

# #Focus5

## Interim Evaluation Report

April 2021



**ERS Newcastle Office**

Floor A Milburn House  
Dean Street  
Newcastle  
NE1 1LE

**T:** 0191 244 6100

**E:** [newcastle@ers.org.uk](mailto:newcastle@ers.org.uk)

**ERS Bristol Office**

48 Corn St  
Bristol  
BS1 1HQ

**T:** 0117 927 3401

**E:** [bristol@ers.org.uk](mailto:bristol@ers.org.uk)

[www.ers.org.uk](http://www.ers.org.uk)



## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Aims of the evaluation

ERS were commissioned in April 2018 to produce an evaluation of #Focus5 providing evidence and analysis with respect to reflections on project delivery, the performance and impact of the project.

The key evaluation questions are as follows:

- **RQ1.** Does it move unemployed/inactive young people into sustained education or training?
- **RQ2.** Does it move unemployed/inactive people into sustained work or self-employment?
- **RQ3.** Does it break down identified barriers, even for those who do not progress into work or learning?
- **RQ4.** Does it support young people to participate more in their community?
- **RQ5.** Does it actively promote gender equality and equal opportunities?
- **RQ6.** Is sustainable development effectively integrated into the delivery of the project?
- **RQ7.** Does it improve CSW Group's and partner organisations' capacity and capability in working with these target groups?
- **RQ8.** Is the project good value for money?

### About this report:

This is the third interim report for the project, building on the 2018 and 2019 interim evaluations. It has a formative focus: looking at how the project has progressed over the past year, particularly with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic; exploring improvements; and identifying outcomes and impacts.

### Evaluation Methodology

This 2021 interim report builds on the data gathered in 2018 and 2019. In spring 2021, there was an additional management team focus group and a key worker focus group. Alongside this, there were in-depth telephone consultations with five referral organisations.

To supplement this primary research, data gathered by the #Focus5 team was analysed. This includes: a participant survey (disseminated between November 2019 and March 2021), an employer, education, and training providers survey (disseminated August 2020), a wider network survey (disseminated August 2020) and an internal COVID-19 review (undertaken in autumn 2020). The participant survey was completed by 124 participants (of the 742 engaged on the project up until Q1 2021). It should be noted however, that not every respondent answered every survey question. The survey for employer, education, and training providers was completed by ten people belonging to nine organisations. The wider network survey was completed by 19 people. These were parents/guardians, an advisory teacher, a support worker for LAC, a social worker, a supported housing worker, a CAMHS practitioner, a Youth Offending Team member, and family intervention workers.

## 2. DELIVERY

### Overarching feedback on delivery

#### Participants

Participants were asked to reflect on the overall project. Figure 2.1 below shows the survey respondents' ratings, with 95 per cent of participants thinking the project was good or very good (n=118). Participants were also asked how useful they found working with their key worker. Figure 2.2 below shows the ratings out of five with 94 per cent finding it useful or very useful (n=120).

Figure 2.1: Participant survey respondents' thoughts on the overall project (n=118)

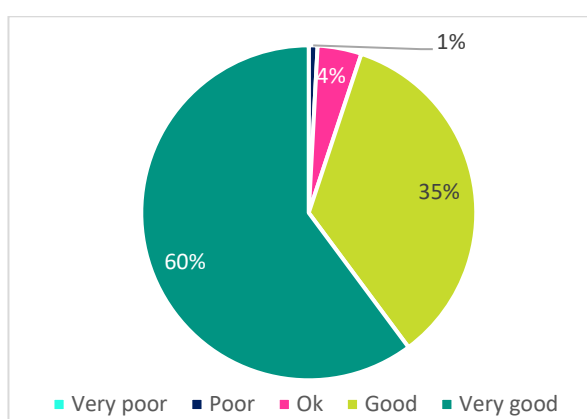
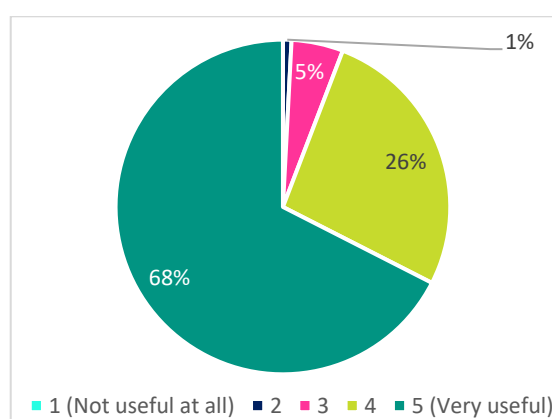


Figure 2.2: Ratings from participant survey respondents on how useful working with their key worker has been (n=120)



Participants were also asked how likely they would be to recommend #Focus5 services to a friend if the opportunity arose. On a scale of one (not at all likely) to ten (extremely likely), the weighted average was 9.6 (n=122). When asked what the best thing about the project was, some common themes include the availability of short courses and online qualifications, skills development, CV support, one-to-one support, building trusting and professional relationships with key workers, building confidence, mental health support, and making plans for the future. One participant said that the best thing was *“being understood and treated like an adult.”*

#### Employer, Education, and Training Providers

Employer, education, and training providers were asked to rate statements about the #Focus5 project, these can be seen in Figure 2.3 below.

Figure 2.3: Ratings from employer, education and training provider survey respondents on statements (n=10)





100% said the project is 'good' or 'very good' (n=10)



100% rated 'quite a lot' and 'a lot' when asked how much the project is helping participants (n=10)



90% said they are 'extremely likely' to work with or recommend CSW (n=10)

When asked what the best thing about #Focus5 in helping participants is, the employment, education, and training providers commented positively on several aspects of delivery. These include consistent support throughout the duration of the programme, regular contact with a friendly and trusted key worker, tailored support for each young person, support to set and achieve goals, education about healthy lifestyles, and the flexibility of the programme to work with Year 11 upwards.



*The best thing is the skilful, positive, hardworking staff who engage with vulnerable young people to help with their next steps and personal development. – E, E & T provider*



Providers highlighted the importance of reaching the most challenging and vulnerable young people. They also emphasised the benefits of regular communication with the young people.



*[#Focus5] managed to engage with some of our most challenging and disaffected students, and motivated and inspired them to have a vision for their future and set goals and how to achieve them. – E, E & T provider*



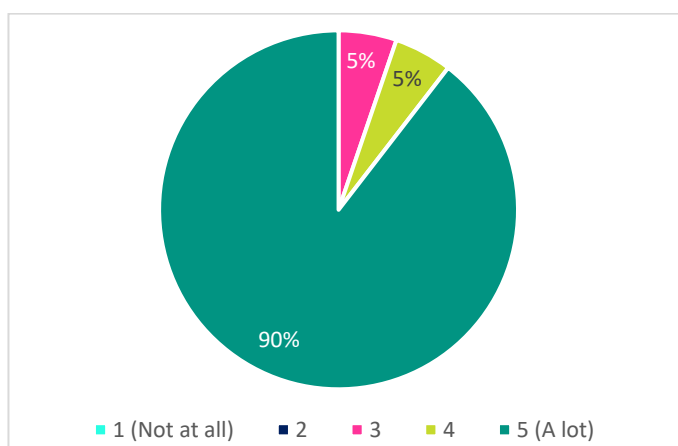
*Regular communication has been crucial in supporting our young people and [the key worker] has been quick to respond to emails and keen to share information which has led to a more joined up and considered approach to the needs of our young people. – E, E & T provider*




### Wider Support Network

Participants' wider support network survey respondents were asked how much being on the #Focus5 project has helped the young person/people they know. This data is displayed in Figure 2.4 below. 90 per cent thought that being on the #Focus5 project helped the young people they know a lot, with a weighted average of 4.84 on a scale of one (not at all) to five (a lot) (n=19).

Figure 2.4: Ratings from wider support network survey respondents on how helpful being on the #Focus5 project has been for the young person/people they know (n=19)



*They listen to the children and encourage them to make the right choices that best suit them. – Wider support network survey respondent*



Survey respondents commented positively on the #Focus5 project. Many mentioned how key workers have been very helpful when working with the young people they know. They reported that key workers have encouraged and engaged participants by thinking creatively and relating the work to the young people's interests. The one-to-one support provided by these professionals is thought to have been invaluable and allowed close working relationships to develop. One respondent said that they valued how the key worker working with the young person they know has persevered where others have given up. Another respondent said that the project has been vital for young people missing out on this type of support from college or a workplace.

*It's offered [young person] the reassurance they need to achieve more and strive for better things. – Wider support network survey respondent*

*It's unique in what it offers. It plays a crucial part in building resilient, happy, and confident young people. – Wider support network survey respondent*

The wider support network was also asked how supported the young person they know has been on the project and their likelihood of recommending CSW to others.

Figure 2.5: Ratings from wider support network survey respondents on statements (n=19)



### Referral organisations

Three of the five referral organisation members interviewed commented on the one-to-one aspect of the project and how this allows for more tailored support for the young person, compared to other programmes in the region. For young people who have been out of education for a long time and feel anxious in group settings, this individual support is needed for them to feel comfortable.

Three referrers were keen to highlight that for NEET young people, other support programmes are quite structured and have set content, but with #Focus5 the team assess the individual on what they really need support with. Referrers who work as family intervention workers have contact with the whole families of young people and one mentioned that this can often cause conflict because they have to put boundaries and sanctions in place. Whereas, the #Focus5 team can build better relationships with the young person alone and clearly understand their needs.



Key workers have been recognised as being innovative in the way they work and tapping into the young people's interests to engage with them. For example, one key worker took a young person to a local armoury because they were interested in wars and the military. As this young person is on the autistic spectrum, this was an effective way to begin to build a trusting relationship. The same worker has gone on walks with young people and brought their dog along with them. The referrer commented on how this was a good idea as, for some people, animals can be therapeutic and calming. Another

“ With the young person I work with now, it has been delivered very well. He's a really hard lad to engage with but the key worker was amazing and just didn't give up. – Referral organisation ”

referrer mentioned that some key workers actively raise awareness on combatting stress and anxiety on social media which is useful for young people and shows the team's commitment to their roles. Two referrers were keen to highlight they have heard very positive comments from the young people they referred about their experience on the project.



Referral organisations also mentioned that key workers try to bring young people together by sharing information between each other. This way they can find out if there are young people on the project who could potentially meet and participate in an activity together. For example, a craft afternoon has previously been organised for several young people to come together and build peer relationships. More recently during COVID-19, a group call has been set up by two key workers, both working with young people with Tourette syndrome, enabling them to meet someone over the phone with the same condition.



*I think [#Focus5] is excellent. I recommend it every time to all partners I work with... There's one key worker I work with a lot and she is fantastic. She builds up a brilliant rapport with young people. – Referral organisation*



One referrer mentioned it would be good if #Focus5 worked with older young people, like those who are recent care leavers, when the support they received as a child in care is suddenly removed, and with no family to support them. Another referrer said that more key workers would ensure more young people can be part of the project. They also thought that being offered an available female key worker in all areas would be beneficial for when a young person feels more comfortable working with a female key worker if for example, they

have past trauma.

## Changes and developments over the last year and in response to COVID-19

### Response to COVID-19

COVID-19 has clearly had a huge impact on the #Focus5 project, due to the nature of the work with young people, the value of the face-to-face interactions, being able to visit young people at home and help them tackle social and travel anxiety.

Due to the 'stay at home' rule, the team have not been working in the office or visiting participants and have instead kept in contact via Microsoft Teams/Zoom, text messaging, phone calls, and email. This has cut down on traveling and saved time.

One referral organisation emphasized the difficulty of the work of #Focus5 with the restrictions due to COVID-19. They recognised that the nature of the service has had to change but the team have done their best to still engage via telephone and virtually to the best of their ability. Two referral organisations noted that #Focus5 have taken more referrals during the pandemic. This shows the project's desire to help as many young people during this time as they can and that they have not limited their service. All referral organisations interviewed thought #Focus5 has continued to engage the right young people who are most in need.



### Management, communication and ensuring staff wellbeing

When asked about the responsiveness of #Focus5 to COVID-19, the key workers commented positively on CSW and the project management team's handling on the situation. They described the management team as encouraging and motivated.



*I don't know what else could have been done to make it a better experience! – Key worker*



Most key workers thought management over this period has been “brilliant.” The #Focus5 management team have felt that CSW have been really supportive during the pandemic and understanding of everyone's individual circumstances.

The management team noted that key workers were able to adapt quickly under COVID-19 restrictions, due to the majority already working remotely most of the time. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the management team have organised regular whole team meetings to check-in with everyone. Initially, there were wider team meetings and smaller geographical meetings once a week; these are now held every fortnight.

The management team have continued to virtually meet with key workers every six weeks to discuss project targets and progress. They have made it clear with key workers, as CSW have with the management team, to just do the best that they can and have encouraged the team to talk to each other. CSW have recognised that these are extraordinary circumstances and have wanted to make sure everyone's health and wellbeing is prioritised, and that the management team get this across during team meetings and one-to-ones. Other activities like quizzes have been organised by the team as an opportunity to get together and to focus on something other than work. This has had a positive response from all involved.



The team have had greater collaboration amongst one another which has improved communication and the quality of shared information, ideas, and resources on how to engage young people remotely. For example, a treasure hunt was set up by the team giving the young people an opportunity to leave their houses and safely engage with a project activity. Short online courses have also been shared as beneficial activities that can be completed remotely. A database has been set up for resources to be shared in one space where they are easily accessed by the whole team.

### Working with young people

The lack of face-to-face and outside interaction with young people has slowed down progress and made it difficult for key workers to give the same level of tailored support #Focus5 was designed to offer. However, the team wanted to make sure the support continued.

Initially, challenges arose around allowed methods of contacting young people. There were questions around the suitability of online video calling and this had to be checked with CSW to clarify the options available to the #Focus5 team. There was also a delay in receiving new guidance from ESF on what is allowed which led to some uncertainty at the start of the pandemic. Paperwork issues regarding some forms requiring a wet signature caused some difficulties at first, but the funder was able to confirm that consent in writing from a young person via an email was appropriate for the current circumstance.





During COVID-19, young people who have had no access to technology for communicating with their key worker or completing online tasks, have been provided with a laptop or tablet by #Focus5. This



has allowed the young people to have the equipment needed to engage with the project and continue progressing. A key worker was able to introduce a charity to the project that lends Chromebooks to young people in the region. As a result of COVID-19, these connections have proven to be very helpful, since access to technology is now more important than ever.

Key workers have observed how COVID-19 has affected young people's motivation. Two key workers highlighted how some young people do not want to get out of bed in the morning and do anything with their day because they are unable to meet people outside or go to places, and that it is difficult to counteract this. With many still being in bed until noon, key workers have had to adjust their schedules to contact them later in the day.

In addition to reduced motivation, many are not comfortable in working with the key worker online which has meant key workers have found it challenging engaging with many young people during this time. Other downsides of remote working include the extra time and difficulty of helping young people with tasks, such as completing applications with time-limits, remotely.



*I've found it difficult to engage with young people during this time. There's a challenge around IT – sometimes it's easier to be next to them when they're completing online applications. – Key worker*



One key worker said that some young people who were enrolled in college have dropped out because they have not been able to cope with online studying and have found this form of learning difficult for vocational courses.

However, in a few instances the switch to remote interaction has meant that a new cohort of young people who would not feel comfortable meeting up in-person were more interested in participating in the project. One key worker mentioned that an autistic young person they have been working with was unable to have a conversation on the phone before lockdown but is now able to talk to them on the phone, making significant progress. It can also be a time efficient way of initiating an interaction with a young person, especially if they live far from where the key worker is based. This highlights the flexibility needed in the future for all young people on the project.

It is clear that for the majority of clients #Focus5 will return to face-to-face meetings post-pandemic as they are more personal and better for confidence-building or because those young people do not feel comfortable video calling. However, for a minority the online methods have suited them and so #Focus5 will include this as an option post-pandemic, depending on the circumstance and preferences of the young person.



## Progression for young people



Flexibility as always with this project, has been key to sustaining progress for young people. Two key workers mentioned that some young people have taken to short online courses that they can do in their own time independently and that this is their preferred way of progressing during the pandemic, compared to phone calls.

Key workers have found it helpful to coach young people on anxiety and stress, which has been heightened during the pandemic. They have talked to young people about the benefits of taking a break from social media and the news and reminded them that they can still go outside and maintain social distancing. Reduced employment opportunities due to COVID-19 do not seem to have hampered progress with young people. Key workers thought this was because many on the project needed to spend significant time addressing their barriers to employment before they could progress.

### Referral Process

Throughout the project there have been occasional difficulties in receiving appropriate referrals. It is thought that this in part due to a lack of understanding from some referral agencies, especially those with high staffing turnover, regarding the purpose of the project and the targeted outcomes. In addition, three key workers mentioned that although consent is required from the young person when referring them to the project, there are instances where the young person does not recall what the project is about, or sometimes that the referral was agreed. This has meant that key workers have travelled to young peoples' homes only to find that they are not aware of the project and are not interested in participating.



The team developed a “Charter of Expectations” for young people, key workers and referral agencies. Organisations who wish to refer young people to #Focus5 are encouraged to read this Charter of Expectations to ensure their young person is eligible for the project. However, four of the five referral organisations interviewed were not aware of the Charter of Expectations, so it is clear more work needs to be

done to ensure organisations engage with it. The team have acknowledged this and are working to amend the charter and make it more visible and accessible on the website, highlighting the suitability criteria, which should help referrers who are more pressed for time. However, key workers also acknowledged there will probably always be a few inappropriate referrals no matter how clear the eligibility criteria, due to the lack of availability of alternative provision to support young people.

Two referral organisations interviewed were keen to highlight how well organised they perceived the #Focus5 referral process. There were differences in opinion on the strength of communication with #Focus5 staff, with two referral organisations saying they are not informed as to whether a young person has been successfully contacted by #Focus5 or not, and they would like to be more involved in the contact stage with the young person.

### Marketing and communications role

The introduction of a marketing and communications role in the #Focus5 team has been seen to add value to the project. The management team commented on how the new team member is a good fit for the project as they are professional but also informal, which works well when interacting with young people. They have been able to work on the website by improving the layout and wording and have also been able to utilise social media and post regularly during the pandemic. A 'Lessons Learnt' document has also been created by them in a visually engaging format and shared internally and externally. The team are trying to make more accessible online video content for key workers and young people, with the marketing and communications role leading on graphics and the video design. A three-minute video on how to get good sleep has recently been created and attained a positive response from young people and the #Focus5 team.



### Inductions

Since the last evaluation reporting phase, one new key worker has joined the team. When asked about the induction process, this key worker commented very positively on the support provided when they first started the role during COVID-19. This suggests the restructured induction process is working well. The new key worker said there was a clear structure to their induction and a checklist including what needed to be covered i.e., online training and policy reading, which gave clarity to the role. There was also flexibility around the induction; it could be tailored to the new member depending on what they would find most useful to focus on. Initially, there were daily check-ins to ensure the new member did not feel isolated and understood what they were supposed to be doing. The induction period was felt to be the correct timescale so by the time the key worker started picking up referrals, they were well prepared. Continuous support has been available from the management team and other key workers, who have been available for any questions.

### Cross-cutting themes

- RQ5. Does it actively promote gender equality and equal opportunities?
- RQ6. Is sustainable development effectively integrated into the delivery of the project?

The project has continued to have a strong emphasis on encouraging sustainability. CSW Group have continued to participate in the SOS-UK Green Impact programme, which has been incorporated into the team's work during COVID-19 and several awards have been achieved during this time. Green



Impact has given everyone the opportunity to be involved and bond as a team and it has helped the wellbeing of the team during the pandemic, especially when work with young people was not forthcoming, as it is something that is practical, giving a sense of achievement.

The sustainability action groups are still present and have widened so that delivery staff are present too, and not just the management team. This has kept sustainability in the forefront of everyone's minds. The management team highlighted how sustainability had always been a cross-cutting theme in #Focus5 but now it has been cemented and accepted as something that is interwoven into the project, not just an add-on or requirement.

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The team have continued to work hard to promote equality and diversity, which is evident in the range of young people on the project. To further support those with specific disabilities, the team have recently changed their website to be more accessible by including the function to change the colour and font of text. Employer, education, and training providers all agreed that #Focus5 promotes gender equality and equal opportunities.



### 3. PROGRESS

#### Outputs

**Table 3.1: Target project output versus project outputs achieved**

Outputs	Total project target	Target up to Q1 2021	Achieved up to Q1 2021	Per cent of Q1 2021 target achieved
Total number of participants	920	781	742	95%
Number of men	460	404	388	96%
Number of women	460	375	348	93%
Number who are unemployed, including long-term unemployed	182	142	143	101%
Number who are economically inactive, including not in education or training	737	627	599	96%
Number with disabilities	182	211	255	121%
Number from ethnic minorities	23	24	28	117%

Outputs against targets can be seen in Table 3.1 above. The project is more or less on target for total participants, having engaged 742 participants by the end of Q1 in 2021 compared to the target of 781. This is despite the COVID-19 pandemic affecting project participation for many young people.

Since the last evaluation in 2019, the team have made significant progress in reaching more female participants, with females making up almost half of participants at the end of Q1 2021. At the beginning of the programme, there were significantly more male participants, so the management team have encouraged key workers and referral organisations to prioritise female participant sign-up, which appears to have been successful.

The number of people on the project who are unemployed and economically active are more or less as targeted. As in the last evaluation, the project has reached a higher number of individuals with disabilities and those from ethnic minorities than targeted.

The team have learnt a lot since the start of the project and implementing learnings throughout delivery has helped the team to progress with targets. The fact that the project is almost on target during COVID-19 is a testament to the dedication of the #Focus5 team.



## 4. OUTCOMES

- RQ1. Does it move unemployed/inactive young people into sustained education or training?
- RQ2. Does it move unemployed/inactive people into sustained work or self-employment?
- RQ3. Does it break down identified barriers, even for those who do not progress into work or learning?

### Participant outcomes and impacts

Targeted outcomes and impacts can be seen against actual outcomes and impacts in figures 4.1 to 4.5. All the outcomes are above their target percentages except “participants will submit a work/learning/volunteering application” which is slightly under. This is understandable given the COVID-19 pandemic and the reduced amount of employment and volunteering opportunities, alongside the additional mental health barriers that the pandemic has created. The achieved impacts are slightly above their targets except “number who were economically inactive engaged in active job search on leaving” which is the same percentage as the 2019 evaluation, and lower than targeted, at 11 per cent as opposed to 27 per cent. In addition to the impact of COVID-19 as outlined above, this is thought to also be in part due to the same reason as last time; many participants would like to get a job and would like continued support to help them achieve this once they start searching, so do not want to be exited from the programme at that point.

Figure 4.1: #Focus5 outcomes – employability

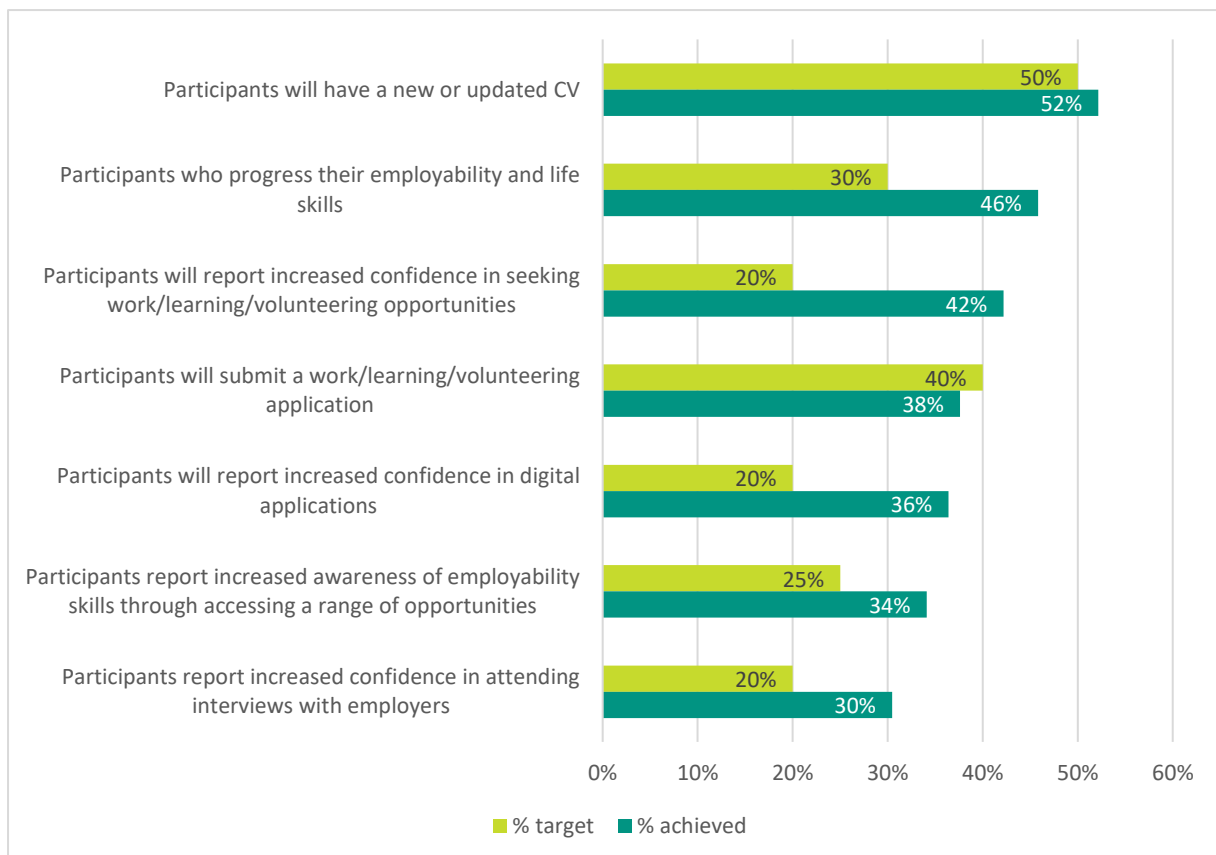


Figure 4.2: #Focus5 outcomes – barriers

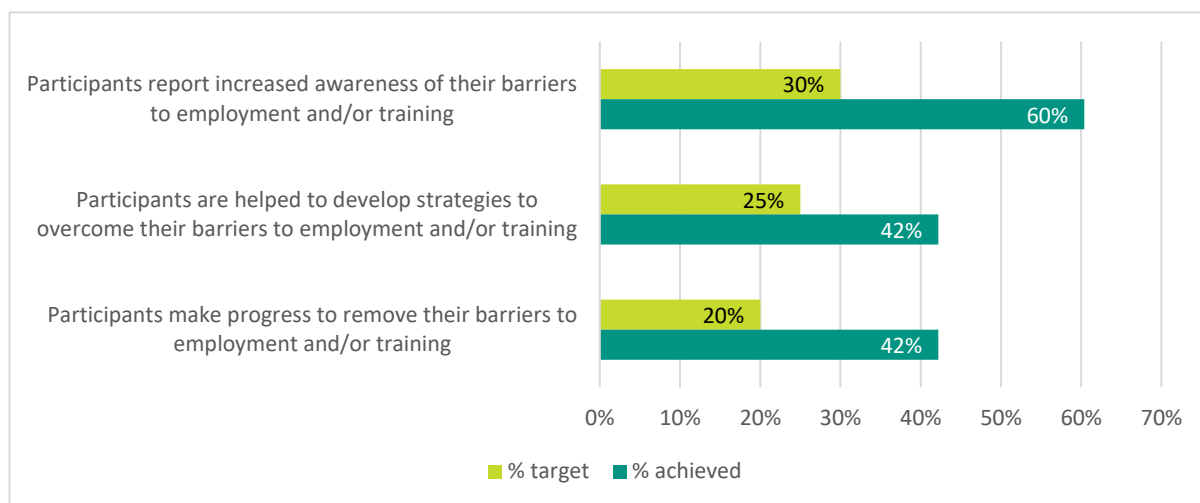


Figure 4.3: #Focus5 outcomes – goals, strengths, and aptitudes

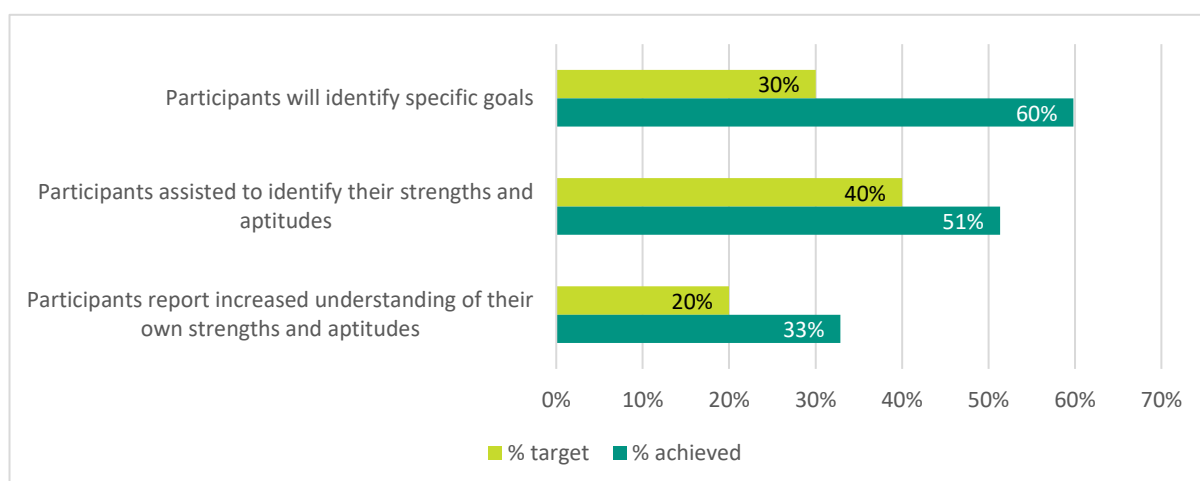
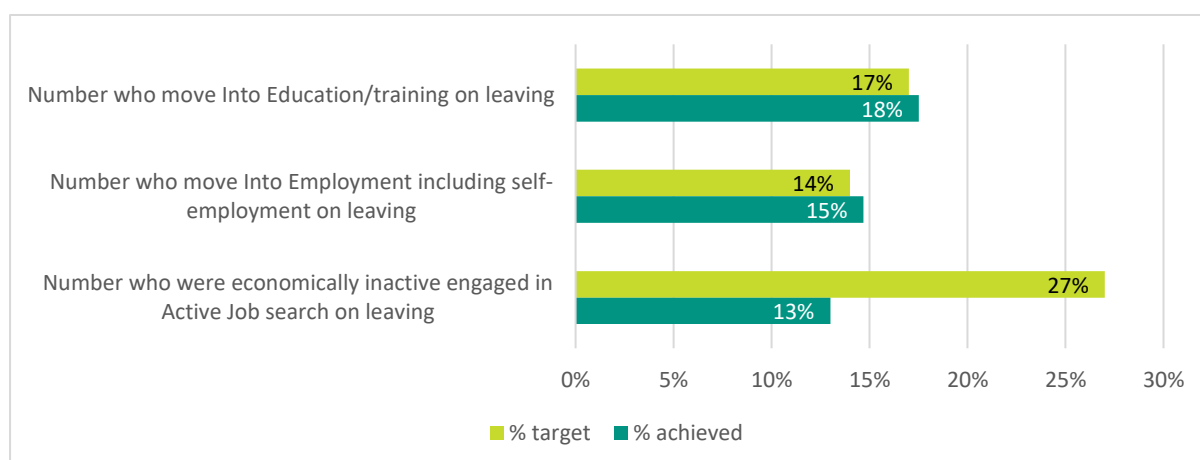


Figure 4.4: #Focus5 impact results – on leaving the project

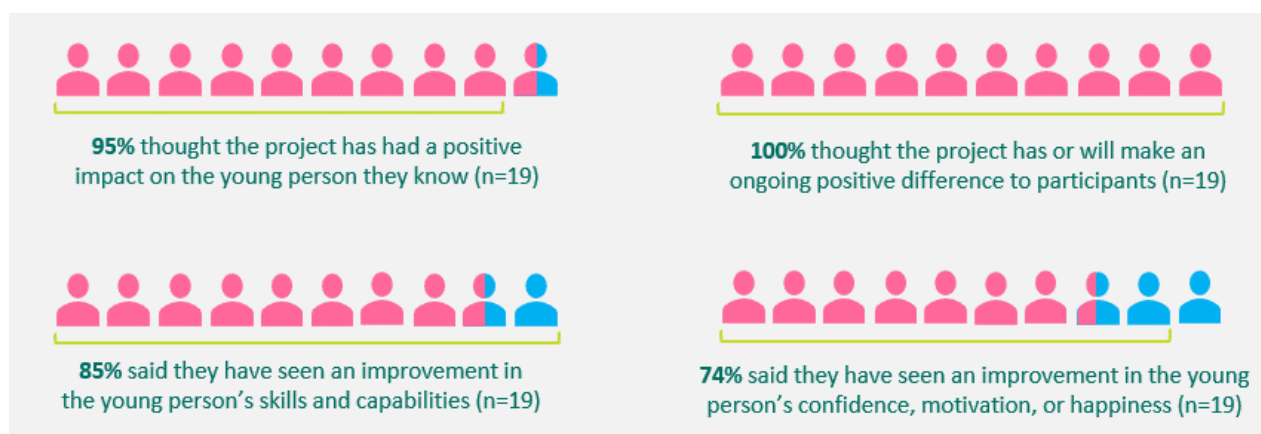


Employer, education, and training providers and the wider support network were asked about the long-term effects of the project on participants. The responses to the surveys can be seen in Figures 4.5 and 4.6 below.

Figure 4.5: A rating from employer, education and training provider survey respondents (n=10)



Figure 4.6: Ratings from the wider support network survey respondents on statements (n=19)



The positive adult input from #Focus5 key workers has been recognised by the wider support networks of participants. It has enabled young people on the project to build their confidence and resilience and feel valued. Respondents praised the project's ability to help young people have a positive outlook, a sense of purpose and direction, be proactive, create a CV, and set goals for their future.

One respondent mentioned that the young person they know is now aware of more options available to them and has a better understanding of employment and further education opportunities and how to access them. They know how to prepare for the next stages of their life and engage with education after a significant break. This is because of the trusting relationship built with their skilled key worker, who is flexible to their needs.

“ With [the key worker's] gentle but proactive approach, my daughter completed a CV that she was proud of and made an application to college. She has now started a college course and I feel that the help my daughter received helped a great deal in getting her where she is now. – Wider network survey respondent ”



*It's unique in what it offers, it plays a crucial part in building resilient, happy, and confident young people. – Wider support network survey respondent*



### Wider Outcomes

- RQ6. Does it support young people to participate more in their community?
- RQ7. Does it improve CSW Group's and partner organisations' capacity and capability in working with these target groups?

### Management team

As a result of the changes in delivery, the team have recognised the benefit of online communication and how it can reach certain young people and lead to efficiencies. Going forward, the team wish to implement a blended service of in-person and online meetings, depending on client preference and circumstance.

### Key workers

Many of the key workers' IT skills have improved over the last year due to the change in working practices because of COVID-19. The team are now easily able to virtually meet which saves a lot of time. One key worker said that because they have not spending as much time travelling, they have more time to reflect on best practise and the most effective ways of working with their young people. More information and resources are now shared between the team. In addition, several key workers have had more time to complete training and personal development. For example, one key worker has been able to complete courses in Domestic Violence, Suicide Awareness, and Autism & Employment during this time and has looked at different possibilities for training young people.

### Employer, education, and training providers and referral organisations

#Focus5 has had a wider impact on associated organisations, with employer, education, and training providers commenting positively on the project's effects, with all of those surveyed stating that they have benefitted from improved relationships with other organisations (Figure 4.7 below).

*Figure 4.7: A rating from employer, education and training provider survey respondents (n=10)*



Survey respondents were also asked to describe how #Focus5 had benefitted their organisation. Common themes include the engagement of students, further transitional support for post-16 students, support over the summer holiday period, and freeing up staff time at schools.

A referrer was able to confirm that the project has influenced wider activities and strategy in the region by creating a network between different organisations who support young people.

## Counterfactual

In the absence of the project, most referrers said that there would have been an increase in disengaged young people who are NEET. Some may not have been eligible for other support provision in the region and would have been without the one-to-one support that #Focus5 provides. All referrers recognised that these young people would not have had the same level of support available to them and instead may have looked to other ways to feel valued. Two referrers said that there would have probably been an increase in mental health problems and crimes in the region without the #Focus5 project.



*#Focus5 is absolutely invaluable. – Referral organisation*



## Value for money

- RQ8. Is the project good value for money?

The spend per participant for #Focus5 is £2,742 and 15 per cent of participants go into employment. This compares favourably to six other current BBO projects based in England whose spend per participant varies from £2,021-£3,802 and percentage into employment varies from 3 per cent to 29 per cent. This suggests the #Focus5 project is providing good value for money.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Data gathered by ERS from BBO projects they are currently evaluating. Projects have given permission for these figures to be used.



## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

The project is progressing well and it is clear that the model is appropriate and successful in addressing the needs of the young people in the region. Due to the nature of the programme, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented a significant challenge in engaging young people and has prevented certain activities from taking place. The project team have clearly actively applied learnings to improve effectiveness and efficiency and have worked hard to keep supporting young people during this time. This has meant they are now on track with all of their output targets and the majority of their outcome and impact targets.

The concluding responses to the research questions can be seen below.

**RQ1.** Does it move unemployed/inactive young people into sustained education or training?

**RQ2.** Does it move unemployed/inactive people into sustained work or self-employment?

It is clear that the project is moving unemployed/inactive young people into education, training and work.

**RQ3.** Does it break down identified barriers, even for those who do not progress into work or learning?

It is clear that breaking down barriers for young people has been a big focus of the key workers. 42 per cent of participants have made progress to remove their barriers to employment and/or training. Evidence from the employer, education, and training provider survey and wider support network survey, along with anecdotal evidence from key workers also corroborates this.

**RQ4.** Does it actively promote gender equality and equal opportunities?

The project has clear strategies in place to tackle gender equality and equal opportunities. The team have continued to exceed targets for involvement of disabled people and ethnic minorities. The project has done well to engage close to 50 per cent female participants.

**RQ5.** Is sustainable development effectively integrated into the delivery of the project?

The project team are very dedicated to integrating the cross-cutting theme of sustainable development into project delivery. They have been instrumental in setting up a sustainability action group and the Green Impact initiative across the whole of CSW. The team report that the theme is now firmly embedded within the project and staff are active and enthusiastic in their approach to these issues.

**RQ6.** Does it support young people to participate more in their community?

The project tries to support young people to participate more in their community but due to COVID-19, restrictions have made it difficult for this to happen.

**RQ7.** Does it improve CSW's and partner organisations' capacity and capability in working with these target groups?

There is evidence to suggest that the project has improved CSW's expertise, capacity and capability with regards to working with vulnerable young people.

## RQ8. Is the project good value for money?

Comparisons with other BBO projects suggest #Focus5 is good value for money.

### Recommendations

The majority of recommendations from the 2018 and 2019 interim reports have been implemented and the team are very proactive at gathering their own feedback and responding to it, in order to ensure continual improvement. There are only a small number of suggestions:

#### Referral and sign-up process

- Continue to progress with updating the Charter of Expectations and the visibility of key referral criteria on the website.
- More two-way communication between schools and #Focus5 could ensure those suitable are introduced to the project as soon as possible and made aware of the support available to them.
- Consider ways of improving communication and understanding between project staff and referrers. This will help the team to better understand the kind of involvement the referrer would like and supports with verifying that consent from the young person has been obtained.
- Ensuring structured updates about whether/how the young person has progressed are provided to all referrers organisations would help referrers follow up with young people not accepted onto the project and ensure they receive alternative support.
- Making sure referral organisations are aware that during the referral form/process they can request if a young person needs to work with a female key worker.



*It's an invaluable service and they're working very hard. They're doing the best they can in the circumstances. – Referral organisation*



If the project were to be continued in a future iteration, the following suggestions could be incorporated:

- The age range of young people eligible for the project could be extended up to 24. This could help care leavers and those who have been involved with the criminal system to access a support programme where they can progress towards education or employment.
- More key workers on the team would enable young people to start the project, as demand currently outstrips capacity.



*I think it's an excellent project. It's really needed. It's really useful and I'm glad it's still running. I'll be disappointed when it stops! – Referral organisation*

