysed thematically.

The results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis are reported and discussed in sections 3-5, where they are organised using the Theory of Change framework presented in the sub-section **Logic models and Theory of Change**.

3. Characteristics and travel behaviour of participating young people

This section reports and discusses some of the socio-economic characteristics and travel behaviour of the participants, to provide useful context to better understand the results presented in the next sections. The three pilots were set up with an aspiration to engage with young people from particularly disadvantaged backgrounds and most at risk of isolation and loneliness. Making Connections, for example, engaged with charities such as NightSafe and DanceSyndrome whose service users are individuals experiencing disadvantages such as homelessness, substance misuse, disability etc. Similarly, Movement and Connected engaged with schools, colleges and charities working with a broad spectrum of young people, some of whom living with intersectional disadvantages, such as young parents, NEETs (Not in Employment, Education or Training) and teenagers who were not in mainstream schooling.

> *"The young people we have targeted for this project are suffering from levels of sort of social anxiety, anxious about meeting peers. Some of them are stuck at home, some of them have been not even attending school."* (Partner organisation, Movement)

Participants' composition in terms of gender, disability and ethnicity is presented below, from data collated from Movement and Connected. The groups were generally balanced from a gender perspective, but with a slight predominance of female participants in Movement. In both pilots there were significant proportions of young people reporting disabilities and/or health conditions, including mental health. Movement participants had a particularly diverse ethnic background (40% non-white).

	Movement	**C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D**
Female	59%	53%
Male	41%	43%
Non-Binary	N/A	4%

	Movement	**C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D**
Disability / Physical and/or mental health issues	26%	52%

	Movement	**C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D**
Asian	15%	3%
Black	14%	2%
Mixed race	6%	4%
White	60%	88%
Any other background	5%	3%

In terms of travel behaviour, only a minority of participants were frequent rail users. The vast majority reported travelling by train rarely or occasionally, and about one in ten participants had never travelled by train before taking part in the project. This means the project successfully engaged with young people who were less familiar with rail travel, and for whom having a day out by train would be a new or unusual experience.

"How often do you travel by train?"

	Movement	Making Connections	C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D
Frequently	11%	11%	N/A
Occasionally	32%	30%	N/A
Rarely	49%	46%	N/A
Never – today is my first time	8%	13%	N/A

Observations made by activity leaders suggest that, in principle, trains are popular with the participating young people and appear safe to them. However, the cost of fares combined with other issues, such as lack of knowledge about travelling by train and available destinations, are barriers to rail travel.

> *"Some of the barriers to travel can be really varied and they can be really simple, and sometimes they can be affording a ticket, not knowing how to plan and go on a train, not knowing where the trains go. The anxiety of going somewhere new by yourself. And I think the great thing about this project is actually removing those really simple barriers that for people who are confident in travelling and doing things, you don't even see them."*
>
> (Activity leader, Making Connections)

Similar considerations appear in the comments left by participants in the post-experience survey, who also cited poor reliability of rail services as a problem. These comments also suggest that participants enjoyed discovering new places by rail as a group (i.e. with their peers) and that better promotion of destinations and activities that are accessible by train, and attractive for young people, would be beneficial.

4. Outcomes for participating young people

This section discusses whether the project achieved its intended outcomes for young people. The findings are based on the analysis of all the data - quantitative and qualitative – from participants as well as partner organisations and activity leaders involved in project delivery. Overall, the evidence gathered for the evaluation suggests that all outcomes have been achieved. The evidence for each outcome is presented and discussed separately in the following sub-sections.

Young people have positive shared experiences taking part in the project activities and events, such as rail experience days.

In the questionnaire survey, participants in all pilots described their experience using words such as *"amazing"*, *"fun"* and *"fantastic"*, and many expressed the desire to repeat the experience. The survey asked young people what they liked the most and the least. Most comments were positive. Among the few negatives, young people mentioned aspects beyond the project's control, such as the quality of the food and the cold and wet weather during excursions by train. Further relevant comments made by participants and are reported below.

"Everyone was friendly and made me feel comfortable" (Participant, Movement)

"I felt secure and excited." (Participant, Movement)

"We don't really do things like this, that's why we were excited, it's nice when you're with your friends." (Participant, Movement)

"It was surprisingly fun. I got hot chocolate and got to go on the train without my parents." (Participant, Movement)

Participants in Making Connections were asked whether they had enjoyed the train journey in the post-experience survey. Most of them (76%) agreed they had. Only 2% disagreed and 22% did not express an opinion.

Activity leaders and partner organisations made very positive comments about the rail experiences, some of which are reported below.

"Four of the young people in attendance (aged 16) are young parents. They stated that it was good for them to have a day with their friends to relax, and the youth leaders also remarked how valuable it was for them to have a day to 'feel like kids again." (Activity leader, Movement)

"Quite a few young people stated they enjoyed travelling by train because of the beautiful views of the countryside and a chance to listen to music or chat with friends." (Activity leader, Movement)

"This demographic of young people benefits greatly from these opportunities; those that attended with Troy and staff from 16-25 Independent People were very vocal about how the experience had greatly improved their wellbeing and wondered when the next trip would be!! This is testament to how great this pilot has been and I hope Severnside CRP continue with the project. Thanks to Troy, and Severnside CRP from 16-25 Independent People and all of the young people's lives who've had a positive impact on." (Partner organisation, Movement)

"Had a brilliant day out. Took young people from homeless charity & created music along the way." (Activity leader, Making Connections)

"We had one individual who was flatly refusing to attend the trip to Newcastle, even though parents wanted him to go. We convinced him to give it a try and he actually enjoyed himself!" (Partner organisation, C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D)

Making Connections had an intergenerational element, where some of the activities involved participants of different ages and not only young people. Observations made by activity leaders suggest that was beneficial for all, for example in raising awareness about other people's needs and instilling a sense of responsibility in younger people to *"look after the older folk"* during the activities and the rail trips.

"People were arm-in-arm at the end of the night, different generations kind of supporting each other and being together… and having fish and chips by the seaside is actually a really lovely experience, and that makes it worth taking the train that you might be anxious about. So, it's kind of linking together positive things with the bit they might be a bit anxious about, and then making it worth it, and it feels like that definitely happened with them." (Activity leader, Making Connections)

Young people have better knowledge of rail services and destinations accessible from their local station, including those promoted by community rail partnerships, and develop a sense of belonging and ownership towards their local station, railway, and community.

Because most project participants were infrequent rail users, one of the key outcomes for them was learning about their local stations and realising that rail can connect them with life opportunities and destinations that are attractive to them. Participants in all pilots, for example, were surprised at how quickly they could get away from the city centre to reach beautiful countryside destinations and connect more closely with the natural environment.

Most respondents in the Making Connections post-experience survey (58%) agreed with the statement "Because of today's experience, I know more about my local station and where you can go by train". Only 13% disagreed and 30% gave a neutral answer.

Participants in the visual art project within Making Connections strengthened their sense of belonging towards the local station and community by creating an art installation to improve Blackburn station subway. They were proud of their achievements and that their artwork was going to be permanently displayed in the station subway.

"We wanted to create something colourful, something inspirational, something showcasing that there are positive things happening in Blackburn, that there are thoroughly good people here that will support one another." (Activity leader, Making Connections).

The celebratory events held to publicly unveil the artwork further enhanced their sense of ownership towards their local station.

"So, everyone's got something in there, and it's… it's their own little bit of investment in it, and I actually really look forward to bringing my own family just to… to come and have a look and like, walk through and… and show people what we actually do." (Participant, Making Connections)

This is also the case for participants in the poetry project, whose poems are to be displayed on posters in stations along the rail line connecting Manchester to Blackburn.

Young people feel more confident about rail travel, are more aware of the opportunities and risks of travelling, feel able to plan a journey and travel by train independently and/or with others.

The achievement of this outcome is supported by the results of the post-experience survey, as well as the evaluation workshops and observations made by activity leaders and partner organisations. The evidence collated below suggests that most participants felt more confident and knowledgeable about rail travel as a result of taking part in the project's excursions and journey planning workshops. Moreover, participants with more experience and confidence helped others in the group, hence creating a supportive and encouraging environment for those who had less confidence or were more nervous about travelling. This is an important positive aspect of group travel, especially for younger generations who feel more at ease when learning informally from their peers.

"Because of today's experience, I feel more confident about travelling by train"

	Movement	Making Connections	C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D
Agree	67%	59%	56%
Disagree	7%	3%	6%
Neutral	26%	38%	35%

"I was terrified of being on a train platform for ages. And because it was a rational fear I didn't think I'd get over it but today I did. Incredible." (Participant, Movement)

"I don't go on the train that often because I am nervous about the platform gap. I feel more confident after today and know I can do it." (Participant, Movement)

"I have worked on my confidence because I never wanted to go on a train, hated the thought but now I feel alright about it." (Participant, C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D)

"Some young people had more experience with train travel than others and enjoyed demonstrating their knowledge of public transport to their peers who travel less frequently, supporting them to find a platform and adhere to safety measures at the station (e.g. standing behind the yellow line)." (Activity leader, Movement)

"Young people enjoyed navigating the train station independently by demonstrating how to find their departure on the information board, how to find their platform, and how to interpret informational announcements related to cancellations and delays. They stated that they were confident contacting a member of staff with questions if these resources weren't available." (Activity leader, Movement)

"Many young people had never travelled by train independently before (e.g. without parental or staff supervision). For many of these young people, today was the first time that they were responsible for their own tickets and learned how to get through the ticket gates on their own for the first time. They asked lots of questions about where to insert the ticket, whether or not to hang on to it, where to keep it while travelling, and why the gate at Bristol station did not return their outward journey ticket." (Activity leader, Movement)

"This project helped the group understand how travelling by rail works, in terms of catching trains, finding which platform to go from, knowing when you have arrived at your destination. The group also practised navigation skills, using public information maps, at our destinations. The group did not have to book their own tickets, which would be a useful part of the process of rail travel to include in

future. Many of the group expressed an interest in taking more trips to new destinations and returning to the places we had visited together." (Activity leader, Making Connections)

"She's been back to that place we visited, by herself, and she wouldn't have done that by herself, but she's gone back, and they were all really impressed that she had gone back to that place on her own. And so, she's now more confident to do that, she's more willing to try things." (Activity leader, Making Connections)

Young people have wider travel horizons and value spending time outdoors or at sites of socio-cultural development, engaging in nature-based, cultural and/or physical activities (depending on the specific pilot under consideration).

Spending time engaging in meaningful social activities, as well as being outdoors and in contact with nature, are known to improve wellbeing and reduce the risk of loneliness. The project pilots drew on this evidence and provided different rail experience days, offering a variety of destinations and social activities that would bring young people out of their ordinary situations. Movement, for example, focused on more rural destinations where young people could engage with nature-based activities, learn about the natural world, and better connect with nature.

Most participants across the three pilots agreed they had discovered new places (over 64%) and felt inspired to spend more time outdoors (over 60%).

"Because of today's experience, I discovered places I didn't know about"

	Movement	Making Connections	C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D
Agree	66%	64%	64%
Disagree	9%	17%	9%
Neutral	25%	19%	24%

"It was fun, everyone was awesome and it was a great time to a place I've never been." (Participant, Movement)

"It was fabulous seeing new place new animals I've never seen before." (Participant, Movement)

"It was great to get away from home life and to experience new things it made me realise there's more out there then we know." (Participant, Movement)

"A lot of the students have never been outside of their local community. This could be through desire, capacity, restrictions, fear or just lack of motivation to travel. Gifting a level of independence inspired many in the group. One wheelchair user really felt the benefit after just getting her electric chair. Even when access was difficult and didn't go to plan, she remained positive and felt confident that she would travel more independently in the future." (Activity leader, C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D)

"I work with these young people every day and most have never ventured further than the limits of Bristol itself. This pilot has provided the opportunity for underprivileged, vulnerable, young people an experience that would have otherwise been inaccessible to them. And not only that, travelling on a train was a new experience for many." (Partner organisation, Movement)

"Because of today's experience, I feel inspired to spend more time outdoors"

	Movement	Making Connections	C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D

Agree	60%	N/A	68%
Disagree	5%	N/A	4%
Neutral	34%	N/A	25%

"I felt incredibly safe, and I had such a brilliant time because it encouraged me to go outside and enjoy such a beautiful day." (Participant, Movement)

"I feel happier I did Connected. It really made me feel like travelling more." (Participant, C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D)

"Would like to go to Bolton again (in future)." (Participant, Making Connections)

The train became a way to reach different destinations as well as a site for meaningful social interaction, or an *"equitable workshop place"* as one the pilot leads put it, where young people could chat, play games, and engage in creative activities such as composing music:

"You go somewhere different and people have that freedom to look out the train window, see what they see. Look at things and be inspired by them, "Oh, there's a church up there. There's a river", and it's different conversations, different things to talk about, so it makes it easy to talk to people you're with, because you're in this new environment. And I think just taking away those walls and that familiarity can be a little bit scary, but then it's lovely to see people sat on the train, chatting; not everyone, some people will still be on their phones, but those conversations were definitely happening there. I think it's… it is having that space. I think it's having a chance to get to know each other outside of your normal environments." (Activity leader, Making Connections)

Young people develop and improve a range of artistic and/or personal skills, such as leadership, teamwork, communication, problem solving, creativity.

The pilots offered young people a wide range of activities, workshops, and projects to help them improve and develop new skills, including important personal and social skills, including self-awareness and engaging with others, that are crucial to mitigate the risk of social isolation and loneliness.

Connected, for example, had a specific focus on developing personal skills such as leadership, communication, problem solving, listening and teamwork, which are part of the National Citizenship Service and are regarded as essential to build teenagers' resilience and ability to cope with life's challenges.

Overall, qualitative comments and observations made by participants as well as activity leaders suggest that this outcome has been achieved across the three pilots.

"I wanted to join this project because getting back outside post Covid was extremely difficult. I wanted to push myself out of my comfort zone. I wanted to meet new friends and hopefully push my art skills and meet new people." (Participant, Making Connections)

"It helped me to create more friends and meet new people. it helped me to expand my artistic skills and learn more about art." (Participant, Making Connections)

"It stops me overthinking, it got me out of the house. Learning more and becoming more self-aware of how I react and behave in a safe environment." (Participant, Making Connections)

"I gained friendships and being involved with games on the train I have gained confidence, leadership and most of all communication." (Participant, C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D)

"I have improved teamwork because we all worked in groups and I learnt to involve others and get along with others." (Participant, C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D)

"The young people enjoyed doing a scavenger hunt, searching for fun facts about certain animals and the environment to report back to their team leader at the end of the day. The young people split into teams to complete this challenge. They were aware of one young person being left out of a team, and seemed to go out of their way to invite him to join so as to feel included." (Activity leader, Movement)

"Those sort of activities, like the drumming that we did, play on the importance of teamwork, giving them an opportunity to have some shared achievement, experience of shared achievement... So, all those various elements are really quite developmental. This project is a very rare and unique combination of elements that allow us to achieve quite a lot in a day, probably more in a day than we could have achieved over maybe a few months." (Partner organisation, Movement)

"I think this project contributed a great deal to the participants' social and personal skills. The group were encouraged to work together on many tasks involving conversation and writing, which helped them build social connections with each other. The trips in particular were useful in that they took the group outside of the formal College setting and the group were always immediately interacting and behaving more casually and socially with each other. I think it contributed in a significant way too, that the group had the chance to interact socially with the adults facilitating in a public setting, rather than just their peers." (Activity leader, Making Connections)

"On both trips participants were given the freedom to go out and explore independently, with one group in particular exploring Hebden Bridge and chatting with shop owners and members of the public whilst on the train. Some worked with people in the group they'd not worked with before, others strengthened relationships through the act of creative expression and improvisation, making music they thought they were incapable of making." (Activity leader, Making Connections)

"The group all had an amazing time, but it pushed their personal boundaries. Often these young people would be very insular, not share personal feelings or talk about how they feel. This programme forced them to empathise with the rest of the team when planning their trips. What everyone liked, what limitations they had and how comfortable everyone was with the activities." (Partner organisation, C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D)

"They grew more empathetic to each other's needs, felt comfortable discussing challenges and helping to come up with solutions." (Partner organisation, C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D)

The qualitative evidence gathered on this outcome suggests for some young people the project was a significant personal growth opportunity, for example in stimulating them to think about their professional career and explore options they had not thought of before taking part in the project:

"As a result of taking part in the activities and rail experience days, some of the young people became interested in career or volunteer opportunities they had not considered before, for example in wildlife and nature conservation, zoology and the railways, whether this be engineering-related or in a customer-facing role." (Activity leader, Movement)

Young people have greater confidence in their skills and abilities, feel more empowered and have better self-esteem.

The qualitative evidence gathered on this outcome suggests that many young people across the project felt more confident and better about themselves because of taking part in the project's activities and rail experiences. Below is a selection of the most relevant verbatim quotes.

"I have improved my listening, creativity, and social skills. An example was when I was put in a group with others I haven't met. My emotional wellbeing has improved as I have got more confident." (Participant, C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D)

"I have more confidence with everything I do." (Participant, C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D)

"I gained confidence and friends and travelling on my own without my mam." (Participant, C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D)

"One young person with anxiety and depression stated they felt overwhelmed due to train delays and cancellations. Because of these delays, they were concerned that we would experience busier traffic travelling during rush hour. When our return train did arrive, they were relieved to have found a seat and remarked on how proud they were of themselves for being able to manage the situation and use coping strategies to enjoy the journey." (Activity leader, Movement)

"Through the course of the workshops, the whole group became more openly communicative and energetic during our sessions. At the end of sessions they would ask eagerly about what we were doing next week. The group grew in their ability to express themselves verbally and through writing and creative exercises. I take all of these as strong indicators of improved wellbeing." (Activity leader, Making Connections)

"As the trips took place over the course of quite a long day, the impact on dynamics and confidence was clear to see even at the end of each session, with participants chatting and interacting with each other and staff members and talking about music and making it together. On the train back, they were open and honest about their achievements and initial anxieties about music making and travel, and how they felt better after having tried both in a supported environment." (Activity leader, Making Connections)

"The weekly project has helped nurture the sense that individuals are writers and a belief in themselves as writers. I think the majority of participants benefited in some way, but a couple of members took to writing and reading poetry more strongly. These two members in particular I can see continuing to write their own work outside of our sessions together." (Activity leader, Making Connections)

"This project has enabled that shift where the learner can come in as a teacher and bring in wider skills and experience. The beauty of this project is that it's reigniting that passion and those skills are being revisited that they know they can now apply them in a different way in a creative project, that is really empowering, and that greater good is now going to transcend onto other people, that peer-to-peer learning and support, it's invaluable." (Activity leader, Making Connections)

"The group absolutely grew in how comfortable and confident they were, in interacting with both each other and myself. Our rapport and their ease with the workshops and writing grew throughout the sessions, week on week." (Activity leader, Making Connections)

"While quietly confident, there was lots of apprehension during the programme. Fear about being able to engage like the rest of the group. She pushed herself incredibly hard and committed to the programme fully. A true inspiration." (Activity leader, C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D)

Young people develop and strengthen connections to others (peers, activity leaders, youth workers and anyone involved in project delivery on the ground). Young people feel less isolated, more connected to others, and willing to spend time with others.

According to the results of the post-experience survey, a large majority of participants (over 82%) enjoyed spending time with others during the project. Qualitative evidence offers richer details about how this outcome has been achieved across the pilots, for example young people forming new friendships and organising activities and outings with new friends outside of the project, and teenagers with social anxiety being able to do things they had struggled with before (for example eating with others).

"I enjoyed spending time with others"

	Movement	Making Connections	C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D
Agree	82%	88%	83%
Disagree	2%	1%	4%
Neutral	15%	11%	11%

In one of the evaluation workshops carried out with a group of eight participants in Making Connections:

- 7 agreed with 'I have met new people';
- 6 agreed with 'I made new friends';
- 5 agreed with 'I made new friends I have plans to see again'.

Some of the most relevant verbatim quotes from participants, activity leaders and partner organisations are reported below.

"Love spending time with other people and learning new social skills." (Participant, Movement)

"It was nice to spend time with my friends and it was nice to get to know new people." (Participant, Movement)

"This trip helped me to connect with friends and to relax it also helped me to have a good day out with all my friends." (Participant, Movement)

"Thank you for another excellent trip, Troy. One of my favourite observations of these trips is the transition from awkward and quiet individuals when they first arrive on the station to developing their confidence, being in new environments and connections with new friends- then we see them as having merged socially and returning with confidence and excitement." (Partner organisation, Movement)

"One young person was very reticent throughout our journey - they only removed their headphones and started engaging in conversation with the group once we arrived at Wild Place. They became progressively more talkative and engaged throughout the day." (Activity leader, Movement)

"Staff members made us aware that some young people in attendance are refugees, have intersectional disadvantages or disabilities. They commented that although these young people likely recognise each other from time spent volunteering at the city farm, some of them have never spoken to each other before and it was nice to see some young people interacting for the first time off the farm." (Activity leader, Movement)

"The young people regularly referred to the group at their 'team' and their 'family' throughout the day, looking for every opportunity to take group photos to commemorate the experience." (Activity leader, Movement)

"Our return train was delayed, so we waited at Kemble station for about half an hour. The young people were so immersed in a game they were playing, that they were not bothered by the delay. In a quiet, empty countryside station, all you could hear were the announcements over the speaker, and the laughter of the group as they played round after round of their game where you must work out who the imposter in the group is. They continued this on the train, relieved to have found two tables where everyone could sit next to each other and keep playing. One of the seats at the table was already occupied by a stranger of similar age. They asked him if he would like to learn the game and play with them, and within a few minutes they were teaching him the rules and involving him in the game." (Activity leader, Movement)

"Seventy percent of our members at least are living on their own and isolated and, when I say that, I mean without friends and without family. Once members have been out on trips and connected together, that's then developed another social aspect where they've then gone to the cinema, a whole group of them went to watch Avatar together and this is recent, and meeting up in the coffee shops and things. So, when it was promoted as an opportunity to make connections, it's been so much deeper than that, that real friendships have formed long-term." (Activity leader, Making Connections)

"Some of the young people developed way more than expected in communicating with others and feeling connected. Staff commented saying that some member of the group hadn't ever really spoken in a group setting or struggling to form friendships. However, over the course of the project these individuals started to communicate in front of the group and made friendships which staff have since commented that these friendships have continued to develop. Both groups from the college worked excellently as a team and grew in teamwork and leadership skills as the week went on. Majority of them also showed confidence increase." (Partner organisation, C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D)

"One of the groups began the project be splitting themselves into 4 smaller groups but by the end of the project worked together as one big group which has continued post project. The group interacted very well with my and other staff and after a couple of trips engaged better with wider public." (Partner organisation, C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D)

"One of the girls from the college really excelled in communicating with the rest of the group which previously was a challenge. One of the boys hadn't eaten in front of any of the group/staff prior to the trips but managed to confidently and comfortable eat in front of others and now eats with the group every lunch time." (Partner organisation, C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D)

"Most students do not socialise in or out of college. Almost all young people want to continue doing activities like this as they feel it has connected them as a team." (Partner organisation, C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D)

5. Lessons learnt from the experiences of pilot leads and their delivery partners

This section discusses the lessons learnt from the experiences of pilot leads and the external organisations and professionals involved in delivery, such as teachers, creative practitioners, and youth workers. The evidence was gathered through conversations during project meetings and research interviews.

Challenges

The project experienced several challenges due to **external factors**, such as rail strikes, cancelled or delayed services, unexpected line closures and particularly cold and wet weather well into the spring, which affected the excursions.

Working with young people from very vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds brought additional challenges, such as **resourcing**. For some groups, the staff-to-young person ratio had to be high to ensure a safe experience for all. This meant that partner organisations needed to have the necessary staffing capacity.

Another challenge was making sure that young people had adequate **equipment** for the excursions. In some cases, participants had no adequate footwear, which was then provided using the project's budget. Whilst the cost of train fares was identified as a considerable barrier to rail travel, this example shows that other factors can prevent young people from participating in life-enhancing experiences.

Pilot leads remarked that **building new connections** with community organisations, schools and professionals is a time-consuming activity that needs adequate resourcing. Once the project was up and running, positive experiences led to recommendations by word of mouth and increased the project's reputation, making it easier to bring new organisations on board.

In some cases, **attendance** was lower than expected due to groups of friends deciding not to turn up if one of them was not attending. However, in most of the excursions and workshops, attendance levels were high.

The project would have benefitted from a longer **set-up time** - to recruit the necessary members of staff, to develop a proportionate monitoring and evaluation plan and to engage with existing and new partner organisations and professionals well ahead of delivery.

For one of the pilots in particular (Movement), the timescale of the project meant that delivery had to prioritise larger organisations which had more capacity to recruit a significant number of young people relatively quickly. This meant that the pilot was less able (although not less willing) to engage with smaller organisations, for example those working with young people with special needs or marginalised groups, who would have found the activities particularly beneficial.

Opportunities

The **offer** of different types of group activities (indoor and outdoor based) combined with rail trips was key to encourage young people to take part, especially because most of the prospective participants had a range of vulnerabilities, such as social anxiety and poor mental health. The outdoor and nature-based activities were particularly well received and beneficial for young people who would normally find it challenging to talk and connect to others in more ordinary settings.

"The activities were brilliant because they were outside in the open air. They connected young people with the countryside, which is really important. They had elements of physical activity to them, which was healthy, and walking around together, which I think is just brilliant for some of these young people. They very rarely get the chance to walk around in the countryside. Their lifestyle doesn't sort of incorporate that. And walking around is a great way of bringing these young people together in a sort of like, much more relaxed way of developing their friendships and chatting to each other." (Partner organisation, Movement)

Some aspects of activity design and delivery that were **youth-led**, particularly in Making Connections and C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D, were particularly successful in the level of engagement and sense of achievement experienced by young people. The rail experience days delivered by Movement were also influenced by the participating young people to some extent, wherever possible, for example identifying a preferred destination or outdoor activity.

All pilot leads agreed that the project allowed them to strengthen and expand the **network** of organisations, community partners and professionals, such as freelance creative practitioners, with whom they work.

"It allowed us to improve what and how we deliver, and who we deliver with and to." (Pilot lead)

The project was a unique opportunity for Community Rail Lancashire (leader of Making Connections) to enhance Blackburn station with youth-designed artwork and strengthen the relationship with this station, which had been an aspiration for several years.

External partner organisations and activity leaders benefitted from the **support** received by the pilot lead organisations and their staff, and praised them for ensuring effective and prompt **communication** throughout the project. They also appreciated the **flexibility** in delivery.

"I was given a lot of freedom over the content of workshops, which allowed me to adapt my plans to suit the group without needing to seek approval - this worked well for this kind of project and meant I felt my expertise as a facilitator was valued." (Activity leader, Making Connections)

"The partnership that we've had with yourselves and the support that we've had, the continuing support that we've had, we've not had support like that from any other funders." (Activity leader, Making Connections)

Partner organisations welcomed the **partnership** nature of the project, in particular that trips and activities were organised and provided by pilot leads. This meant that partner organisations could focus their efforts and resources on recruiting prospective participants that would most benefit from taking part. Additionally, it significantly enhanced the offer they are able to provide to their service users, with potential long-term benefits.

"As a small organisation we would never be able to fund this type of activity with any service users. It has helped link together other programmes that we are running within the college and in turn enabled us to really build a good rapport with the users and give a fantastic springboard to move forward and continue to develop each learner." (Partner organisation, C-O-N-N-E-C-T-E-D)

As a result of this **enhanced service provision**, the project may have very significant impacts on young people's life opportunities. For example, activity leaders indicated that some participants decided to enrol in courses and start new activities because of taking part in the project, which improved their confidence and self-esteem. This positive impact on individual participants could be

quite significant, especially those who had been adversely affected by social isolation and loneliness during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The participatory approach to the evaluation allowed pilot leads to have some ownership of the evaluation and learn about logic models and Theory of Change approach, which they can now use to apply for further funding.

Recommendations

Because this project relied heavily on partnership working with external organisations supporting young people, it is important that such organisations are able to take part in similar projects in the future. It is therefore crucial that **funding for youth services** is preserved.

If future project opportunities were available, partner organisations would welcome more initiatives to help young people build **travel planning skills and confidence**. For example, future rail experiences could involve journeys where young people can sit together as a group in a carriage, and journeys where they are encouraged to mix with other passengers to gain more confidence and prepare for independent travel.

The **intergenerational** element in one of the pilots allowed younger and older people to work together on art-projects. This proved to be successful and should be considered in future projects.

To include the voices and input of young people in the design of community rail projects, for example in planning, delivering, and evaluating rail experiences, it could be helpful to consider setting up a **Youth Steering Group**.

If participatory evaluation is included in future grant applications, project managers need to be resourced with a specific '**evaluation time**' allocation in addition to 'project delivery' time.

6. Conclusions

The Engaging Young People with Community Rail project engaged with young people aged 15-24, many of whom from particularly disadvantaged backgrounds, to reduce the risk of loneliness and isolation for this age group, and to enhance their propensity and effective ability to use rail to travel sustainably to destinations and access life opportunities.

Moreover, the project sought to build an evidence base and for wider, more effective engagement of young people with rail, and to identify lessons learnt and best practice from the experience of project partners and other organisations involved in project delivery.

Through the broad range of delivered initiatives - journey planning workshops, art-based projects, and rail experience days – the project demonstrated that transport, and rail in particular, can be used:

- as a **means** of accessing destinations and social activities.
- as a safe **place** for meaningful social interaction and friendship development.
- as a **personal development resource**, to improve and gain new personal, social, and creative skills.

The participatory evaluation involved a range of data collection tools such as questionnaire surveys, research interviews and activity-based evaluation workshops. The collated evidence suggests that the project achieved the following short and medium-term outcomes, which lead to the intended impacts:

- Young people had **positive shared experiences** taking part in the project activities and events, such as rail experience days.
- Young people increased their **knowledge** of rail services and destinations accessible from their local station, including those promoted by community rail partnerships, and developed a **sense of belonging** and ownership towards their local station, railway, and community.
- Young people felt more **confident** about rail travel, are more aware of the opportunities and risks of travelling, felt able to plan a journey and travel by train independently and/or with others.
- Young people increased their **travel horizons** and valued spending time outdoors or at sites of socio-cultural development, engaging in nature-based, cultural and/or physical activities (depending on the specific pilot under consideration).
- Young people developed and improved a range of artistic and/or personal **skills**, such as leadership, teamwork, communication, problem solving, creativity.
- Young people felt **more confident** in their skills and abilities, **more empowered** and improved their **self-esteem**.
- Young people developed and strengthened **connections to others** (peers, activity leaders, youth workers and anyone involved in project delivery on the ground).
- Young people felt **less isolated**, more connected to others, and willing to spend time with others.

Moreover, the project delivered the following outcomes for the partners, organisations and professionals involved in delivery:

- Pilot leads strengthened existing connections and developed new connections with external organisations and professionals working with young people.
- Pilot leads and external organisations and professionals increased their knowledge of each other's services and opportunities, and gained better awareness of how community rail can support, and successfully work with, youth service providers and young people.
- Project partners acquired new experience and further strengthened their and ability to engage effectively with young people to foster meaningful social connections and prevent loneliness.

The evaluation identified the following factors as enablers of wider and more effective youth engagement with rail, including community rail:

- Building effective and trust-based partnerships with organisations and professionals working with young people.
- Providing group rail experience days, combining rail travel with meaningful socio-cultural or nature-based activities, that complement and enhance the offer of youth service providers.
- Creating a safe and supportive environment for young people to shape projects and engage in group activities, explore new places, feel a sense of achievement, and enjoy themselves in the process.
- Being mindful of the specific social contexts, situations, and individual vulnerabilities, when planning and delivering activities with and for young people.

Future similar projects would benefit from:

- Adequate rail service provision, especially in terms of service reliability.
- Adequate project set-up time prior to delivery, for staff recruitment, development of evaluation plan and to connect with external partner organisations and professionals.
- Proportionate resources allocated to delivery partners specifically for evaluation purposes.

Appendix 1

Suggested questions for POST-ACTIVITY QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY directed at participating young people

These questions were co-designed by all project partners as a resource to be used to gather the opinions and experiences of project beneficiaries. A selection of these questions were used as part of a post-activity or post-experience survey conducted on the way back on the train (if the experience involved a rail journey for example), or after a session or group of sessions.

1. Participant ID
2. Date
3. Details of trip/activity
4. How often do you travel by train? (*this Q is relevant if the experience includes a train journey*)

   Options: Frequently, Occasionally, Rarely, Never – today is my first time
5. Think about your experience today. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

   Options: Agree, Neutral, Disagree

   A. I enjoyed the train journey

   B. I enjoyed the activities at the destination

   C. I enjoyed spending time outdoors (OR ADD OTHER RELEVANT ACTIVITY)

   D. I met new people

   E. I enjoyed spending time with others

   F. I discovered places I didn't know about

   G. I would like to take part in similar experiences in the future

   H. Because of today's experience (or "because of taking part in this workshop/session/project")

      a. I know more about community rail (or the local CRP) and its initiatives

      b. I know more about my local rail station and its available train services

      c. I know more about destinations I can access by train

      d. I discovered places I didn't know about

      e. I feel more confident about travelling by train on my own

      f. I feel more confident about travelling by train with friends/family

      g. I feel inspired (or motivated) to travel by train again

      h. I could lead a group trip by train

      i. I made new friends

j. I feel more confident when talking to other people

k. I feel inspired (or motivated) to spend time in nature/outdoors

l. I feel inspired (or motivated) to spend time doing physical activity (like walking, cycling etc.)

m. I feel inspired (or motivated) to spend more time socialising with others in person

n. *Add any other statements that applies to the specific activity/session/project*

6. In three words, how did the train journey make you feel? (Open question)
7. In three words, how did spending time outdoors make you feel? (Open question)
8. What did you like the most about today's visit/experience/activity, and why? (Open question)
9. What did you like the least about today's visit/experience/activity, and why? (Open question)
10. What, if anything, would have made this visit/experience/activity better? (Open question)
11. What, if anything, would encourage (or enable) you to travel by train more, and why? (Open question)
12. Any other comments about your visit/experience/activity today? (Open question)

Appendix 2

Format of Evaluation Workshop with young people

1. Why did you join us, did you get what you hoped to from your time with us?
We will ask questions about why you came and whether you liked the experience

2. Your New Connections

We will think about new people you have met on our trips and workshops and how that made you feel

3. Your new travel skills

We will think about how your experience has helped you know more about planning and taking train trips

4. Using your experience in the future

We will think about how the experience changed your feelings about

Ways to capitalise on the experience

1 - Why did you join us and how was the experience?

We would like to know how you felt about coming to the project and whether it turned out the way you hoped it would when you signed up.

Question 1. Please tell us in your own words what made you want to join our project:

Question 2. What was good about our project?

Question 3. What could have been better or improved the experience for you?

2 - What new connections did you make?

For this task we have given you 3 different coloured pegs.

We would like you to place a peg every time you agree with our questions.
Remember: this isn't a test! It's ok to answer however you like, and your answers will help us think about how we can do our best to help everyone make new friends.

Question 1. I met new People
yes, place a peg in our box

Question 2. I made new friends
yes, place a peg in our box

Question 3. I made friends that I have a plan to see again

If you have plans with someone to meet up again, place a peg in our box

Please also let us know how you felt about the experience of meeting new people on our 'My New Connections' worksheet.

MY NEW CONNECTIONS

My first name [optional]: _____

Since you came on our trips and workshops

Do you feel (tick a box if you agree):

[ ] More confident
[ ] More excited about the future
[ ] Closer to other people

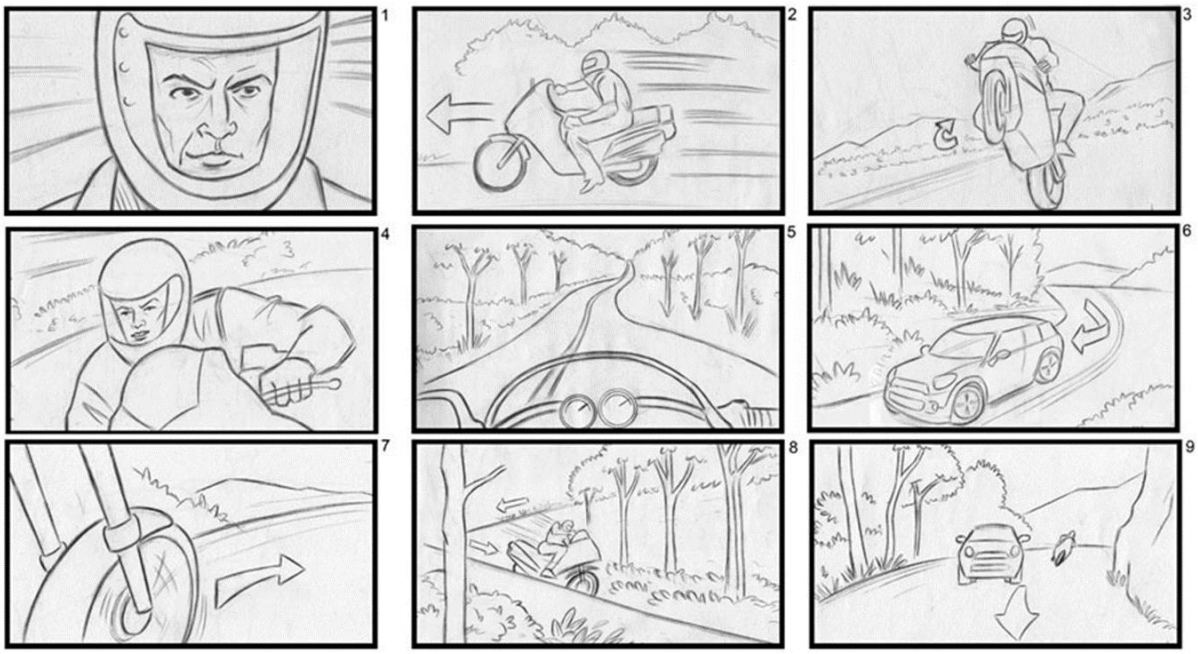
Please tell us in your own words how it makes you feel to have met new people with our project by writing below:

3 - Your new travel skills

Planning a journey storyboard:
For this task we would like you to draw a 'storyboard' of how you would make a trip with friends in future.

Imagine you need to go to a nearby landmark or trip at least a half an hour away. How would you do it? Please use a mix of writing and drawing to 'storyboard' your trip.
For example, you might write and draw: 'I use my phone to look at train times on the Trainline website.

Examples of storyboards:



Include information like this in your Storyboard:

- **What decisions did you make? –** for instance, did you think about where you would go, what was convenient

  - **How did you find the information you needed?** - for instance, did you use a phone, website, ask friends

  - What tools and resources did you use: devices, websites, calculators etc – for instance, did you use a calculator to budget? Did you use your phone?

  - How did you prepare for the trip, what planning did you do? – for instance, did you find out what times trains left, what times the place you visited was open

  - How did you let other people know the plan? Would they be involved in deciding things?

- **What factors influenced their decisions making -** (i.e. can I afford it, is it too far, what are the journey times)

  - What barriers you faced - (e.g. my free time, money)

Reflecting on your storyboard:

Look at your storyboard, we'd like to know which of the things you do to plan a trip are new, and how you feel about your new skills. Please add post it notes to your storyboard letting us know:

Using Blue post it notes, please write about any part of the process that you hadn't done before
- you might say: 'I didn't know this website that shows me trips around Blackburn'
- or you might say 'I didn't know how much train tickets there cost'

Using Pink, please write how you felt going on the trips
- you might write 'I feel excited about seeing a new place
- or 'I feel nervous about going to a new place'
- or 'I feel glad to share this experience with new people'

4 - What about your future, what will help or hinder you taking more trips?

My first name [optional]: _____

We would like to know how you would continue to take trips like we did in our project in the future.

We'd like to know how likely you think it is that you will take more trips in future. Answer by ticking the relevant box.

Question 1. Think about the next year from today compared to the past. Will you increase the number of journeys like those we took as part of the project next year?
Answer by ticking the relevant box
[ ] Strongly Disagree (I will definitely not increase the number of journeys I take)
[ ]Disagree
[ ] Not sure
[ ] I Agree
[ ] Strongly Agree (I will definitely not increase the number of journeys I take)

Question 2. Is the cost of a trip a big barrier for you?
Answer by ticking the box that most applies

Question 3. What things might help you or stop you taking more journeys
Please answer in your own words

Tops & Pants – developed and used by Catch 22 (Pilot 3)

This activity is to be delivered at the end of the intervention with a handful of groups. It is classroom based, with simple facilitation with limited resources required (flip chart, pens, paper Tops and Pants). Staff will facilitate by having pre written questions (relating to the logic model) on flip chart paper placed around the room. They will introduce the activity and walk around reading out the questions or statements. Each young person will then choose if they have something positive or negative to say in response. If positive they will write on their Top or if negative/developmental they will write on their Pants. They will then stick their Tops and Pants on the relative flip chart. This allows for individual answers, young people less likely to be influenced by others and allow for honest answers without the feeling of being on display. Staff can then go round and read out a few of the responses, if an individual acknowledges its theirs they can ask and open up a discussion.

Questions / Statements

1. I am glad I took part in the Connected programme and why.
2. I have gained something positive from participating on the Connected programme
3. The highs and lows of the Connected programme were?
4. I have built or improved friendships with others while on the Connected programme.
5. I have greater confidence in my abilities after the Connected programme especially when helping others
6. I feel more knowledgeable and confident in using the rail network
7. How would you rate your emotional wellbeing after participation after the Connected programme.
8. Skillsbuilder elements include – Listening, Speaking, Problem solving, Creativity, Staying positive, Aiming high, Leadership and Teamwork. On Connected I have improved one or more of these. Please give an example to support your statement.

Appendix 3

Suggested questions for POST-ACTIVITY OR END-OF PILOT SURVEY for activity leaders/youth support workers/creative practitioners involved in delivery

These questions were co-designed by all project partners as a resource to be used to gather the opinions and experiences of youth practitioners involved in activity, project, and pilot delivery. These questions were asked in different ways according to the partners needs and capacity, for example via a questionnaire (on Microsoft Forms) or via in-person/telephone/online interviews (undertaken by pilot leads).

1. Date of interview
2. Which pilot you have been involved in:
3. Activity/project within pilot you have been involved in:
4. Duration of activity/project:
5. Brief summary of activity/project:
6. How many participants took part in activity/project you led? Were all the participants young people (aged 16-25) or did you involve other demographics?
7. What was the level of attendance and drop-outs, were these as expected?
8. What were the challenges you encountered delivering the activities/project?
9. What helped you deliver the activities/project?
10. Based on your experience in this project, how much do you think the activity/project you led has contributed to the following outcomes for the participants, if at all (and provide examples):

    a. Improved social and personal skills - relevant to the specific pilot e.g.

Problem solving, creativity, listening and communicating with others, feeling connected to others/the local railway station/nature, teamwork, leadership, self-confidence, feeling part of something bigger etc.

    b. Improved travel-related skills and expanded travel horizons - relevant to the specific pilot e.g.

Improved confidence when walking/wayfinding/following a route/cycling (depending on activity at destination)

Improved knowledge about opportunities and destinations that are accessible from the local station

Improved confidence in organising a rail journey to undertake alone or with a group (within the project and also outside of the project, e.g. with family or friends).

    c. Improved wellbeing and reduced social isolation

    d. Any other outcomes, including unintended?

11. Do you have any comments and specific examples on

a. How group dynamics changed over the course of the activity/project (in terms of how engaged the participants were during the activities, how comfortable/confident they were in interacting with one another and with you)?

b. Specific individuals who seemed to particularly benefit from the activities/project, and why? Or who didn't and why?

c. Participants who organised social activities with others, outside of the project (going out for a coffee/walk etc.)

12. What impacts has this pilot had on your organisation? E.g., being able to deliver activities that would not be possible otherwise, expanded organisation's reach to under-served social groups etc.

13. What impacts, if any, has this pilot had on you, professionally? E.g., developed or improved specific skills etc.