MILLION HOURS FUND EVALUATION

Interim report

July 2025

RSM

CONTENTS

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC)	A voluntary written agreement between a person involved in anti-social behaviour and one or more agencies, such as the local authority and police, aimed at preventing further anti-social behaviour.
Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)	Any behaviour that causes distress, alarm, or harassment to others. It can include both criminal and non-criminal actions, e.g. vandalism, graffiti, fly-tipping and littering, noisy neighbours, and threatening, harassing or inconsiderate behaviour.
Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan	A 2023 Government initiative aimed at tackling anti-social behaviour across England and Wales. It sets out an ambitious approach to work with local agencies, providing them with the tools to address anti-social behaviour and restore the right of people to feel safe and proud of their local areas.
Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)	UK Government department supporting culture, arts, media, sport, tourism, and civil society and youth across England.
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)	UK Government department responsible for housing, communities, and local government. Name changed in July 2024 from Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).
Dose-Response Analysis	A method used to describe the change in effect on an outcome caused by differing levels of exposure to a particular variable or intervention.
Grant Management System (GMS)	Platform for managing grants awarded by The National Lottery Community Fund.
Leaders Unlocked (LU)	A group of young evaluators trained to conduct site visits, working in partnership with RSM UK Consulting LLP (RSM) on this evaluation.
National Youth Guarantee (NYG)	Over £500m investment ensuring every young person in England has access to regular out-of-school clubs and activities, adventures away from home and opportunities to volunteer by 2025.
Police Crime Commissioner (PCC)	Elected official in England and Wales responsible for ensuring local police meet community needs.
Police Community Support Officer (PCSO)	Uniformed police staff member supporting local communities and policing, sharing some powers with police officers.
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	A child or young person has special educational needs and disabilities if they have a learning difficulty and/or a disability that means they need special health and education support.
The National Lottery Community Fund	A non-departmental public body responsible for distributing funds raised by the National Lottery to support community projects across the UK.
Value for Money (VfM)	The extent to which the resources used (including financial inputs) are minimized while achieving the desired outcomes.
Voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations	Non-profit organisations operating independently from Government for community benefit (e.g. charities, community groups, Community Interest Companies, social clubs, sports clubs, and voluntary organisations).

MILLION HOURS FUND BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Million Hours Fund (MHF), which will run until 2026, is part of the previous 2022 to 2024 Conservative Government's **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Action Plan** setting out a range of policies and programmes to tackle the issue of ASB across England and Wales. Tackling ASB is important because research has shown it can have negative impacts on individuals' emotional and financial wellbeing, on their behaviours and health, and on local community cohesion[1]. Part of the ASB Action Plan is to provide **at least one million extra hours of youth services** with Government funding in 'ASB hotspots' in England, which The National Lottery Community Fund match funded. These hotspots are based on youth population and Police information on numbers of incidents of ASB. Activities funded must take place in or benefit young people living in one or more of eligible areas.

The MHF supports existing 'open access' youth services[2], funding additional youth workers, volunteers, venue hire and resources. This increases opening hours or session availability each week and helps organisations to provide extra support to young people in areas where they may be at risk of ASB, whether as victims or offenders.

In February 2022, the government announced the National Youth Guarantee (NYG), with over £500m investment to ensure that 'by 2025, every young person in England should have access to regular out of school activities, adventures away from home and opportunities to volunteer'. Part of the NYG promises to 'level up' the delivery of youth service activities in target areas across the country. The MHF complements the NYG. The MHF has a total funding allocation of £22m, with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) committing £11m and The National Lottery Community Fund match funding a further £11m.

The MHF is being delivered in two phases.

* **The 'Summer Funding programme'** (Phase 1) committed £3.7m to help 427 grantholders expand their offerings for young people over the summer holiday period (3 July – 4 August 2023), providing small grants of up to £10,000. Although the summer funding primarily focussed on the summer holiday period, grantholders had up to 12 months to spend the funding. A summary of the findings relating to the Summer Funding phase is included in Annex B – Summer Funding Summary – Summer Funding Survey.

* **Phase Two** of the MHF is delivering up to £17.4m, providing grants between £30,000 and £100,000 to grantholders from December 2023 to March 2026. Delivery start-dates vary, as some grantholders received grant confirmation as early as December 2023 and others as late as April 2024. Some will complete their delivery in March 2025, while the majority will finish in March 2026. Phase Two is the focus of this report.

RSM UK Consulting LLP (RSM), together with Leaders Unlocked (LU), were commissioned by DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund to conduct a process and impact evaluation of the MHF. This interim report brings together evidence gathered from various sources and presents this against key process and impact research questions, detailed in Annex C. To explore the impact of the MHF on young people, a dose-response approach was used by the evaluation team. This approach examines whether the regularity and duration of participation in MHF funded activities leads to differences in young people's outcomes and impacts of interest, including wellbeing, building relationships, and participation in ASB. The evaluation also uses contribution analysis to assess whether the MHF ToC holds true or not. Annex C discusses the methodology in detail. This report is the first of two interim reports (the next of which is due in September 2025) and covers the first year of delivery of the MHF with data collection between January to October 2024.

This interim report, along with the subsequent interim and final reports, will only evaluate Phase Two of the MHF delivery and will not include detailed analysis of the summer funding programme. This is because the purpose, grant amounts available and length of grants in the summer funding programme were different from those in Phase Two and are therefore not comparable.

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[1] See for instance Home Office (2023): Anti-social behaviour: impacts on individuals and local communities. Available online: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/impacts-of-anti-social-behaviour-on-individuals-and-communities/anti-social-behaviour-impacts-on-individuals-and-local-communities#wider-impacts-beyond-the-individual (accessed 22 January 2025).

[2] Open access youth services are activities that young people can attend without the need for referrals or prior registration. These activities are designed to be free from barriers to access.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The MHF aims to achieve outcomes for:

- **MHF grantholders**, their staff and volunteers, such as increasing their capacity to deliver youth activities, increasing their skills and knowledge and in turn their ability to understand and meet young people's needs;
- **Young people**, such as increased confidence, life skills and practical skills, increased wellbeing, positive relationships with grantholder staff and volunteers and in turn reductions in the risk factors and increases in the protective factors they experience for ASB[3]; and
- **Local communities**, such as improved perceptions of young people and improved community integration.

This first interim evaluation report draws on: survey data from young people attending MHF activities and from staff and volunteers of organisations receiving MHF funding; grant monitoring data reported to The National Lottery Community Fund; and interviews and group discussions with young people, grantholder staff and volunteers, and local and national stakeholders. It uses this evidence to explore what MHF has achieved in the 11 months from the start of Phase Two in December 2023 to October 2024, when data collection for this report concluded.

1.1 Key findings about the MHF

Using these sources, the report identifies the **following key findings about the MHF**, what it delivers, and the outcomes it has achieved to date.

Monitoring data up to the end of September 2024 suggests that the **MHF has enabled grantholders to deliver at least 899,227 hours of additional youth activities**.[4] The achievement of anticipated early outcomes for youth organisations and their staff is supported by the evidence available for this report, which covers the period from the start of Phase Two of MHF in December 2023 to the completion of data collection for this report in October 2024. These outcomes include the ability to expand services, develop skills, and improve organisational reputation. There is a mixed picture with regards to anticipated outcomes for young people. These include shorter term outcomes like access to and participation in positive activities, connections with staff and volunteers, and increased confidence, and longer-term outcomes like increased wellbeing and life and practical skills, among others. This mixed picture is unsurprising as many of the longer-term outcomes in particular were not expected to materialise substantially in the period covered by the data collection for this report. However, there is currently no evidence that suggests these outcomes will not be achieved by the end of the MHF.

Grantholder experience of the MHF and what they deliver with their grants:

- Consistent with feedback The National Lottery Community Fund receives on many of its other programmes, MHF grantholders had a **very positive experience with application, set up and MHF delivery processes**: this includes, the clarity of and length of time it took to complete of the grant application process, the support received from The National Lottery Community Fund during application, and communications with The National Lottery Community Fund after application.
- Grantholder organisations generally **expanded their existing youth provision** by adding extra opening days or hours. The three most prevalent ways in which grantholders planned to use their MHF grant were (one) paying for youth worker time; (two) purchasing equipment for service delivery and other resources and; (three) hiring venues for activities.
- Grantholders have different perceptions of what **ASB** is. Grantholders and young people, to varying degrees, include loitering in public spaces, playing loud music, or graffiti as examples of what they

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[3] Reducing reported instances of youth related ASB is one of the MHF's assumed longer term outcomes and impacts although it is not one of the MHF's stated goals.

[4] This figure is based on monitoring data reviewed by The National Lottery Community Fund team, who make every effort to verify data accuracy. Once monitoring data is received from individual grantholders, The National Lottery Community Fund funding officers validate the data and implement additional checks such as liaising with the grantholders to query their submitted sumbers if they do not seem accurate. The RSM evaluation team replicated the calculation with the data provided by The National Lottery Community Fund and confirmed the same number of hours. However, due to ongoing monitoring and validation checks, it is possible that data changes occur outside the monitoring period up to 30 September 2024. The calculation is as follows: For each grantholder calculate the Average number of young people per hour x Total number of hours. Then add all figures together to calculate the total number of additional hours delivered. RSM has no oversight over the collection and validation of monitoring data.

believe to be ASB. However, some perceptions also include actions typically classified as criminal offences in their definition of ASB, such as knife crime.

- Almost four in five MHF grantholders used the funding to offer **sports and informal physical activities**. However, evidence from interviews indicates grantholders are using these activities to attract young people through the door. Once in, grantholder organisations provide a combination of other activities including mentoring, volunteering and youth social action.
- Grantholder interviews highlighted **varying levels of engagement from young people with their activities**. Many grantholders are struggling to meet the high demand from young people, with some having to place young people on waiting lists. Conversely, a few grantholders are facing challenges in engaging their target numbers, requiring more continuous outreach and promotion. Those finding it easier to engage young people tend to be extending their existing hours or days, rather than introducing new activities or targeting new audiences.

Grantholders' outcomes reported to date:

- The funding allowed grantholders to expand their services and increase staffing and volunteer numbers, in line with expectations reflected in the ToC. Some reported that MHF enabled them to **operate more sustainably**, and transition from using ad hoc support or zero hours contract staff to offering formal contracts, which has provided consistency and stability. Others used the funding to provide support they could not have otherwise offered. Examples included detached youth work, targeted support for young people rather than general community work, or specialised services for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- Some grantholders reported that delivering MHF funded activities **strengthened their reputation and visibility within their communities**. This increase in recognition led to greater demand for their services beyond MHF activities and, in some cases, enabled them to successfully apply for additional funding by demonstrating their impact on young people.
- Grantholder staff and volunteers developed **professional and practical skills** through their MHF grant. Grantholders reported being able to invest in training and development, such as training in safeguarding, food hygiene, first aid, and mentoring. Some staff and volunteers gained formal qualifications, such as sports coaching certifications. Grantholders noted that young volunteers have gained valuable insights into potential career paths and acquired work experience to support future job or university applications.

Young people outcomes reported to date:

- Through a quantitative dose-response study[5] and qualitative discussions with young people, this evaluation aims to assess the extent to which young people attending MHF activities achieve the outcomes outlined in the MHF Theory of Change (ToC, see Annex A for the full ToC). Interviews with grantholders are used to provide additional context. A study employing dose-response analysis aims to detail the relationship between a dose (an activity funded by MHF, or multiple activities) and the resulting response (outcomes for young people). It does this by examining how differences in activity frequency relate to outcomes, with the hypothesis that greater participation leads to better results. However, as an observational method, it identifies associations rather than proving causality by investigating, where available, identifiable trends that may suggest a link between participation in the MHF activities and its outcomes, and the variation for young people with different characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, frequency of attendance). It is therefore important to account for differences in risk levels among individuals, as those more "at risk" may receive more interventions. Without fully controlling for such factors - observable or not - findings may be biased. While statistical adjustments (e.g., regression) can address some disparities, unobservable factors like family or peer influences may still skew results. To examine this dose-response relationship, we formulated a set of Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) that the young people survey was designed to address (refer to section 4.2.2 for a detailed explanation of the variables used and the full analysis).
- Overall, there is **evidence of varying strength that MHF activities impact young people's attitudes and behaviours in different ways**. At this interim stage, our analysis does not provide a conclusive explanation of these findings. However, it has revealed intriguing trends that will be further investigated in future data collection and evaluation reports. The main trends identified are listed below.
- Young people who attend MHF activities more frequently report:

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[5] Please see Annex C – detailed methodology, subsection young people survey for further information on this approach.

- o **higher confidence to say no to friends**, thus avoiding peer pressure;
- o **higher emotional skills and empathy**. This is reinforced by findings from interviews and group discussions where young people reported **improvements to their mental health,** attributing it to the supportive environment in grantholders organisations and the structured activities delivered by them. Engaging in activities like boxing and employability workshops gave them a sense of achievement and purpose, **positively impacting their emotional wellbeing**;
- o **high levels of involvement with ASB activity**, specifically, annoying strangers and participating in fights with other young people. These young people also tend to hang out outside shops or on the streets at night, and litter in the streets most frequently. Interviews with grantholders indicated that some young people attending the MHF, referred to them due to ASB and gang involvement, continue facing systemic issues. The MHF offered these young people positive activities and role models, but external factors can still drive these behaviours;
- o **negative feelings about school or work**. In interviews young people highlighted that they prefer attending MHF activities over school, partly due to bullying experiences and the perception of schools as sites of ASB. Grantholders also noted that schools are reportedly sites of ASB, which may contribute to young people's negative perceptions of the educational environment. Additionally, schools refer students with behavioural issues to grantholders, which may further influence these negative perceptions; and
- o that they **do not trust staff; do not feel listened to; and do not feel safe**. Interviews with young people and grantholders highlighted different experiences. While the predominant theme for young people was that relationships with staff and volunteers were broadly positive, examples of some reporting that staff were strict or that they did not feel that staff listened to them were cited. Grantholders generally observed positive outcomes, with young people developing trusted relationships with staff and confiding in them about personal issues. However, some young people struggled to trust adults due to past negative experiences, impacting their ability to build these relationships.

The main body of the report uses the data available to explore these findings further. As noted above, however, there are findings that the evaluation cannot explain at this interim report stage. Additionally, the evaluation has not yet collected sufficient information to comment on outcomes for local communities. This is the first interim report, with another interim report in Autumn 2025 and a final report in Autumn 2026. The remaining reports will use further survey and interview data to learn more about the outcomes and impacts achieved for grantholders, young people and communities and the role of MHF in achieving these. More details on the next steps for the evaluation are discussed below.

1.2 Next steps for the evaluation

Based on evidence gathered to date, it is too early to make recommendations for MHF or for similar, future programmes. Below is a list of the next steps the evaluation will take. They will help the evaluation to understand the findings in this report in more detail and to gather further insights into the outcomes and impacts MHF delivers, and how MHF delivers them. These steps will help to identify relevant recommendations for DCMS, The National Lottery Community Fund and other funders. The evaluation will:

- **Review and revise data collection approaches**, survey questionnaires, and interview topic guides to gather more data on the context in which outcomes for young people occur, and why. This review and revision of data collection approaches and the questions we ask will allow the evaluation to better track and understand outcomes, the role that MHF plays in achieving them, and the types of activities that grantholders deliver. It will also allow the evaluation to explore the extent to which MHF grantholders are using MHF funding to deliver activities they otherwise would not have delivered and how MHF impacts on grantholders' sustainability, if at all.
- **Seek to collect local community and stakeholder feedback from a wider sample** of grantholder locations. The evaluation will also explore whether grantholders that have already been interviewed and who mentioned working with local partners could provide contact information for their local partners for interviews. This will enable the evaluation to explore local community outcomes and impacts that are currently a gap in the available evidence base.
- **Provide more clarity on the definition of ASB** when conducting data collection activities with grantholders. The lack of clarity on what behaviours grantholders perceive as ASB leads to inconsistent data collection with grantholders. This inconsistency impacts our ability to analyse the data effectively and to draw robust conclusions.
- **Collate a good practice set of steps for DCMS funding**, based on views grantholders have about the application and communication processes of the MHF.

2. METHOD

2.1 Evaluation overview

RSM and LU conducted quantitative and qualitative primary data collection with stakeholders and analysis of secondary data to address the core research questions. The research questions cover a **process evaluation** and an **impact evaluation.** Annex C provides a list detailing the extent to which this interim report addresses these questions. Process evaluation questions examine who applied for the MHF, stakeholders' experiences of MHF design, set up and delivery and who the MHF reached. Impact related questions explore what outcomes and impacts the MHF achieved for young people taking part in activities, for the organisations taking part in the MHF and for the communities in which MHF funded projects are located. Additionally, the impact evaluation seeks to understand stakeholders' views of what constitutes ASB and how the MHF impacted on ASB and the factors that decrease the risk factors or increase the protective factors for ASB.

To explore the impact of the MHF on young people, a **dose-response approach** was used by the evaluation team. This approach uses young people survey data to examine whether the regularity and duration of participation in MHF funded activities leads to differences in young people's outcomes and impacts of interest, including **wellbeing**, **building relationships**, and **participation in ASB**. The report also uses **contribution analysis** to assess whether the MHF ToC holds true or not. Further detail on the method, including analysis approaches and data tables, can be found in Annex C – Detailed Methodology Our approach incorporates **youth voice** through engaging a group of **young evaluators** to conduct interviews and focus groups with young people through site visits at MHF funded projects.

This section provides an overview of the data used in this report, key data limitations and what they mean for the interpretation of findings in the report, and the next steps in the evaluation.

2.2 Data sources for this interim report

This section provides an overview of the data sources used to produce this interim report[6].

- **An online survey sent to all 238 grantholders.** 144 responses were used for analysis, with a response rate of 61 per cent. The survey was live from 22 April to 10 May 2024. It asked grantholders about how they planned to use their grant, the profile of young people they intended to reach and the expected outcomes of activities. It also asked grantholders about their experience of their grant so far.
- **31 in-depth interviews with grantholder staff.** Interviews covered further detail of the activities that grantholders deliver, how these activities benefit young people, their organisations and the wider communities. Interviews took place between August and October 2024.
- **An online survey of young people participating in MHF activities.** 430 responses were used for analysis. The young people survey asked about the profile of young people, their interactions with MHF activities, and outcomes including relationships with staff and volunteers, wellbeing, life skills and practical skills, and involvement in ASB. The survey was undertaken between July and October 2024.
- **Four site visits with grantholders** (one each in Blackburn, Bristol, Lambeth and Newcastle). Site visits consisted of in person interviews with young people taking part in MHF activities (41) and group discussions with young people taking part in MHF activities (three). Site visits were conducted by young evaluators who engaged young people directly and were supported by a staff member from LU. Site visit data collection covered how young people experienced the activities they took part in, what those activities were, and the outcomes the young people have experienced.

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[6] The evaluation conducted a group discussion with older people in one of the site visit locations to gather insights into community perceptions of young people, ASB and MHF funded activities. The team plans to conduct further community group discussions for future site visits but has not drawn on data from this individual group discussion for this interim report as the insights from it are not in any way generalisable to wider MHF activities. The evaluation conducted an online survey of all 427 Summer Funding grantholders. 137 responses were used for analysis. The survey asked about grantholders' experiences with their Summer Funding grant, the young people they worked with, and the outcomes and impacts achieved. This report focusses on Phase Two of MHF. Because Summer Funding grants were shorter and of a smaller monetary value than Phase Two grants, and because the Summer Funding had the specific purpose of providing young people with access to positive activities during the summer holiday months, the findings from the Summer Funding survey are not comparable to the findings about Phase Two. However, a summary of Summer Funding findings is included in the appendices.

- **Three interviews with The National Lottery Community Fund staff and one with DCMS staff** focused on the aims of the MHF and how it was designed and delivered.
- **11 interviews with local stakeholders**, primarily other local Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations working with young people and local councillors. These interviews covered the local context for ASB, perceptions of young people and awareness of the MHF.
- **Monitoring information** collected by The National Lottery Community Fund from 171 grantholders including the number of additional hours of youth work delivered, total and average numbers of young people that attended activities, and total number of new young people that attended activities.

2.3   Limitations

This section details some of the main limitations of our evaluation, including challenges encountered with data collection and analysis, and their implications for this report's findings.

- **Timing and extent of primary data collection for this first interim report:** Data collection for this interim report took place less than a year after the first grant award from The National Lottery Community Fund, and for many grantholders, around six months after they began delivering activities. This timing limits the observable outcomes, primarily to those affecting grantholders directly (e.g. their skills and capacity to deliver activities) and some for young people, such as access and participation in activities. This means the evaluation cannot yet comment conclusively on the extent to which young people attending MHF activities have achieved outcomes such as emotional wellbeing, life skills and practical skills, and the reduction of risk factors and increase in protective factors for ASB. This is notwithstanding emerging evidence of varying strength against these ToC outcomes. Additional data collection set out in section 1.2 will be used to address this limitation. The evaluation initially planned ten annual community group discussions across site visit locations, sourced through grantholders. However, few grantholders in our site visit sample could suggest local groups, resulting in only one group discussion with community members in Lambeth. Consequently, there is limited data on community perceptions of young people and feelings of safety and belonging. By the September 2025 interim report, we expect to have completed more grantholder interviews and data collection with community members, providing more evidence of community outcomes.
- **Stakeholder interview limitations:** Arranging stakeholder interviews proved more challenging than anticipated. Grantholders involved in the site visits had fewer stakeholder contacts than expected, particularly of individuals with oversight or opinions on MHF delivery, involved in referrals to MHF activities or understanding ASB in their area. Additionally, identifying relevant contacts online, such as Police Crime Commissioner (PCCs), Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), schools, or local authorities, was difficult. By the September 2025 interim report, we intend to have consulted with these stakeholders to provide more meaningful and relevant feedback on MHF.
- **Young People survey limitations:** The Young People survey was administered as an anonymous survey link as this was the most expedient way to deliver the survey without holding personal information of young people. This means we were unable to assess overall response-rates due to the base size being unclear as it is not possible to ascertain which responses came from which MHF project. This also means we cannot make definitive statements on how representative the findings are of the overall cohort of grants (although we can estimate the regional spread based on self-reported location information from young people). The parental / guardian opt-out process excluded grantholders that engage young people below the age of 16 through detached youth work as many do not have contact information of parents / guardians and were therefore unable to complete the opt-out process.
- **Does-response:** As mentioned above, the dose-response approach examines how differences in activity frequency relate to outcomes, with the hypothesis that greater participation leads to better results. However, as an observational method, it identifies associations rather than proving causality. It's important to account for differences in risk levels among individuals, as those more "at risk" may receive more interventions. Without fully controlling for such factors - observable or not - findings may be biased. While statistical adjustments (e.g., regression) can address some disparities, unobservable factors like family or peer influences may still skew results.
- **Attribution issues**: MHF is one of several funds delivered by both DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund. Participating young people may have taken part in other programmes before, during, or after their engagement with MHF. Although each programme / fund aims to develop a specific set of skills, they are all designed to enhance young people's personal skills. This creates an attribution challenge for the evaluation, whereby it is difficult to be sure whether the outcomes achieved by participants are due to their participation in MHF. To mitigate the attribution problem, the evaluation uses contribution analysis. Contribution analysis is a theory-based evaluation approach. It uses mixed-methods data sources to assess the strength of evidence available against a series of contribution

claims which are designed to understand the extent to which an intervention contributed to observed outcomes.

- **Differences in how management information is collected:** Information on the total number of young people engaged was not originally part of grantholders' monitoring requirements. This means grantholders vary in their methods of collecting data on the total number of young people attending MHF funded activities. Consequently, we are unable to report on the total number of young people attending activities funded by MHF in this interim report. We are, however, able to calculate and report on the total number of young person hours delivered (see 3.3).
- **Lack of secondary data for reporting on ASB reduction impacts:** The evaluation team consulted with police forces in West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire to determine if police have access to data on youth ASB incidents that could be used to track changes over time. Police confirmed that such data does not exist, as ASB rates are typically recorded without details on those involved, if recorded at all. This means the evaluation cannot track changes in recorded youth ASB rates. However, other metrics around outcomes for young people can serve as indicative evidence of the likelihood of reduction in ASB.
- **Defining ASB:** A common theme in collecting people's experiences and perspectives on ASB is the variation in how ASB is defined and what activities and behaviours constitute ASB. This has been evident through interviews with grantholders, stakeholders, young people, and staff from DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund. Therefore, it is important to consider that when people discuss ASB in interviews, they may often be referring to different things, which introduces a level of subjectivity and inconsistency in the data collected. This limitation will remain throughout the entire evaluation. Mitigations include presenting the ASB White Paper definition to interviewees as part of our interviews and thematic analysis of qualitative findings based on interviewee context.
- **Lack of counterfactual group:** The feasibility of a comparative counterfactual analysis was explored during the inception phase: a comparison group was not identified. Due to the absence of a comparator group, the evaluation cannot make a robust assessment to determine whether or not the changes (both positive and negative) in any intended outcomes are directly attributable to MHF programme activities, as opposed to other factors.

2.4 Next steps of the evaluation

The next interim evaluation report is planned for September 2025. In advance of that report, the evaluation team will conduct further interviews with grantholders and local and national stakeholders as well as site visits and group discussions. To inform the next interim report, additional waves of the young people survey and grantholder survey will be conducted in 2025 to collect further first-hand evidence of outcomes and impacts. The evaluation team will also conduct further site visits, including interviews and group discussions with young people. To complement this data, the team will explore ways to collect more information from members of local communities.

3. PROCESS EVALUATION FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents **findings relating to our process evaluation**, drawing on interviews with grantholders as well as with DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund staff, the grantholder survey, and management information. It focuses on the MHF design, set-up, and delivery, exploring reflections on experiences and suggestions for improving future, similar funds. **This interim report focusses particularly on the experiences grantholders had with the MHF, who the grantholders reached, and the types of activities they delivered.** This section focusses on findings for Phase Two of the MHF. Findings for the Summer Funding phase of MHF can be found in Annex B – Summer Funding Summary.

3.2 Fund design and set up (RQ1, RQ2, RQ11)

This section includes details on the **MHF design and rationale**, as well as the **application and selection process for grantholders**, based on interviews with DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund staff. For context, the MHF design and set up was all done at an extreme pace, so it included imperfect elements. These choices were considered the best option given the tight timings. This section also incorporates insights from grantholders on the application process and project set-up.

3.2.1 Fund design

The rationale behind the MHF's design was largely shaped by the <u>Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan</u>[7], a joint initiative between the Home Office and the (then) Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

During the design phase, The National Lottery Community Fund focused more on delivery objectives, as the policy objectives for MHF had already been set by government, and DCMS determined the language around eligibility and selection criteria to reflect the ASB focus.

A recurring theme from The National Lottery Community Fund staff interviews was that **earlier involvement in the process** would have allowed them to share learnings from other programmes and would have given them a better understanding of the fund's aims. This could have enabled them to develop materials more efficiently and helped with various decisions including defining ASB, deciding on taking an open access versus ASB approach, and the calculation of additional hours. For MHF, this was not possible due to the speed in the development of the fund but early involvement of funders such as The National Lottery Community Fund could be considered for other funds.

Many aspects of the MHF design were shaped by the short timeline and limited resource. The National Lottery Community Fund had only two months to develop all materials and systems, a process that typically takes up to six months. Initially, The National Lottery Community Fund had hoped to involve young people more in codesigning materials, contributing at the customer testing stage, and participating in grant management or support and learning. However, due to time and budget constraints, this did not happen in practice.

"I think there are lots of hidden things about the resource involved. If the eligibility criteria and the design of it is not completely clear…If we are not clear on it, then other staff are not clear on it and customers are not clear on it. My biggest thing is that we should be involved way earlier in the design, because we can see the whole journey. When it comes to website, application, customers reading/understanding, they are going to have issues." – The National Lottery Community Fund staff interview (June 2024).

There were challenges around determining applicants' eligibility for the funding. An organisation could apply if the young people coming to their service live in an eligible postcode. However, applicants faced difficulties in determining their eligibility because they often do not know the postcodes of the young people they support until they arrive for the activities, or sometimes not at all, as they do not collect that information.

DCMS staff, reflecting on the design process, noted that more consideration could have been given to the ASB dimension of MHF. The National Lottery Community Fund staff said there was a risk that the term "young people at risk of ASB' was unclear, and due to the rapid timeframes, there wasn't sufficient time to fully determine how ASB relates to the Fund and how it could be used to define the funding criteria. They

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[7] Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan: <u>Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan (accessible) - GOV.UK</u> (Accessed 22/10/2024).

felt that as ASB was a substantial aspect of the application process, its inclusion could have been improved.

3.2.2 Grantholder application and selection

At the application stage, MHF was oversubscribed, with large numbers of applicants coming through in the last few days. There was more interest than anticipated, therefore, in reaction to the high volume of applications received, the team introduced a new approach of doing an initial sift of applications to prioritise applications of which they would fully review. Applications could be paused to allow funding manager review, to ensure the portfolio of selected applications had sufficient spread across geographies, grant application size, and equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).

The initial review of applications focused in particular on a project's focus on ASB and Value for Money (VfM). DCMS did not provide a clear definition of 'good' or 'bad' VfM, which staff from The National Lottery Community Fund noted could have improved decision-making if defined from the start. However, The National Lottery Community Fund developed guidance for staff to calculate and assess VfM and included this guidance in its assessment manual for the MHF. Additionally, there was an unexpected significant spike in applications in the final days, surpassing usual levels from previous funds.

> *"We did not know it would be so oversubscribed as it was. Having to go out and assess applications as they were still coming in, you would not want to do that again- but we had to get funding out of the door… I don't think the rolling fund was right for this one, I know why we did it to get the funding out. Because we were so overwhelmed, we should have gone for a standard one. If we did a rolling fund in the future, we could be clearer to when closing it." – DCMS staff interview (June 2024)*

There was a discussion around whether to close the application window early due to the high levels of demand. However, early closure was decided against because this possibility was not clear to applicants and therefore would not have been fair to late applicants. The National Lottery Community Fund staff said that in retrospect it should have been made much clearer on the website for applicants that the programme had the potential to close early if the demand was high.

The selection panel format was considered crucial by both DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund. The panel evaluated applications based on the summary of the project, the number of additional hours of youth provision delivered, understanding of ASB, level of safeguarding of the grantholder, and VfM. To improve the process, it was suggested that panel meetings occur more frequently each month to reduce the volume of applications per session.

The involvement of a young person on the panel was considered extremely useful and worthwhile, and DCMS staff recommended that including additional young people in future funds would take the pressure off one individual and ensure the youth perspective is not missed if they are unable to attend the panel. Another suggestion was increasing the word count in the application text boxes, as the current limit restricted detail.

3.2.3 Grantholder application process

Motivation for applying for MHF funding

Grantholders were aware of the MHF from various sources, primarily mailing lists, newsletters, and social media from local VCS organisations, as well as through word of mouth from other youth organisations.

Grantholders shared their motivations for applying for the MHF grant. Most felt that the grant would provide an opportunity for their organisations to expand their services to **continue addressing issues related to ASB or other socio-economic challenges** faced by young people in their local communities, eg poverty, cost of living crisis, and unemployment. These organisations were generally expanding their existing youth provision by adding extra opening days or hours, rather than introducing entirely new projects or services, in alignment with the ToC.

Nearly half of the grantholders interviewed indicated that the **multiyear funding was a key driver** for applying. In the current funding climate for youth sector organisations, this influenced their decision, as there has been a reduction in long term funding for youth services from local councils, other government departments, and European Social Funding.

> *"The fact that it is three years funding, it's not a short-term fix. Often you get a pot of money and it's maybe for six months or a year. It means…our staff have that reassurance; our volunteers have that reassurance, and our service users have that reassurance." – Grantholder interview (July 2024).*

Grantholders' experience of the application process

According to the grantholder survey, overall, they had a **positive experience with all aspects of the grant application process.**

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with six aspects of the grant application process, and at least 82 per cent of responses for each outcome statement indicated satisfaction (either 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied'). The percentages of those who indicated satisfaction for each aspect are as follows:

- The overall value of the grant: 98 per cent (base=141);
- The overall clarity of the grant application process: 97 per cent (base=143);
- Clarity of written application instructions: 96 per cent (base=139);
- Length of time for transfer of grant funds: 94 per cent (base=141);
- Length of time it took to prepare and submit the grant application: 91 per cent (base=140); and
- Length of time between submitting your application and receiving a decision on the outcome: 82 per cent (base=142).

This sentiment was echoed in the grantholder interviews. Most grantholders found the application process **straightforward and reported no major issues, complaints or suggestions for improvement**. Many grantholders compared the application process with those they have completed for other funds, stating that the MHF process was much quicker and easier to complete. Several grantholders also mentioned their familiarity with completing The National Lottery Community Fund applications, such as National Lottery Awards for All, which made it easier for them to complete.

"It was very similar to an Awards for All application. They kept it as simple as possible. It was clear what to do and what they were expecting." – Grantholder interview (July 2024).

Most grantholders received notification of their successful application shortly after submission, though a few had longer wait times of up to four and a half months. The National Lottery Community Fund communicated the longer wait time via its website and automated email responses to queries about the MHF applications. According to The National Lottery Community Fund the longest wait times occurred due to the need to implement four additional decision panel meetings to deal with the higher than anticipated number of applications. This meant that the final decisions were made in March 2024, rather than January 2024, as originally planned.

In the grantholder survey, respondents reported **positive experiences with the support provided by The National Lottery Community Fund during their grant application process**. A total of 93 per cent (base=143) were either very satisfied or satisfied with the clarity of communications from The National Lottery Community Fund, and 90 per cent (base=135) were either very satisfied or satisfied with the speed of responses to their questions.

During grantholder interviews, all those who requested support from The National Lottery Community Fund with their application process said they felt well supported. They found the feedback and responses constructive, effectively addressing any queries.

3.2.4 Grantholder project set-up

Grantholders reported positive experiences with project set-up during interviews. Many attributed this to the design of MHF, with the fact that they were **delivering an expansion of their usual provision or an extension of a piloted project**, meaning the set-up process required minimal effort and ran smoothly. A few grantholders mentioned they were able to draw on lessons learned from similar previous projects, such as best practice for recruiting staff, which helped with setting up their MHF delivery at pace.

Only a few grantholders encountered major challenges during the set-up stage. Two grantholders specifically struggled to secure a facility that met their sporting needs, which posed a significant challenge for hosting their activities in the early months of delivery. This suggests that greater consideration should have been given to the availability of suitable facilities during the bid assessment process, ensuring such facilities were in place beforehand.

Grantholders' experience of staff and volunteer recruitment

According to the management information, **48 per cent of the 163 grantholders recruited new staff**, resulting in a total of 294 new hires, with an average of 3.7 new staff members per grantholder which recruited new staff. Additionally, **60 per cent of the grantholders recruited new volunteers**, bringing in a total of 409 new volunteers overall, averaging 4.2 new volunteers per grantholder which recruited new

volunteers. To determine if these outcomes are specifically due to MHF and not broader recruitment efforts, we will include related questions in future grantholder interviews.

According to interviews, many grantholders did not need to recruit any additional staff or volunteers to deliver their activities; instead, they extended the hours of their existing staff and volunteers to meet the increased delivery needs for MHF funded activities. In future interviews with grantholders, we will explore whether extending existing staff and volunteer hours was a temporary measure or a long-term, formal change.

Several grantholders, however, did need to recruit additional staff or volunteers, and most reported positive experiences with the process. However, two grantholders identified staff recruitment as their biggest challenge during project set-up. They were unable to fill certain roles and had to use alternative solutions, such as accessing support from a local VCS network to help fill these positions on a temporary basis.

"Three staff that were already delivering well were given additional hours…and we employed two more [staff members] to bring fresh perspectives and a fresh way of thinking." – Grantholder interview (July 2024).

Grantholders' experience of promotion and advertisement of MHF activities

During the grantholder interviews, they explained the variety of methods used to promote and advertise the MHF funded activities they deliver. The most common methods of promotion include:

- **Collaboration with local organisations:** Grantholders often promote their activities through organisations they have pre-existing relationships with such as schools, local councils, housing associations, VCSOs, and the police. Some use these partnerships to advertise their activities and services, whereas others receive referrals from these organisations for young people who may be eligible and could benefit from their project. One grantholder is an entirely referral-based service, through which they receive referrals for the local authority to support young people.
- **Social media:** Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat along with their own websites, are commonly used to promote activities.
- **Leafletting and posters:** Grantholders distribute leaflets and posters around their local area. Some also provide leaflets to local organisations, such as schools, for distribution.
- **Word of mouth:** Some grantholders noted that a large proportion of their young people learn about their activities through word of mouth, often from young people in their local areas or schools.

"We use Instagram, the club's website, TikTok – really the full range of social media outlets. We never get missed; people keep resharing across our different platforms. We also do a lot of flyers and going out into high schools and primary schools." – Grantholder interview (July 2024).

A few grantholders explained that they have not needed to do additional promotion, as they already have a strong reputation within the local area and an established network of young people who regularly engage with their organisation and quickly fill the available places for these additional hours. In future interviews with grantholders, we will explore the relative effectiveness of different promotion and advertisement methods in various circumstances and for different groups of young people.

3.3 Additional hours and types of activities delivered (RQ1, RQ3)

3.3.1 Additional hours

Monitoring data up to the end of September 2024 suggests that the MHF has enabled grantholders to deliver **at least 899,227 hours of additional youth activities**[8]. At this stage of the Fund, we anticipate it is

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[8] This figure is based on monitoring data reviewed by The National Lottery Community Fund team, who make every effort to verify data accuracy. Once monitoring data is received from individual grantholders, The National Lottery Community Fund funding officers validate the data and implement additional checks such as liaising with the granholders to query their submitted numbers if they do not seem accurate. The RSM evaluation team replicated the calculation with the data provided by The National Lottery Community Fund and confirmed the same number of hours. However, due to ongoing monitoring and validation checks, it is possible that data changes occur outside the monitoring period up to 30 September 2024. The calculation is as follows: For each grantholder calculate the Average number of young people per hour x Total number of hours. Then add all figures together to calculate the total number of additional hours delivered. RSM has no oversight over the collection and validation of monitoring data.

on course to surpass the planned one million hours. On average grantholders delivered 220.8 additional hours to an average of 24 young people per hour[9].

3.3.2 Types of activities being funded

Most grantholders (79 per cent, base=142) are delivering **sports and informal physical activities**[10]. Workshops[11] and drop-in sessions are also popular (58 per cent), followed by volunteering activities, including youth social action (44 per cent), and one-to-one support mentoring (42 per cent). The grantholders interviewed reflected a similar profile to those surveyed, with most delivering either sports focused activities such as football, cricket, basketball, and boxing, or running drop-in sessions and workshops.

3.4 Profile of young people who participate in the MHF

The grantholder survey collected data on the **age profile** of young people who they expect will participate in activities funded by the MHF, as detailed in Table 1. Grantholders had the option to select as many options as applied to them, which means the percentages do not total 100 per cent.

Table 1 – Expected age profile of young people (Grantholder survey, May 2024, base=143).

Age range	Number of grantholders (%)
11–12-year-olds	125 (87%)
13–14-year-olds	133 (93%)
15–16-year-olds	134 (94%)
17–18-year-olds	109 (76%)
18–25-year-olds with SEND	43 (30%)
Too early to say	3 (2%)

The survey also gathered data on the expected **demographic profile** of young people who will participate in MHF funded activities (Figure 1). Grantholders had the option to select as many options as applied to them, which means the percentages do not total 100 per cent.

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[9] In addition, with the summer funding, 123 grantholders delivered a minimum 37,301 total additional hours of youth provision. Extrapolating for all 427 Summer Funding grantholders, this would mean a minimum of 129,492 additional hours of youth provision were provided, on top of the 899,227 additional hours delivered by grantholders in Phase Two of MHF.

[10] Due to lack of clarity on what should be categorised as "sports and informal physical activities", grantholders may have differing understanding of what is included in this category. We will clarify this further with grantholders in future data collection.

[11] Although we did not ask for examples of the types of workshops the grantholders are delivering in the GH survey, the application data from projects provided examples. These including life skills workshops focused on qualifications and teambuilding, as well as workshops on anger management, stress coping mechanisms, and positive decision-making.

We will explore the demographic profile of the young people who have participate in MHF funded activities in future data collection with grantholders.

3.5 Fund delivery, including external factors impacting delivery (RQ2)

This section presents findings from the grantholder survey and interviews, detailing **what grantholders have delivered and their experiences of delivery**. It also incorporates insights from interviews with staff from DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund, exploring their experiences with project and grant management.

3.5.1 Planned funding usage

Figure 2 below presents an overview of how grantholders planned on spending the MHF grant. Grantholders had the choice to select multiple answer choices that applied to them, which means the percentages do not total 100 per cent. On average, grantholders selected five response options for this question.

We aim to further investigate how the funding has been used through additional grantholder interviews. This will include examining whether grantholders have been able to increase staff salaries in paying for youth worker time and whether they intend on retaining the additional youth workers recruited beyond the duration of the MHF delivery.

Figure 2 - Grantholder planned funding usage (Grantholder survey, May 2024, base=143).
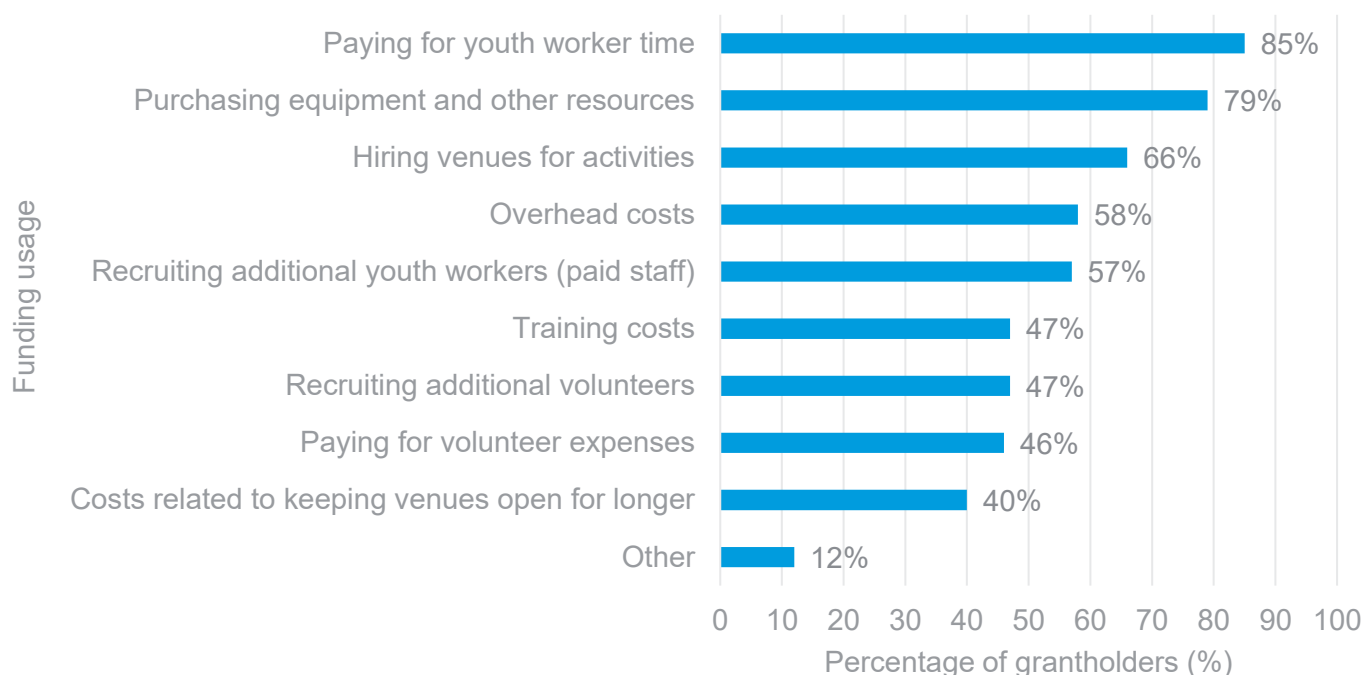
3.5.2 Managing the MHF delivery

The management process has been navigated well due to the **strong, familiar working relationship between DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund**. This has been facilitated by effective weekly meetings and open, honest communication. The National Lottery Community Fund typically manages most risks internally, flagging issues as needed. DCMS staff noted that, compared to other funds, no significant problems have arisen.

The experience of The National Lottery Community Fund's staff that worked on the Summer Funding in 2023 has contributed to a better understanding of the overall fund structure, which proved helpful in Phase Two.

3.5.3 Grantholders' experience of the MHF delivery

This section outlines grantholders' experiences in delivering their projects, highlighting both the factors that facilitate successful delivery and the barriers they encounter.

Partnership working

According to the grantholder survey, **38 per cent of respondents (base=144) are working in partnership with at least one organisation**. A partnership is defined as a formal or informal agreement with one or more organisations that may directly or indirectly support the delivery of Million Hours Funded projects. The number of partner organisations that grantholders are working with ranges from one to 15, with an average of 2.7 partners. 81 per cent of grantholders in partnership had previously worked with their partner(s) (base=54), indicating that most partnerships were not formed as a result of the MHF.

Through interviews grantholders explained that they are working in partnership with local organisations including the **police (specifically with Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)) schools, housing associations, and VCS organisations**.

In the survey grantholders were asked to select the roles of their partner organisations in project delivery. 65 per cent (base=54) of respondents use partners for recruiting and referring young people for project activities, 56 per cent for providing additional or enhanced activities, and 50 per cent for the provision of space or equipment to conduct activities. 87 per cent (base=54) of grantholders in partnerships surveyed agree or strongly agree that their 'partnership is essential to successful delivery of this project'. Meanwhile, seven per cent neither agree nor disagree and six per cent strongly disagree with this statement.

Through interviews with grantholders, we explored the roles of different local organisations in project delivery and the benefits of these partnerships.

- **Local police forces:** Many grantholders explained the importance of partnerships with local police to share knowledge about youth ASB to help them respond more effectively to ASB locally. Some grantholders involved police officers in their activities, such as basketball games and workshops on knife crime to help build trust between young people and the police. This approach aims to reduce negative perceptions of the police and empower young people with the knowledge on how to protect themselves from ASB and other crime.
- **Local schools:** For some grantholders schools play a key role in signposting and referring young people to their services, connecting young people to appropriate support. Several grantholders highlighted their involvement in bridging support between schools and their services, particularly regarding safeguarding and behavioural issues, providing a continuity of care for young people.
- **Local council:** A few grantholders are in contact with their local councils, particularly their safeguarding and youth and play teams. This allows them to understand the landscape of services being delivered in the local area, preventing duplication of efforts.
- **Local VCS and community organisations:** Some grantholders are working with local VCS organisations to deliver activities, such as working with the local Championship League Football team's community trust to deliver football activities and use their equipment or working with a sexual health organisation to provide guidance around sexual health. These partnerships also extend to promotional activities within the community, sending out leaflets to young people in their network.

In future grantholder interviews, we will explore the extent and structure of these partnerships, including the roles and contributions of partner organizations and their impact on the delivery of MHF-funded activities, their "added value", as well as the impacts on grantholders and young people.

Staff and volunteer knowledge and expertise

Through interviews, the majority of grantholders explained how staff and volunteer knowledge and expertise has facilitated the delivery of their activities. Many noted that their staff and volunteers often come from the same local community and share similar backgrounds to the young people they support. This shared experience provides them with a deep understanding of local needs and effective ways to engage young people. A few grantholders also emphasised that staff and volunteers' lived experiences allows them to relate to the young people on more of a personal level, helping to build trust and facilitate open and honest conversations with them.

"The kids have free and open conversation with the coaches and the volunteers… The coaches who deliver the programmes can relate to the children they are working with. They are from the areas that we're delivering in, they have been those kids on the streets before." – Grantholder interview (July 2024).

Youth led engagement

A common theme across the grantholders was providing **youth led or codesigned projects** which means that the young people coming to their sessions can participate in the activities they are interested in and therefore are more engaged. This finding was mainly relevant to grantholders that predominantly deliver drop-in sessions and workshops, as opposed to sports activities which tend to follow a more formalised approach.

"Consulting the young people at all times, we are always asking them- what they want to get from our sessions. We want them to feel a belonging to the space… We have an anonymous suggestion box so young people can feedback if they don't want to share it verbally. If we can take it on, we act on it." – Grantholder interview (September 2024).

Engagement with family members

Some grantholders are actively working to engage young people's parents and guardians, recognising the various benefits this brings to outcomes for the young people. These discussions typically occur informally before or after activities. Informal interactions with parents and guardians help build trust and reassure them about the support being provided and ensuring there is alignment in supporting the young people's development. Parents have also shared challenges related to their children, allowing grantholders to contribute to addressing concerns, such as worries about negative influences on the young people. We aim to determine if MHF funded additional hours enabled grantholders to do more extensive engagement with parents and guardians through future data collection with grantholders.

"We outreach to families and try to understand more about the children and invite them into our hub. We tell them the other activities we do and get them involved slowly… They sometimes express complications or

challenges their child is facing currently and we provide support when they come to us with these challenges." – Grantholder interview (July 2024).

However, two grantholders noted challenges in this approach, as most of the young people participating in their activities are older and often do not have their parents dropping them off or picking them up, making it harder to reach these family members for informal conversations.

Weather and seasonality of activities

A few grantholders highlighted concerns about the impact of weather and seasonality on the delivery of activities and engagement of young people. They anticipate a potential drop-in participation during the winter months due to cold weather which may make outside activities less enjoyable and darker evenings which may make young people feel unsafe traveling to and from activities. This issue will be explored further in the next reporting period once grantholders have experienced winter delivery and identified any strategies to mitigate this challenge.

"We do anticipate challenges when it comes to wintertime with shorter days and bad weather. Parents might not let the young people come out then. We will try to increase the hours during the weekends to enable us to hit our targets in the winter months." – Grantholder interview (July 2024).

Stakeholders acknowledge that summer has a reputation for being busy for demand for youth service and also spikes in ASB. However, there were mixed views on the reality of this observation when compared to the rest of the year. One stakeholder commented that there is more of a police presence in the summer, so the rest of the year has streets that are less patrolled or supervised. Stakeholders also said that there is a different cohort of young people that attend in term time. These young people are regular attendees during the week, whereas the summer provision is more unpredictable in terms of retention. Another seasonal factor that affects activity attendance is how young people do not like or are not allowed to walk or travel home in the dark evenings. This results in groups of young people who do not feel safe, leaving earlier in the evening during the winter months.

3.5.4 Engagement with young people

Grantholder interviews highlighted **varying levels of engagement from young people with their activities**. Many grantholders are struggling to meet the high demand from young people, with some having to place young people on waiting lists. Conversely, a few grantholders are facing challenges in engaging their target numbers, requiring more continuous outreach and promotion. Those finding it easier to engage young people tend to be extending their existing hours or days, rather than introducing new activities or targeting new audiences. In the next reporting period, we will explore the actions grantholders have taken to boost engagement with less engaged groups.

"Those who join our football, cricket or badminton programmes are more regular and consistent and they tend to bring others as well. A challenge we are facing is that at a point we have to say we do not have enough resource to support, or try and find them other activities to engage in." – Grantholder interview (July 2024).

Most grantholders reported having a **consistent core group of repeat participants each week**, with a few new attendees at each session. Some grantholders reported difficulties in engaging and retaining certain demographic groups, particularly girls and older youth (aged 16-18), while boys and younger participants have been easier to engage. These challenges were predominantly reported by grantholders running drop-in youth clubs. To address this, a few grantholders have adapted their approach, such as offering separate sessions for younger and older participants, as they have learned that older youth sometimes prefer not to attend activities with younger peers.

3.5.5 Grantholders' experience of grant monitoring

Overall, **most grantholders found the monitoring process straightforward and reasonable**, but with **some challenges noted around form usability**, as per the grantholder interviews.

Most grantholders appreciated the ease at which they found the forms to complete and appreciated the clear guidance and expectations from The National Lottery Community Fund, particularly when they had support from funding officers. Grantholders mostly found the process manageable compared to processes experienced with other funders, particularly for a larger sized grant. One grantholder, who usually faces challenges with detailed written reports due to a disability, expressed appreciation that this was not an issue with the MHF grant monitoring, which they found more accessible compared to other funders and resulted in less stressful completion.

"It was fine. Because with The National Lottery Community Fund you always have a grants officer it is always easy, and everything is clear about what is expected." – Grantholder interview (July 2024).

However, some grantholders raised concerns about not being able to save the form mid-completion, causing frustration when they needed to find or collect additional information and had to re-complete sections. While some grantholders had automated systems to manage data collection, a few struggled with specific aspects, such as counting individuals for activities without a registration system.

The National Lottery Community Fund staff mentioned that they trialled Microsoft Forms for MHF monitoring. This tool allows them to aggregate data across grantholders to provide an overview of MHF key figures. They acknowledged that although this new method has some feature issues for grantholders, it works well for analysis on the administrative end.

4.   IMPACT EVALUATION FINDINGS

4.1   Introduction

This section draws on young people and grantholder survey data as well as grantholder, stakeholder and young people interviews and group discussions to explore the **outcomes of the MHF on its intended beneficiaries to date**. Research questionsThroughout the rest of this chapter, we indicate which RQs are being addressed in each section.

4.2   Outcomes for young people (RQ6, RQ7, RQ8, RQ9[12])

The following analysis draws on the young people survey and uses interviews and group discussions with young people to provide context, examples, and where possible explanatory detail of how outcomes and impacts occur. It describes the **outcomes and impacts young people experienced** and then examines in more detail, where possible, what role the MHF had in helping to achieve these outcomes and impacts.

4.2.1   Young people outcomes

Demographic characteristics of the young people survey sample

The **first Wave of Young People survey was completed by 431 respondents**, collecting the basic demographic information described below. This has provided a **snapshot profile** of the young people attending MHF activities up to the beginning of September 2024.

- **Age:** Respondents were distributed across all ages. Most (73 per cent) were between 11 and 15 years of age, and the two most represented ages were 12 and 13 (18 per cent and 17 per cent of respondents for each age group).
- **Gender:** Almost two-thirds of respondents (60 per cent) reported being male against approximately a third (38 per cent) of female. The remaining two per cent preferred not to respond to the question on gender identity or reported their gender identity as non-binary (I do not identify as either male or female).
- **Ethnicity:** Almost half of respondents (48 per cent) described themselves as White, and the next largest ethnic group (25 per cent) was represented by Asian and Asian British respondents. Other ethnic groups reported were: Black, Black British, Caribbean or African (13 per cent), Dual or multiple ethnic groups (eight per cent), other ethnic backgrounds (three per cent), with almost two per cent of respondents not disclosing their ethnicity.
- **Geographical distribution:** Almost half of respondents (45 per cent) lived in the North of England (North West 19 per cent, North East 13 per cent, Yorkshire and Humber 13 per cent). A quarter of respondents (25 per cent) lived in the Midlands (West Midlands 15 per cent and East Midlands ten per cent), with the rest of the population spread across London (14 per cent), South (eight per cent) and East of England (seven per cent).

Activities and Outcomes

Frequency of attendance and engagement: Most (65 per cent) of young people attend MHF activities either 'once a week' (32 per cent) or 'two times a week' (33 per cent). For the other one-third, attendance went down as the number of activities per week went up, with fewer young people going to many activities each week. Only three per cent of young people attended 'more than five times a week'.

Over a third of young people (37 per cent) attended MHF activities three to four hours per week followed by 20 per cent of young people attending one to two hours per week and 13 per cent of young people attending five to six hours per week.

The trend shows that fewer young people attend for longer hours. Around four per cent of young people attend 15+ hours per week.

When asked about how participation in MHF activities in the last six months has changed, only four per cent of young people have 'decreased' their participation. Participation has either 'increased' (58 per cent) or 'stayed the same' (30 per cent).

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[12] The research questions can be found in Annex C, section 8.1.

Figure 3 - Graph showing weekly attendance of young people (n=430).

Percentage of Young People

Times per week	Percentage
Once	32%
Twice	33%
3 times	12%
4 times	11%
5 times	9%
More than 5 times a week	3%
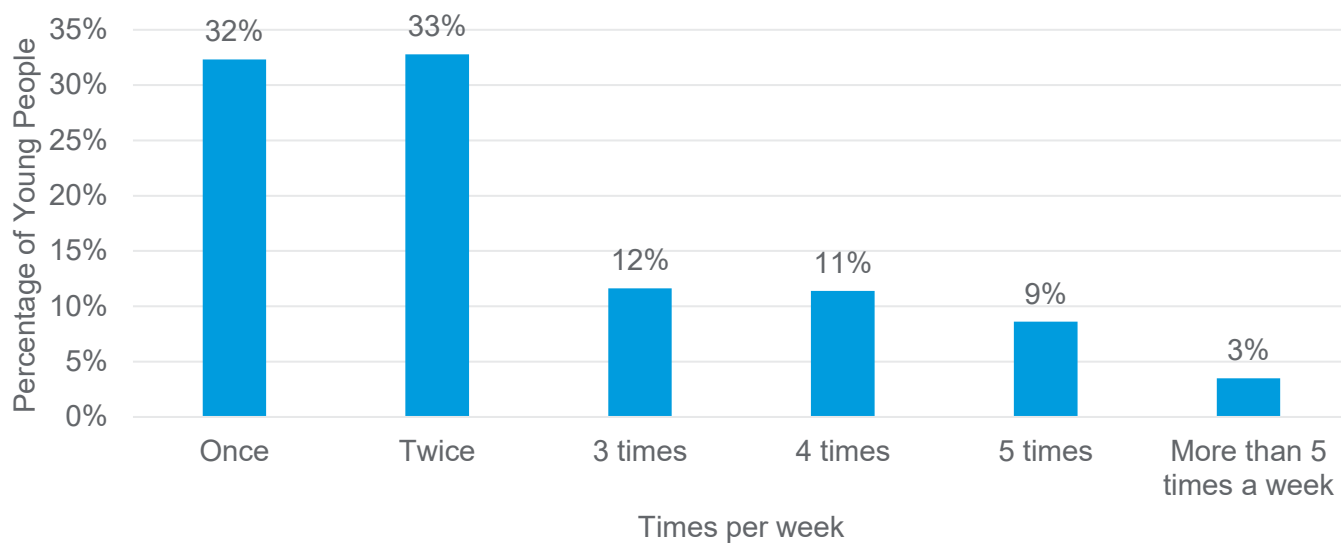
Figure 4 - Graph showing attendance of young people in hours per week (n=429)

Percentage of Young People

Hours per week	Percentage
1-2 hours per week	20%
3-4 hours per week	38%
5-6 hours per week	13%
7-8 hours per week	7%
9-10 hours per week	4%
11-12 hours per week	5%
13-14 hours per week	2%
15+ hours per week	4%
Don't know	6%
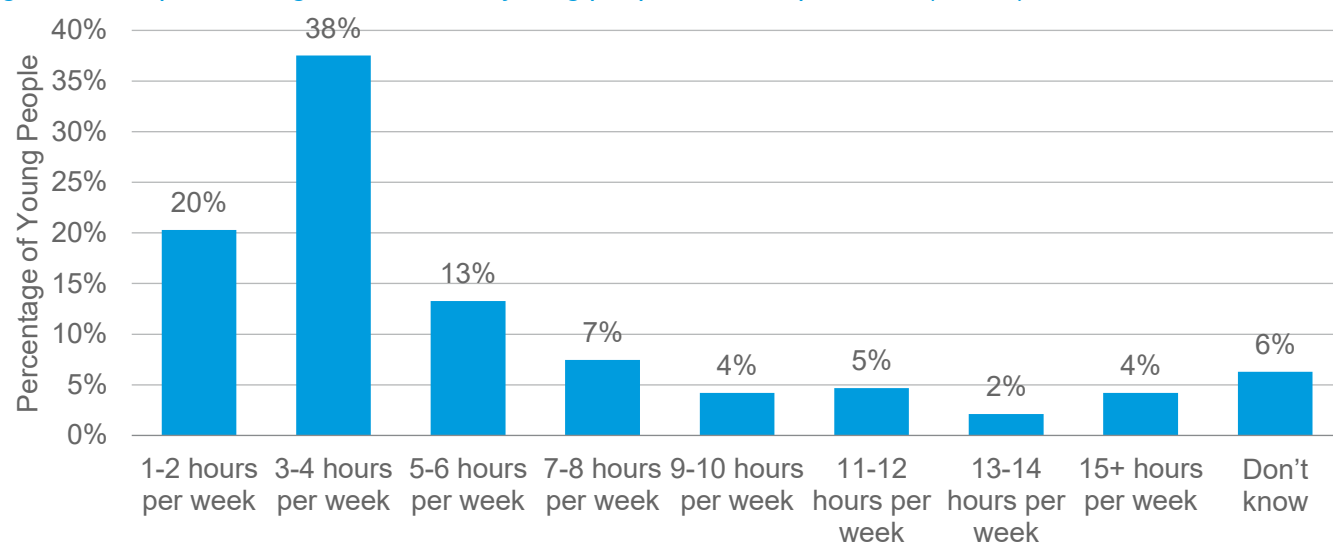
Table 2 - Heatmap of young people attendance

= The legend for Table 2 is a green to red colour scale. Green represents **high** numbers of young people and red represents **low** numbers of young people in attendance.

	1-2 hours per week	3-4 hours per week	5-6 hours per week	7-8 hours per week	9-10 hours per week	11-12 hours per week	13-14 hours per week	15+ hours per week	Don't know
Once a week	69	60	2						7
2 times a week	16	83	28	8	3	3			
3 times a week	2	10	11	13	4	2	4	2	2
4 times a week		7	10	9	3	12	1	3	3
5 times a week			5	2	6	2	4	8	10
More than 5 times a week		1	1		2	1		5	5

Type of activities attended: MHF activities attended by young people have been grouped into five main groups from the response options in the survey. These are: 'Sport and physical activity'; 'Hanging out' (with other young people or adults that work in the centre); 'Clubs and workshops' (eg science clubs, music clubs, book clubs or drop-in sessions eg cooking classes, or IT/media activities, eg radio, podcasts, etc.); 'Mentoring and volunteering'; and 'Various activities' (eg trips or a combination of activities). 'Sport and physical activities were the most popular (49 per cent) activity selected. This includes exercising, playing football and other sports, including cue sports such as pool and snooker, table tennis. 'Hanging out' (22 per cent) and 'Clubs and workshops' (20 per cent) are the second activity groups that young people attend the most.

Figure 5 - Graph showing type of activity (n=391)
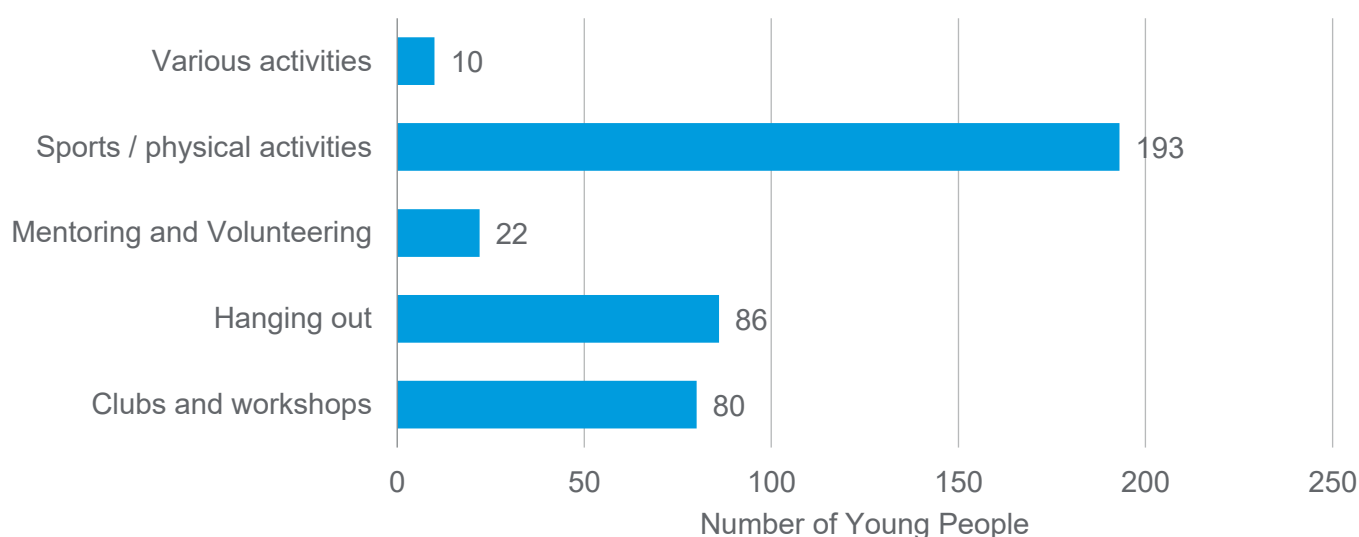
Wellbeing: The measure used to assess wellbeing was the Understanding Society Youth questionnaire. Young people were asked about how they feel about their school or work, appearance, family and friends. For each of these dimensions, they gave an answer reflecting how they felt on that day. Responses have been aggregated and grouped in a five-point scale from 'very high wellbeing' to 'very low wellbeing'. The majority (90 per cent) of young people reported their feelings towards the four wellbeing dimensions being

'very high' (30 per cent), 'high' (28 per cent) or 'moderate' (32 per cent). Less than ten per cent of respondents felt 'low' (less than nine per cent) or 'very low' (one per cent).

Most young people interviewed reported improvements to their mental health, attributing this to the supportive environment and structured activities. Engaging in activities like boxing and employability workshops gave them a sense of achievement and purpose, positively impacting their emotional wellbeing.

"My mental health has improved because I am more relaxed, and I feel happier. I used to be tired or anxious all the time, so boxing has had a big impact." – Young person interview (August 2024).

"It has made me more talkative and friendly, also feel more positive." – Young person interview (August 2024).

Confidence: The survey asked young people how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about their confidence in making new friends, trying new activities, talking to adults and saying 'no' to their friends since participating in MHF activities. Responses have been aggregated and grouped in a five-point scale from 'very high confidence' to 'very low confidence'. The majority (85 per cent) of young people reported their confidence being 'very high' (48 per cent), 'high' (38 per cent) or 'moderate' (eight per cent). Less than six per cent of respondents reported 'low' (less than five per cent) or 'very low' (one per cent) confidence level.

Interviews with both young people and grantholders support this finding. Many young people reported increased confidence from participating in MHF activities. They felt more confident speaking with people, making new friends, expressing themselves in front of others, and resisting peer pressure. Grantholders also noted that some young people with initially low confidence showed significant improvements as a result of participation in MHF activities. This was evident in their increased ability to express their views and opinions, and in how they have *"come out of their shell" – Grantholder interview (July 2024)*.

"Before I started coming, I wasn't speaking much to people, I had really bad anxiety and wasn't speaking, but coming here, its really helped with my confidence." – Young person interview (August 2024).

"I've got more self-confidence; I am happier, and I have made new friends that I hang out with outside of the gym." – Young person interview (August 2024).

Life skills: The measures used to assess young people's life skills have been taken from the Young People's Survey (YPS)[13]. This is a self-report survey used to assess young people's functional mental and behavioural skills in six domains of socio-emotional skill functioning (ie Emotion Management, Empathy, Initiative, Problem Solving, Responsibility, and Teamwork).

Functional skills are the best an individual can do with no additional support (for example, from youth workers in a provision setting), so are good indicators of how young people are likely to 'perform' in most life settings. Functional skills are relatively enduring socio-emotional skill traits that are transferred into and out of provision; they are not static, but change generally requires effort, practice, and patience. When the young people were asked to think about what usually happens in their life and describe how they see themselves in general, the following findings shown in the graph below emerged.

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[13] Young People's Survey (YPS) Technical Guide: YPS Tech Guide June 23 FINAL 2 (Accessed 28/10/24).

Figure 6 - Graph showing Young People life skills.
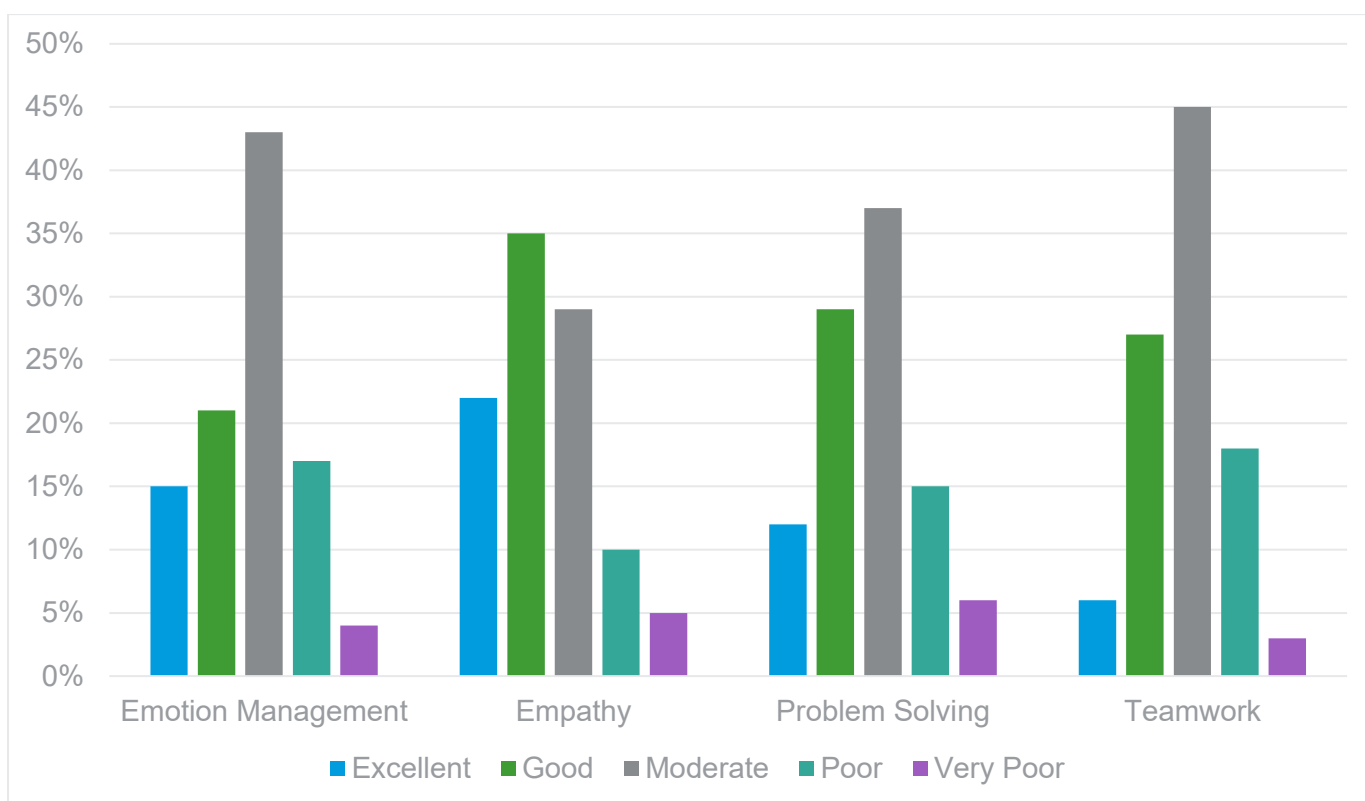
These findings suggest that the majority of young people attending MHF activities already have moderate to excellent socio-emotional skills. It is important to note that the survey results provide a snapshot in time and therefore they do not indicate an improvement or a change over time, whether this may be due to MHF activities or not. However, the high levels of empathy and emotional management, in particular, may indicate that the structured and supportive environment provided by the MHF is effective in fostering these critical life skills. The moderate to high levels of problem-solving and teamwork skills may also reflect the positive impact of MHF's engagement activities.

Relationship with grantholder staff and volunteers: Young people were asked to agree or disagree with statements about the relationship with staff at the organisation where they participate in youth activities. These included statements on trust, staff doing what they say they will do and staff listening to the young person.

Responses have been aggregated and grouped in a four-point scale of 'very good', 'good', 'poor' and 'very poor' relationships with staff. The majority (63 per cent) of young people reported having a 'very good' relationship with staff. 24 per cent of young people feel that they have a 'good' relationship with staff and less than two per cent of young people feel that they a 'poor' relationship with staff. Interesting to note that 11 per cent (approx. 46, depending on the individual statements) of young people reported having a 'very poor' relationship with staff. More analysis on this finding is presented in the dose-response analysis section 4.2.2 below.

When asked if they feel safe while participating in MHF activities at their youth organisation, most (62 per cent) young people feel 'very safe' and 27 per cent 'feel 'safe'. For all areas previously discussed (wellbeing, confidence, life skills), the lowest level of skills or most negative statements were reported by the smallest proportion of young people. Regarding feelings of safety, only one per cent of young people felt 'unsafe', while nine per cent felt 'very unsafe'. Although this is still significantly lower than the majority who feel safe, it highlights an important issue for the group of young people who did not feel safe during MHF activities. This aspect will be further investigated in future data collection.

ASB: The young people were also asked about the frequency of their engagement in ASB in the last year. Responses have been aggregated to show average level of ASB across the sample. A majority (90 per cent) of young people were involved in ASB activity 'never' (or almost never) (71 per cent) or 'sometimes' (19 per cent). However, around eight per cent of young people commit 'frequent' ASB, while only two per cent 'very frequently'. This aspect will be further investigated in future data collection by digging deeper into the drivers behind the frequency of ASB amongst those who do it.

Only a limited number of young people interviewed acknowledged prior involvement in ASB, such as bullying or engaging in physical violence. None of the interviewees explicitly indicated current participation in antisocial activities.

4.2.2 Dose response analysis and supporting findings

A study employing dose-response analysis aims to detail the **relationship between a dose** (an activity funded by the MHF, or multiple activities) **and the resulting response** (outcomes for young people). We recognise that the dose-response analysis does not address issues such as selection effects, but this approach allowed for an assessment of the potential impact that these effects might have on the results (e.g., by comparing the impact for those with various levels of engagement, characteristics, geography). To examine this relationship, we formulated a set of **Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs)** that the young people survey was designed to address (refer to Table 4 below for a detailed explanation of the variables used and the full analysis).

The analysis presented below provides an assessment of the KEQs using the dose-response approach. It also explores, where possible, any variation by demographic characteristics. The approach used to assess trends is outlined in Table 3.

Table 3 - Approach to assessing trends and categorisation of evidence.

Answer to Key Evaluation Questions	Threshold of variation[14]	Categorisation of evidence
No evidence / no variation	<1.5%	
Partially	1.5-5%	Weak evidence
Partially	5-10%	Emerging evidence
Yes / No	10-20%	Moderate evidence
Yes / No	>20%	Strong evidence

Table 4 - KEQs and strength of evidence assessment (overleaf).

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[14] For example, if the variation between two variables (eg frequency of attendance and level of wellbeing) is three per cent, the answer to the relevant KEQ would be 'partially', and the evidence categorised as 'weak evidence'. For future analyses, it is important to note that the thresholds defined for evidence strength and variation may be updated based on the specific sample size and context of the survey. In cases where a sufficiently large sample size is achieved (eg n > 30 for each category of responses), the current thresholds should be reassessed and validated to ensure they accurately capture meaningful patterns. Conversely, for smaller sample sizes or specific subgroups with unique characteristics, adjustments to these thresholds may be necessary to account for potential variability or noise in the data. Any such updates will be made to ensure the analysis remains rigorous and contextually appropriate.

	Key Evaluation Question	Dose-Response combination survey Qs	Dose-Response evidence
Wellbeing and Confidence **(Q9 & Q10)**	1. Do those who attend more activities report higher levels of wellbeing and confidence?	**Dose:** Activities attended - times a week (Q5), hours per week (Q6). **Response**: Outcome in wellbeing and confidence (Q9 & Q10). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	No, there is moderate evidence indicating a negative relationship between attending more frequently and feeling good about school or work (Q9a).
			Partially. There is emerging evidence indicating a positive relationship between attending more frequently and confidence to say no to friends (resilience to peer pressure) (Q10d).
	2. Is there evidence that those attending a specific activity report higher levels of wellbeing and confidence?	**Dose:** Type of MHF activities (Q8). **Response**: Outcome in wellbeing and confidence (Q9 & Q10). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	Partially. There is emerging evidence indicating a positive relationship between attending sports and physical activities with positive feelings about appearance (Q9b).
	3. Is there a relationship between changes in participation levels over the past six months and better life skills?	**Dose:** Activities attended - change in participation (Q7). **Response**: Outcome in wellbeing and confidence (Q9 & Q10). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	No evidence / variation.
	4. Does the geographical location of where activities are delivered influence levels of wellbeing and confidence?	**Dose:** Location (Q2). **Response**: Outcome in wellbeing and confidence (Q9 & Q10). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	No clear evidence / variation (and sample size is too small to be able to indicate a variation for certain groups of respondents)
	5. Is there evidence that the quality of relationships with GH staff / volunteers affects wellbeing and confidence?	**Dose:** Relationship with the GH staff / volunteers (Q11). **Response:** Outcome in wellbeing and confidence (Q9 & Q10). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	No evidence / variation.

Relationship with GH staff / volunteers (Q11)	6. Do those who attend more frequently develop a trusted relationship with GH staff / volunteers?	**Dose:** Frequency of activities attended - times a week (Q5), hours per week (Q6). **Response**: Developed trusted relationship with staff (Q11). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	Partially. There is weak evidence indicating a negative relationship between attending more frequently and ability to trust staff (Q11a), feeling listened to (Q11b&c), and feeling safe (Q11d). No variation.
	7. Is there evidence that those attending a specific activity develop a trusted relationship with GH staff / volunteers?	**Dose:** Type of MHF activities (Q8). **Response**: Developed trusted relationship with staff (Q11). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	No clear evidence / variation.
	8. Is there a relationship between changes in participation levels over the past six months and development of a trusted relationship with GH staff / volunteers?	**Dose:** Change in participation (Q7). **Response**: Developed trusted relationship with staff (Q11). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	No clear evidence / variation.
	9. Does location influence the development of a trusted relationship with GH staff / volunteers?	**Dose:** Location (Q2). **Response**: Developed trusted relationship with staff (Q11). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	No evidence / variation (and sample size to be able to indicate a variation for certain groups of respondents).
Life skills (Q12)	10. Do those who attend more frequently report better life skills?	**Dose:** Frequency of activities attended - times a week (Q5), hours per week (Q6). **Response**: Life skills (Q12). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	Partially. There is emerging evidence indicating a positive relationship between attending more frequently and higher emotional skills (Q12a) and empathy (Q12c).
			Partially. There is weak evidence indicating a negative relationship between attending more frequently and having higher levels of impulsivity / reflection (Q12d).

	11. Is there evidence that those receiving a specific activity report better life skills?	**Dose:** type of MHF activities (Q8). **Response**: Life skills (Q12). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	Partially. There is weak evidence indicating that those participating in 'hanging out' activities have a lower need to seek external help (Q12e).
	12. Is there a relationship between changes in participation levels over the past six months and better life skills?	**Dose:** Change in participation (Q7). **Response**: Life skills (Q12). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	No clear evidence / variation.
	13. Does the geographical location of where activities are delivered influence level of life skills?	**Dose:** Location (Q2). **Response**: Life skills (Q12). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	No clear evidence / variation (and sample size to be able to indicate a variation for certain groups of respondents)
	14. Is there evidence that the quality of relationships with GH staff / volunteers affects life skills?	**Dose:** Level of relationship with the GH staff / volunteers (Q11). **Response:** Life skills (Q12). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	No clear evidence / variation.
Anti-social behaviours (Q13)	15. Do those who attend more frequently report lower levels of ASB?	**Dose:** Activities attended - times a week (Q5), hours per week (Q6). **Response**: Levels of anti-social behaviours (Q13). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	No. There is moderate evidence indicating that those who attend more frequently report higher levels of ASB activity, particularly in annoying strangers (Q13a) and participating in fights with other young people (Q13b).
			There is also weak evidence for those hanging out outside shops or on the streets at night (Q13d), and for those littering in the streets (Q13h).
	16. Is there evidence that those attending a specific activity report lower levels of ASB?	**Dose:** Type of MHF activities (Q8). **Response:** Levels of anti-social behaviours (Q13). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	No clear evidence / variation.
	17. Is there a relationship between changes in participation levels over the past six months and levels of ASB?	**Dose:** Change in participation (Q7). **Response:** Levels of anti-social behaviours (Q13). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	No clear evidence / variation.

	18. Does the geographical location of where activities are delivered influence levels of ASB?	**Dose:** Location (Q2). **Response**: Levels of anti-social behaviours (Q13). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	No clear evidence / variation (and sample size to be able to indicate a variation for certain groups of respondents).
	19. Is there evidence that the quality of relationships with GH staff / volunteers affects levels of ASB?	**Dose:** Level of relationship with the GH staff / volunteers (Q11). **Response:** Levels of anti-social behaviours (Q13). **Demographic characteristics:** Explore variation age, gender and ethnicity (Q1, Q3 and Q4)	No clear evidence / variation.

The analysis revealed **identifiable trends that suggest a link between participation in the MHF activities and its outcomes**. These are discussed in this section. However, KEQs where no trends were identified or remained uncertain due to a small sample size and/or a limited variation in MHF effects on outcomes have not been included in this section. Even where trends were identified, small sample sizes meant that no variation by individual characteristics was identified.

KEQ 1: Do those who receive more activities report higher levels of wellbeing?

- **NO:** The dose-response analysis provided **moderate evidence** that those who attend more frequently report fewer positive feelings about school or work. There was no variation by individual characteristics due to a low sample size.

The fact that young people who attend MHF activities more frequently are more likely to want to spend less time at school can be further explained by looking at data from the interviews with young people and grantholders. Some young people interviewed indicated a preference for participating in MHF activities over attending school. This preference was attributed to various factors, including experiences of bullying by other students at school. In addition to this, several grantholders observed that local schools are frequently sites of ASB, which may contribute to young people's negative perceptions of the educational environment. Additionally, grantholders suggested that the education system could improve its support for the most vulnerable young people, who often lack the necessary assistance. This is likely to further exacerbate negative perceptions of school. Lastly, grantholders also reported that they receive referrals of young people from local schools to their activities. This is often for young people who are dealing with behavioural issues, exclusions or expulsions. This indicates that some regular attendees of MHF activities may view school negatively.

KEQ 1b: Do those who receive more activities report higher levels of confidence?

- **PARTIALLY:** The dose-response analysis provided **emerging evidence** indicating that those who attend more frequently report a higher confidence to say no to friends (ie resilience to peer pressure). There was no variation by individual characteristics due to a low sample size.

Findings from interviews with young individuals and grantholders corroborated this finding. Several young people reported that MHF activities have helped them avoid associating with peers who exert negative influences, thereby preventing their involvement in ASB.

Both young people and grantholders noted an increase in participants' confidence and their improved ability to express emotions as a result of engaging in MHF activities. A few young individuals mentioned that they now possess the confidence to decline requests from others, a trait they believe they would not have otherwise developed. Furthermore, some young people highlighted that fostering positive relationships with older peers through MHF activities has significantly enhanced their confidence in interacting with their peers and articulating their feelings.

KEQ 2: Is there evidence that those receiving a specific activity report higher levels of wellbeing and confidence?

- **PARTIALLY:** The dose-response analysis provided **emerging evidence** indicating those who attend sports and physical activities report higher positive feelings about the way they look / their appearance. There is no variation by individual characteristics due to a low sample size.

Changes in physical health, fitness, and appearance (such as weight loss, increased strength and better diet) were cited as consequences of engaging in MHF funded sports and physical activities. Although young people did not explicitly discuss their feelings about these changes, a few grantholders noted that enhancements in health and fitness had positively impacted young people's confidence and self-esteem. While it can be inferred that some young people may feel more positive about their appearance as a result, the evaluation did not find any direct evidence from young people to confirm this inference.

KEQ 6: Do those who receive more activities develop a trusted relationship with GH staff / volunteers?

- **PARTIALLY:** The dose-response analysis provided **weak evidence** indicating that those who attend more frequently: are less able to trust staff; do not feel listened to; feel less safe. There is no variation by individual characteristics due low sample size.

Findings from interviews with young people and grantholders generally present a different perspective. The majority of young people reported positive relationships with staff and volunteers and expressed feeling safe in their presence. Interviews with young people generally support a sense of positive relations and feeling safe. Amongst the young people interviewed, the majority reported feeling safe in the spaces where

the MHF activities are run. Most young people praised staff and volunteers for being friendly, welcoming and, good listeners. They appreciated having younger staff or those from similar backgrounds as they felt they were more relatable. Only a few young people had negative opinions of the staff and volunteers, feeling their opinions were not listened to and that the staff were strict. However, they did not mention feeling unsafe.

"They're [the staff] all nice always there for you if you need them. If your parents aren't there, they are there to help you." – Young person interview (August 2024).

A possible explanation for these conflicting findings is twofold:

- Firstly, grantholders who participated in site visits may have agreed to do so because they were confident in the strong, positive relationships they had established with the young people they support.
- Secondly, young people may have responded to questions about staff in a manner that would be viewed positively by the interviewers and their peers, particularly in focus group settings (introducing a social desirability bias).

Despite this, a few young people provided negative feedback about their relationships with staff and volunteers, mentioning feelings of being left out or neglected and instances when staff were being too harsh. These comments align with the survey findings.

In a similar vein, grantholders provided overwhelmingly positive feedback regarding their interactions with young people. They observed that one of the primary outcomes for young people is the development of positive and trusted relationships with staff and volunteers. This has been evidenced by young people's ability to speak openly and honestly about challenges in their personal lives. They reported that young people felt safe and comfortable discussing personal issues. A key insight was that young people sometimes lack trusted relationships with teachers or parents and therefore confide in their staff and volunteers. This finding should be considered by providers when developing youth provision or services in schools. However, a few grantholders noted that some young people seemed to experience difficulty trusting adults due to previous negative experiences at school or elsewhere. Consequently, these young people may find it challenging to establish trusting relationships with other adults. This may explain why some young people reported being less trusting of staff, not feeling heard, or feeling less safe. To further investigate this discrepancy, we will develop additional questions focused on building trusted relationships with staff and volunteers for the next round of interviews with young people.

KEQ 10: Do those who receive more activities report better life skills?

- **PARTIALLY:** The dose-response analysis provided **emerging evidence** indicating that those who receive more activities report higher emotional skills and empathy. There is no variation by individual characteristics due to a low sample size.

This finding is partially supported by interviews with young people and grantholders. Depending on the type of activity delivered by grantholders participating in site visits, young people reported different levels of skill improvement. Many noted improvements in emotional skills such as respect for others, awareness of different perspectives, and increased patience for peers. Nevertheless, it should be noted that some activities are not specifically designed to develop these emotional skills, even if they do so indirectly. As a result, young people participating in these activities often report improvements in other areas, such as employability skills, rather than emotional skills and empathy.

Although grantholder interviews occasionally highlighted enhancements in emotional skills and empathy, these were not primary findings and were mentioned significantly less often than the effects on young people's mental health and wellbeing.

- **PARTIALLY:** The dose-response analysis provided **weak evidence** indicating that those who receive more activities report higher levels of impulsivity. There is no variation by individual characteristics due to a low sample size.

There is no evidence from interviews with young people and grantholders to support this finding. Some grantholders observed that a few young participants experience stress, anger, and occasionally act impulsively. One of their objectives is to assist these young people in managing their impulsivity and understanding the consequences of their actions. However, the interviews with both young people and grantholders did not indicate any impact of these activities on young people's impulsivity, whether positive or negative.

This aspect will be further investigated in future data collection.

KEQ 11: Is there evidence that those receiving a specific activity report better life skills?

- **PARTIALLY:** The dose-response analysis provided **weak evidence** indicating that those who hang out with other young people or adults that work in the centre have a lower need to seek help from others. There is no variation by individual characteristics due to a low sample size.

Interviews with young people indicated that they benefit from their relationships with peers, staff, and volunteers during the MHF activities they attend. In addition, grantholders observed that young people who regularly participated in these activities have developed strong, open, and honest relationships with staff and volunteers. For some, this interaction has contributed to enhanced confidence and improved ability to express their feelings.

Additionally, grantholders reported various positive outcomes resulting from consistent participation, including improved mental health and wellbeing, fewer incidents of fighting, decreased involvement in ASB, and increased self-esteem and confidence. It can be inferred that if young people spend more time with other young people or adults in the centre and derive positive benefits from the activities, they may feel more independent/self-sufficient and less compelled to seek help from others.

However, it is important to note that the evidence regarding the need for external help is limited, precluding us from drawing definitive conclusions on this matter.

KEQ 15: Do those who receive more activities report lower levels of ASB?

- **NO:** The dose-response analysis provided **moderate evidence** indicating that those who receive more activities report higher levels of ASB activity, particularly annoying strangers and participating in fights with other young people. There is also **weak evidence** indicating that those receiving more activities tend to hang out outside shops or on the streets at night, and litter in the streets more frequently. Due to low sample size, there is no variation by individual characteristics.

This finding is partially supported by interviews and surveys with grantholders. In interviews, some grantholders mentioned that the young people participating in their activities are currently involved in ASB. These young individuals are often referred to them by the police, schools, or other VCS organizations due to their involvement in ASB, such as being under Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC)[15] orders or known gang activities. As such, it is likely that some young people regularly participating in MHF activities have a history of engagement in ASB. Furthermore, grantholders identified underlying systemic issues contributing to ASB. While they offer diversionary activities, safe environments, and positive role models, many factors driving ASB are beyond their control. This indicates that for young individuals participating in ASB while also engaging in MHF activities, external influences continue to affect their behaviour.

The grantholder survey indicates that the most prevalent type of ASB among the young people involved in their activities is intimidatory behaviour, encompassing threatening or unruly actions, harassment, and loitering in public spaces (93 per cent). This finding partially corresponds with dose-response findings of young people 'hanging out' outside shops or on the streets, as well as littering in these areas.

Findings from interviews with young people presented a different perspective. In fact, few young people admitted to previously engaging in ASB, and several provided examples of how MHF activities reduced their willingness to engage in ASB. However, it is possible that some young people may have been hesitant to admit current involvement in ASB during interviews due to fear of being reprimanded or reported, which could explain these findings[16].

This aspect will be further investigated in future data collection by investigating the referral pathways into the MHF.

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[15] In the United Kingdom, an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) is an early intervention with individuals who are perceived to be engaging in anti-social behaviour. Though they may be used against adults, almost all ABCs concern young people between the ages of ten and 18. ABCs are not legally binding, although an ABC breach is often used as evidence to support an application for an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO), a breach of which is a criminal offence. (See: Cover (publishing.service.gov.uk), Accessed: 20/08/2024)

[16] Before the interviews and focus groups, young people signed a consent form for taking part in evaluation activities. The consent form stated that any information that raises concern about their safety or someone else's would need to be shared with someone who can help. As a result, young people may have been less open or honest about their involvement in ASB.

4.3 Understanding of ASB, how projects tackle it, and perceptions of ASB (RQ2, RQ9)

4.3.1 How grantholders define ASB

ASB and crime are closely related, often overlapping in definitions and impacts. The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014[17] highlights that many actions considered to be ASB, such as vandalism, graffiti, aggressive begging, and public drunkenness, are also criminal offenses but may be addressed through alternative measures rather than criminal prosecution. The ASB Action Plan[18] emphasizes that ASB is not a minor issue; it has significant impacts on communities.

During interviews, **grantholders were asked to describe what they consider to be youth related ASB**. Their definitions vary. Several grantholders include gang activity, drug related crimes, and serious violence in their definition of ASB. A minority of grantholders focus on less serious behaviours such as graffiti, loitering in public spaces[19], or playing loud music. **For many grantholders there is a lack of distinction between what is categorised as ASB versus crime**, with some grantholders including actions typically classified as criminal offences, such as knife crime, under the umbrella of ASB.

Grantholders reported that **youth related ASB is often concentrated in areas such as parks, fast food outlets, housing estates, and areas near schools**. In a couple of cases, grantholders described these areas as 'no-go zones'. As detailed further in this section, some grantholders frequently choose to deliver some of their activities in these areas, for example, by hosting sports sessions or conducting detached work in parks and streets where young people are regularly engaged in ASB.

4.3.2 Categories of ASB grantholders aim to address

The vast majority of the grantholders interviewed do not aim to address specific types of ASB. A few indicated that they aim to address gang related crime and violence, drug related crime, and general disturbance and nuisance in the local area. Their approach to tackling ASB is explored in Section **Error! Reference source not found.**. Approximately one quarter of grantholders acknowledged the deeper systemic issues underlying ASB, saying while they can offer diversionary activities, safe spaces, and role models, they recognise that many drivers are beyond their control[20]. This was not mentioned by the remainder of the grantholders.

4.3.3 Approach to targeting young people at risk of / engaging with ASB in the local area

For MHF funded activities, around a third of grantholders interviewed specifically engage young people at risk of, or engaged in, ASB. However, many grantholders do not use ASB-targeted strategies, preferring to promote their activities to young people in general, because the MHF's funding requirement was to provide young people with more places to go and with more positive activities, not just to target those at risk of or involved in ASB.

Among the grantholders targeting young people at risk of or engaging in ASB, a variety of approaches are used, including:

- **Detached youth work:** A minority of the grantholders interviewed actively approach young people in the local area, including those involved in ASB, such as those loitering, fighting, or playing loud music in public spaces.

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[17] Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (See: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/12/contents, Accessed 20/11/24)

[18] Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan (See: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6463889b0b72d3001334455d/Anti-social_Behaviour_Action_Plan_March_2023.pdf, Accessed 20/11/2024)

[19] The ASB Action Plan outlines that ASB covers criminal and non-criminal activity including loitering in public spaces.

[20] Grantholders also identified risk and protective factors relating to youth ASB in their local areas:

Risk factors: socio-economic issues (e.g. high levels of deprivation, poverty, drug and alcohol use, unemployment); excessive spare time; limited safe spaced for young people; lack of positive role models; lack of motivation and aspiration; gang grooming; school exclusion; and local conflicts.

Protective factors: positive community youth activities, building trusted relationships with adults, and having a safe space to go in their free time. Grantholders highlighted the absence of protective factors locally due to a sharp decline in youth services over the past decade due to budget cuts and reduced government and council funding.

"When we become aware of some of the issues in local estates, we physically go into the local estates, sit on the same steps young people are sitting on and we talk to them. We tell them about the work we do and invite them to join us." – Grantholder interview (July 2024).

- **Collaboration with local stakeholders:** Over half of the grantholders interviewed connect with young people through partnerships with local stakeholders, including PCSOs, housing associations, local authorities, and schools. This can occur informally or through formal referral networks.

"Intelligence from the housing association asked us to work with that particular group [members of a gang]. There was a lot of issues happening last summer with stabbings and with young people on the estate against the estate across the road. So, they wanted us to put in some intensive work for that specific group, so they had a space in the club which was just for them on a particular day of the week. The police, social services and the housing association all talk with one another." – Grantholder interview (July 2024).

- **Targeted outreach:** A couple of grantholders specifically target individuals who are known to be involved in ASB, such as ringleaders or gang members. From our interviews, it seems that outreach approaches vary widely among grantholders, though explanations were often unclear. We will explore this in greater detail in future interviews with grantholders. To ensure young people are not being profiled and subsequently targeted based on demographic characteristics, we believe a streamlined approach based on objective criteria is needed.

Some grantholders know that the young people participating in their activities are involved in ASB based on how these youths were initially referred to their organisation. For instance, police referred young people on ABC orders to one grantholder, while another grantholder works with a specific group of young people in a gang, separate from others. Most grantholders have made assumptions about the extent of their young people's involvement in ASB based on their general understanding of the local youth population. Additionally, a couple of grantholders focus on young people at risk of becoming victims of ASB, such as those with SEND.

Stakeholder interviews discussed approaches that work well to reaching young people at risk of ASB. This included going to the young person for initial contact/introduction. This includes schools and outreach work in the area. Stakeholders had experience of this working well as the young people then feel more willing, comfortable and safe going to the youth provision on their own accord. The same concept applied to early intervention.

Other suggested approaches included having varied provision to choose from. This creates more choice for the young people with more coverage of activities per week and a wider range of the activity type themselves. This can make the young person feel in control of their time, feel valued and feel that they have full opportunities to be supported.

Also, more detached work works well, such as night provision. One stakeholder agreed that this would provide safer space for young people to go later in the evening that is not a police station or their home. This was suggested alongside using more specialist workers who can carry out this night work such as those with psychology qualifications, lived experience and no fear of the environment.

4.3.4 How funded activities address ASB in the local area

Grantholders explained how they expect their MHF-funded activities to address ASB:

- **Diversionary activities:** The majority of grantholders are providing structured activities for young people during critical times after school and in the evenings, creating a safe and controlled environment for young people to meet. Sessions are often scheduled when youth ASB is most prevalent, such as during the evening or during school holidays. In general, stakeholders also agreed that funded activities can address ASB in the local areas by providing diversionary activities in safe spaces with trusted adults.

"With the sports training or fitness training, for instance new people are going to put loads of the energy that they have into training, it's like a religion, and takes so much discipline, they get hooked like an addiction and they don't put their energy into things which aren't good for them. There is less chance of them getting involved in ASB and crime." – Grantholder interview (June 2024).

- **Self-perception and empowerment:** Activities to help young people develop positive self-perceptions and feel empowered.
- **Trusted relationships:** Staff and volunteers build meaningful relationships with young people, serving as positive role models and trusted adults, especially when young people lack such relationships with teachers or parents. Stakeholder interviews echoed that providing structured and regular provision of

supervised time with reliable adults can help to increase young people's sense of purpose and self-worth. This gives the young people an opportunity to access advice as well as mental stimulation.

"It's about promoting those positive role models that are probably lacking in a lot of the young people's lives. Building relationships with young people is key as they are often very untrusting of adults." – Grantholder interview (June 2024).

- **Educational sessions:** A few grantholders are hosting sessions with those with lived experience (eg former gang members) or experts to educate young people about ASB related issues, such as knife crime and the prison system.
- **Safeguarding:** Protecting young people who are at risk of becoming victims of ASB.

Stakeholder interviews linked the retention of young people to a lasting impact on youth ASB. They also corroborated the effective engagement and retention strategies above. In particular, the development of employability and softer life skills can benefit the young people's levels of motivation and responsibility. In addition to this, physical activities such as exercise and crafts can benefit those young people with different learning and attention styles, and for those without a garden at home.

Stakeholder interviews highlighted that there is a patchwork of interventions that aim to address youth ASB, involving PCSOs, social services, and organisations in the VCS youth sector. One stakeholder highlighted the current underfunding in this area, leading local organisations to be desperate for funding. Consequently, youth services eagerly apply for any announced project, regardless of the funding aim.

"It is about integrity of the organisations, that they will deliver exactly what they have won the funding for, correctly supporting the intended beneficiaries. To support and benefit the young people and their families should be the priority." – Stakeholder interview (August 2024)

4.3.5 ASB related outcomes

Outcomes related to ASB reported by young people in the survey and their interviews are explored in detail in Section 0.

Figure 7 presents an overview of the **types of ASB the young people participating in MHF funded activities are most at risk of**. In the GH survey, grantholders had the option to select as many answer choices as applied to them, which means the percentages add up to over 100%.

Figure 7 - ASB young people participating in MHF-funded activities are most at risk of (Grantholder survey, May 2024, base=142).

Grantholders assess impact through conversations with the young people, through **observing decreased ASB in local areas and hotspots and based on feedback from members of the local community**. For example, one grantholder has observed a reduction in young people openly taking drugs in the park and around their community centre – an issue they had frequently noticed before starting their activities. Another grantholder reported receiving feedback from the community that young people have changed their

behaviour, with less stealing and a general decrease in disruptive behaviour. A few grantholders have also received feedback from the police, such as fewer referrals or callouts from PCSOs.

4.4   Outcomes for organisations in receipt of funds (RQ10)

89 per cent of grantholders surveyed note that the MHF grant has benefitted their organisation so far, while 11 per cent feel it is too early to say (base=144). No grantholders reported that the grant had not benefitted their organisation. Grantholders were also asked the extent to which they 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the following statements regarding the impact of the MHF grant on their organisations: my organisation is able to provide additional services that we otherwise would not have: 97 per cent (base=125) and my organisation has a clearer understanding of young people's needs and wants: 78 per cent (base=118).

Through interviews, grantholders highlighted several outcomes for their organisations.

Increased organisational capacity: The funding allowed grantholders to expand their services and increase staffing and volunteer numbers. Some reported that the MHF enabled them to operate more sustainably, and transition from using ad hoc support or zero hours contract staff to offering formal contracts, which has provided consistency and stability. Others used the funding to provide support they could not have otherwise offered, such as detached youth work, targeted support for young people rather than general community work, or specialised services for young people with SEND and addressing ASB.

"Before the MHF we were relying on zero hours staff. Since we have been successful, we've been able to put three people on contracts." – Grantholder interview (September 2024).

Collaboration with other organisations: As noted in the process section (Section 4), many grantholders established new partnerships with local organisations, such as VCS groups, the police, and local authorities. These partnerships were made possible by the MHF and would not have developed otherwise.

Impact on visibility and reputation: Some grantholders reported that delivering MHF funded activities strengthened their reputation and visibility within their communities. This increase in recognition led to a greater demand for their services beyond MHF activities and, in some cases, enabled them to successfully apply for additional funding by demonstrating their impact on young people. A few grantholders also reported that their involvement in the MHF has led to increased promotion of their projects which has attracted attention from nationally recognised organisations, which have reached out to congratulate them and offer support.

"It has also been a stepping stone for other funding. Funders have seen the success of the project which has enabled us to seek a couple of other [sources of] funding as well." – Grantholder interview (July 2024).

Clearer understanding of young people's needs: A few grantholders explained that increased engagement with young people has led to a better understanding of their needs and how to best engage. This has been done through a variety of methods including talking to young people during activities, youth boards, and participant voice forms. We aim to determine if MHF funded additional hours enabled grantholders to better understand young people's needs through future data collection with grantholders.

"We are more aligned to better understand young people's needs. Not only due to our direct communication with young people during the sessions, but also through the youth board where they can communicate what they'd like to see in their community when they grow up and what changes they would like to make. It's really powerful. The funding has totally enabled us to give young people a platform and get them engaged." – Grantholder interview (July 2024).

4.5   Outcomes for staff and volunteers (RQ10, RQ12)

In the grantholder survey, grantholders reported on the extent to which they 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' with the following statements regarding how the MHF grant has benefitted their staff and volunteers.

- Volunteers increased their skills and knowledge: 82 per cent (base=103).
- Staff increased their skills and knowledge: 80 per cent (base=115).

Through interviews grantholders explained outcomes for their staff and volunteers.

Strengthened skills and knowledge: Staff and volunteers have developed professional and practical skills through their work with the MHF grant. Grantholders reported being able to invest in training and development, such as training in safeguarding, food hygiene, first aid, and mentoring. Some staff and volunteers have even gained formal qualifications, such as sports coaching certifications.

Grantholders also noted that young volunteers have gained valuable insights into potential career paths and acquired work experience to support future job or university applications. They believe this will have a substantial impact on the career trajectories of these volunteers.

"Lots of the volunteers have gained qualifications. We have helped them to understand the different career paths they can take, whether in sport, or elsewhere." – Grantholder interview (July 2024).

Established positive and trusted relationships with young people: Some grantholders reported that staff and volunteers have developed and strengthened relationships with the young people who regularly attend their MHF funded activities. These young people feel comfortable being open and honest about personal issues, such as challenges at home or school, indicating the trust has been built. As a result of these trusted relationships, a majority of these grantholders believe that young people are more likely to feel safe and secure when attending their activities.

"They speak to us and trust us. They tell us about how their life is going, how they're getting on in school, about family issues… We always want to develop a relationship between staff and young people so they can have role models and trusted adults they can speak to." – Grantholder interview (July 2024).

4.6   Outcomes for communities (RQ9)

Through the grantholder survey, grantholders reported on the extent to which they 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with how they expect that the local community will benefit from activities funded by their MHF grant.

- Reduction in rates of recorded ASB and other youth related crimes in my local area: 95 per cent (base=131).
- Reduction of young people's involvement in gang related activities: 95 per cent (base=132).
- Improved community integration: 94 per cent (base=134).

At this stage, we have limited evidence of the outcomes and impacts of the MHF on local communities. This is expected, as our data collection occurred early in the grantholders' project delivery, making it unlikely for significant outcomes and impacts to have materialised in the short term.

Grantholders reported some observed outcomes for the local community, often based on verbal feedback. However, due to the lack of involvement or oversight of stakeholders in the MHF that we interviewed, they were unable to provide specific feedback regarding the outcomes of the MHF on their local communities.

Improved perceptions of young people: Many grantholders noted a shift in how young people are perceived within their communities. Previously negative or sceptical views about young people have become more positive, acknowledging the contributions of young people. This change is attributed to visible community work by young people, such as litter picking and participation in community events. Members of the local community have expressed their appreciation for these positive contributions, either directly to the young people or through feedback to the grantholders.

"One of the groups is doing a social action project for a few weeks. They wanted to do litter picking and a tidy up of the local area. They did it around the local park and council bungalows which has predominantly older people that can't often do it by themselves. The community were really impressed by the young people doing that. They came out and chatted to them and said thank you to them. They liked the fact the young people were doing something positive rather than the typical ASB in the park." – Grantholder interview (July 2024).

This aligns with findings from the **#iwill Fund Learning Hub's**[21], which explains the double benefit of youth social action for both local communities and young participants. The report explains that young people's social action activities, such as cleaning the local area, not only provided a direct community benefit but also empower them, fostering positive socio-emotional outcomes.

Improved community integration and cohesion: Some grantholders have observed improved relationships between young people and other community members, especially with older generations. This has been achieved through community events that bring diverse groups together, social action projects, and partnerships with local organisations. Grantholders believe these have fostered positive relationships and engagement among the community. A couple of grantholders felt that their MHF projects have encouraged young people, and subsequently their families and friends, to interact with people from diverse

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[21] #iwill Fund Learning Hub: https://www.ymcageorgewilliams.uk/sites/default/files/2023-05/V3%20iwill%20summative%20report%204%5B86%5D.pdf Accessed 20/11/2024.

socio-economic backgrounds, religions and ethnic groups who may not regularly interact outside of these activities.

Safer communities: As detailed in section 4.3.5, some members of the local community have reported to grantholders that they have observed a reduction in ASB and feel safer in their local areas.

5. REFLECTIONS ON THE THEORY OF CHANGE

Using contribution analysis techniques, this section provides an interim reflection on the MHF ToC. The ToC can be found in Annex A – Theory of Change. The anticipated intermediary, or early, outcomes for youth organisations and their staff are supported by the available evidence. There is a mixed picture with regards to anticipated outcomes for young people although there is currently no evidence that suggests these outcomes will not be achieved by the end of the MHF. At this stage, it is not possible to assess the likelihood of impacts being achieved. The contribution statements and available evidence are as follows:

Contribution statement one: the **MHF increased youth organisations' capacity, as well as their knowledge and skills. This enabled them to provide young people access to positive activities that meet young people's needs**.

The evidence available suggests that the MHF is increasing capacity, knowledge and skills and providing young people with access to positive activities. In interviews and survey responses, grantholders said that the MHF enabled them to deliver activities they would not otherwise have been able to. They also overwhelmingly felt that the MHF helped them improve staff knowledge and skills. Considering the decline of youth provision over recent years, local stakeholders highlighted that these activities provide young people with access to opportunities that are not otherwise available. Over half of the young people who responded to the survey indicated they increased their attendance of MHF activities in the past six months. The evaluation will further explore the extent to which the activities meet young people's needs, however feedback from young people in interviews and group discussions indicates that this is also the case.

Contribution statement two: Young people increased their participation in positive activities which supported improvements in their confidence, emotional wellbeing and skills for life and work.

Over half of the young people who responded to the survey indicated they increased their attendance of MHF activities in the past six months. There is mixed evidence with regards to improvements in confidence, emotional wellbeing and skills for life and work, with young people saying they experienced these outcomes in interviews while the dose response study only found weak evidence of these outcomes. Further site visit data collection and rounds of the dose-response study will be used to explore these outcomes more.

Contribution statement three: the MHF allowed youth organisations to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors for ASB[22], leading to a reduction in recorded and perceived ASB in funded areas.

Young people interviews showed the strongest evidence of reducing peer pressure and providing a safe space for young people away from the streets, as well as opportunities for young people to build new friendships and mix with others they might not usually befriend. However, the young people survey indicated low engagement in ASB in the first place and there is no reliable data about youth ASB that could be used to track changes in recorded ASB in funded areas. Similarly, to date the evaluation has been unable to collect substantial data from local community members about their perception of youth ASB. The evaluation team will explore avenues for community data collection with DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund as part of forthcoming data collection and future reporting.

Contribution statements four and five: the MHF contributed to an improved perception of young people and youth organisations in the local area. The MHF helped to establish a stronger sense of community in areas with funded activities, helping communities to feel safer.

The evaluation has been unable to collect substantial data from local community members about their perception of youth ASB to date. Challenges included fewer than expected existing groups to contact in areas local to the site visit organisations. For future rounds of data collection, attempts will be made to engage community groups throughout the year more proactively as opposed to during or just after a site visit. This would allow time to establish rapport with community groups and more flexibility in dates to maximise their availability.

Through further data collection as set out in section 1.2 and the second interim and final reports, we will explore the contribution of the MHF to the anticipated outcomes and impacts in more detail.

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[22] Risk factors for ASB may include peer pressure and negative influences, unstructured free time, lack of positive role models and community disconnection. Protective factors for ASB may include skills development, community engagement, positive peer relationships and mentorship and guidance.

6. ANNEX A – THEORY OF CHANGE

Figure 8 - Theory of Change diagram.

Barriers

- Lack of long-term funding available for youth organisations
- Youth organisations lack the necessary staff and/or volunteers to provide extra capacity/hours and therefore cannot meet the high demand for youth activities from young people
- Youth organisations lack the capacity/resources to effectively support young people, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Youth organisation staff and/or volunteers lack skills and/or knowledge to support young people
- There is a lack of regular/repeat engagement by young people in positive activities, leading to limited benefits
- Young people face resource challenges in accessing positive activities (e.g. lack of transport)
- Young people in ASB hotspots have inadequate access to positive activities, resulting in participation in ASB
- Young people lack awareness and knowledge of youth organisations in their local area and the activities they offer
- Lack of diversity of staff and volunteers in youth organisations limiting engagement with a diverse group of young people
- Young people may perceive youth organisation activities as being "not for me", leading to a reluctance to participate

Inputs

- DCMS and TNLCF time and knowledge / expertise
- £22m grant funding (£11m from DCMS, £11m match-funding from TNCLF)
- Identification of 1,005 wards that are ASB hotspots
- Youth organisations' staff and volunteers' time, knowledge and resources
- Young people's engagement in activities
- DCMS and TNLCF communications and promotion of the Fund

Activities

1. TNLCF fund management and governance
2. Extension of youth clubs and services, with extra hours of youth work providing additional activities
3. Delivery of positive activities by youth organisations
4. Data monitoring and reporting by youth organisations
5. Promotion of youth organisations providing extra hours of youth work for additional activities to young people
6. Training of youth organisations' staff and volunteers

Outputs

1. Number of grants distributed to youth organisations
2. Number of extra hours of youth support in ASB hotspots
3. Youth organisations' staff and volunteer time to deliver the expanded programme
4. Number of young people attending the MHF funded youth activities
5. Number of young people new to the funded organisations
6. Expanded programmes of positive activities

Outcomes

Intermediate outcomes:

For youth organisations:
1. Increased capacity of youth organisations

For youth organisations' staff and volunteers:
2. Increased skills and knowledge of youth organisations' staff and volunteers

For young people:
3. Increased access to positive activities
4. Increased participation of young people in positive activities
5. Young people establish positive connections with youth organization staff/volunteers
6. Young people feel safer in youth organisations / with youth workers
7. Young people have increased confidence
8. Young people's and their parents'/carers' increased awareness of youth organisations and the activities they offer

Long-term outcomes:

For youth organisations:
1. Youth organisations have a clear understanding of young people's needs and wants
2. Youth organisations work more collaboratively

For young people:
3. Young people develop trusted relationships with youth organisation staff/volunteers
4. Improvement in young people's emotional wellbeing
5. Young people have improved life and practical skills
6. Reduced engagement of young people in ASB / other youth crimes
7. Reduction in risk factors and increase in protective factors for ASB

For local communities:
8. Reduction in rates of recorded ASB and other youth related crimes in funded areas
9. Reduction of young people's involvement in gang related activities
10. Improved community integration

Impacts

1. Prevention of ASB
2. Improved perception of young people in the local area
3. Improved perception of youth organisations in the local area
4. Greater feeling of community
5. Communities feel safer in the local area
6. Increased stability of the youth sector through the growth of youth organisations
7. Lessons learned on what works for programmes to tackle ASB

Assumptions:

Youth organisations have enough staff and/or volunteers to provide extra capacity/hours by 2026. (2) Youth organisations have a clear understanding of what young people need and want. (3) There is demand from young people who want to attend the extra hours of activities. (4) Young people who are likely to commit ASB will want to attend positive activities. (5) Young people develop relationships and trust with staff/volunteers at the youth organisations and feel safe at the youth organisations as a result. (6) Young people who take part in positive activities will experience the following outcomes: increased wellbeing, improved life and practical skills and less likelihood of participating in ASB. (7) By having more youth activities in a local area which young people attend, there will be a greater sense of community as there are more opportunities available locally and opportunities for volunteering. (8) MHF will fund a variety of youth organisations offering a diverse range of activities for young people. (9) The target wards identified for MHF are also hotspots for youth-related ASB and other youth crimes.

7.   ANNEX B – SUMMER FUNDING SUMMARY

The MHF committed £22m in two phases. The 'Summer Funding programme' is Phase 1 of the MHF and committed £3m to help grantholders in eligible wards expand their offering for young people over the summer holiday period (3 July – 4 August 2023). This was delivered through the 'National Lottery Awards for All' funding programme, providing small grants of up to £10,000. While the summer funding primarily focussed on the summer holiday period, grantholders had up to 12 months to spend the funding. Therefore, some activities were still ongoing during our data collection period (January – February 2024).

This section presents the **headline findings** from data collected on the **Summer Funding Phase** via a short survey sent to all **427 Summer Funding grantholders (137 provided usable responses).** The following findings are from the 137 survey responses and where an answer was provided.

7.1   Additional hours of youth provision

The minimum total additional hours of youth provision from 123 grantholders who provided reliable data was at least **37,301 hours**[23]. Extrapolating for all **427 Summer Funding grantholders,** this would mean a minimum of **129,492 additional hours** of youth provision were provided. However, given that this estimate rests on the assumption that non-respondent grantholders have similar characteristics (eg size of grant, n. of YP engaged, n. of youth activity provided) to respondent grantholders, this figure should be treated with caution.

7.2   Young people reached

The MHF Summer Funding programme enabled 136 grantholders to provide activities to at least 9,225 young people. Over 50 per cent of grantholders provided activities to more than 50 young people. Participants aged between 13 and 16 (13-14 & 15-16) were the most common age range of young people that participated in MHF Summer Funding activities.

7.3   Volunteers and staff engaged

MHF Summer Funding programme enabled 132 grantholders to engage with at least 555 volunteers in total. On average, 99 grantholders delivered at least 1,877 additional hours of volunteering per week. The average additional volunteer hours per week was a mean of 28 hours and a median of nine hours.

The majority of grantholders did not hire any new staff, with only 54 hiring new staff. Of the 54 grantholders which hired new staff, they recruited at least 113 staff members. The MHF Summer Funding programme enabled 123 grantholders to provide at least 2,616 additional paid staff hours per week.

7.4   How grantholders used the grants

The top three uses of funding were to pay for youth workers, purchase activity equipment and to hire venues for activities.

7.5   Types of youth services provided

The three most common types of youth services provided were sports/informal physical activities, open access youth club activities and workshops/drop-in sessions. The majority of funded activities ran for either five to seven weeks or more than 25 weeks.

7.6   Outcomes for young people

The three most commonly reported outcomes for young people were: young people made positive connections with grantholder staff/volunteers, young people feel safe with grantholder staff and young people had increased confidence. The following figures present responses from grantholders about the

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[23] **Calculation:**

- Total number of young people refers to the total number of individual young people that took part in funded activities. This means that if a young person attends multiple activities or attends a single activity multiple times a week, then they would be counted as one individual.
- Value for each grantholder = Total number of young people / durations of provision in weeks * average hours of youth provision per week.
- Total additional hours of youth provision = sum of values for all 123 grantholders.
- 123 grantholders provided all three figures needed for total calculation. Grantholders that missed a component were omitted.

extent to which they agree or disagree with a series of statements about how young people benefitted from activities funded by their MHF grant. These responses indicate that, according to grantholder staff, young people benefitted from MHF activities in various ways such as increased confidence, increased feelings of safety, and improved positive connections with staff and volunteers.

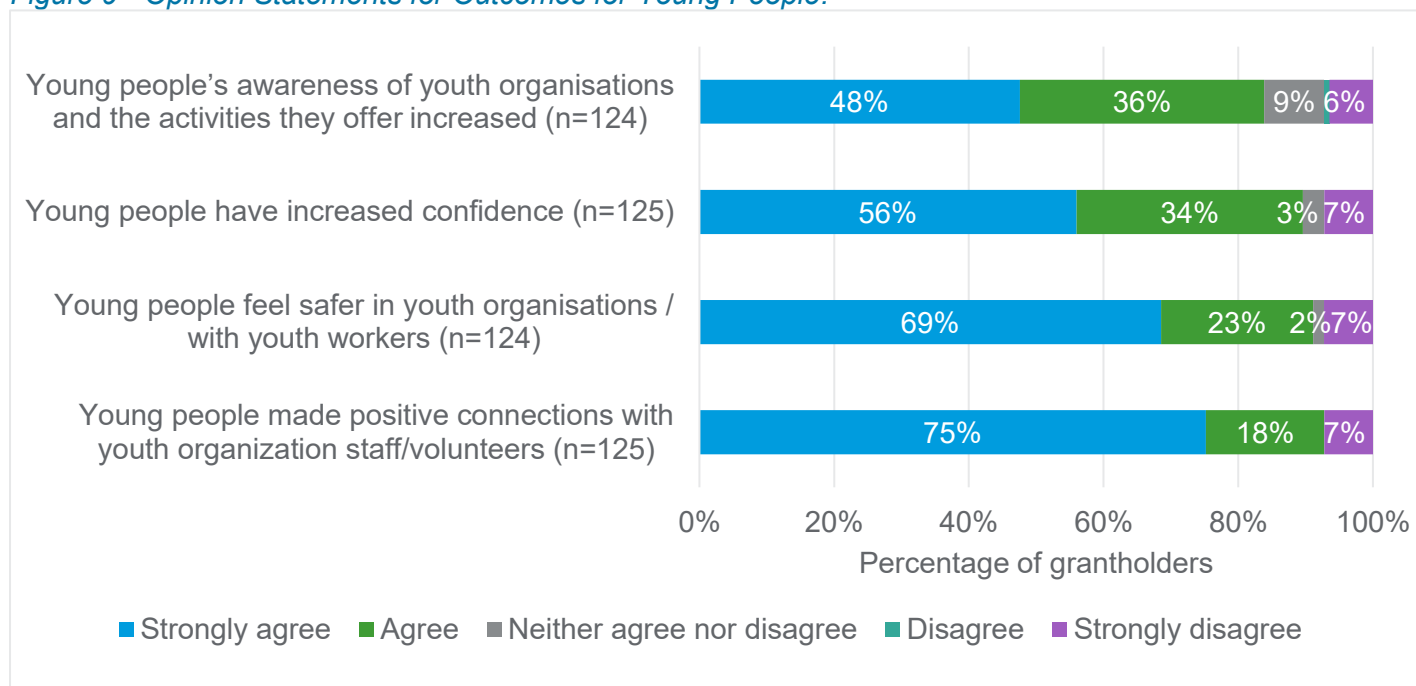*Figure 9 - Opinion Statements for Outcomes for Young People.*

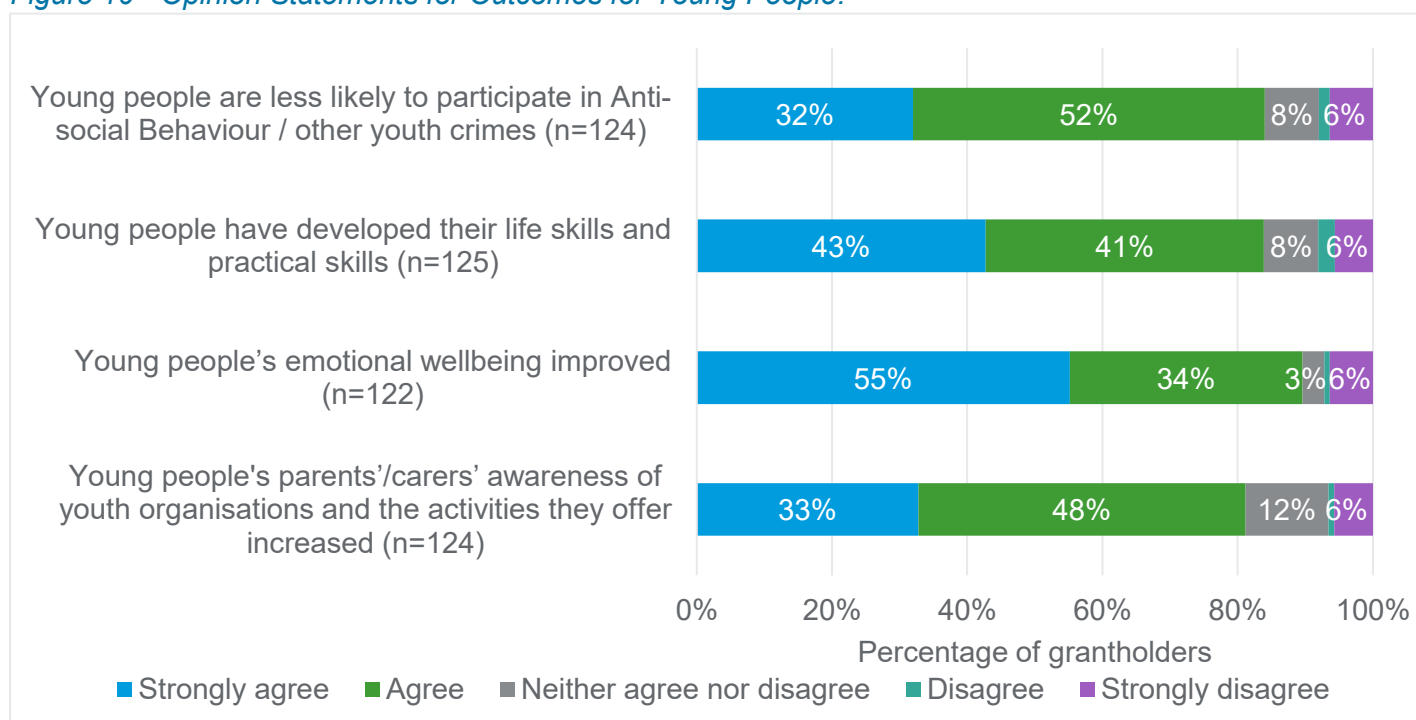*Figure 10 - Opinion Statements for Outcomes for Young People.*

7.7   Outcomes for grantholders

Grantholders generally experienced positive outcomes. 85 per cent of grantholders felt that as a result of the MHF they have a clear understanding of young people's needs and wants. The figure below illustrates the extent to which grantholders experienced key outcomes as a result of the MHF Summer Funding.

Figure 11 - Opinion Statements for Outcomes for Grantholders.
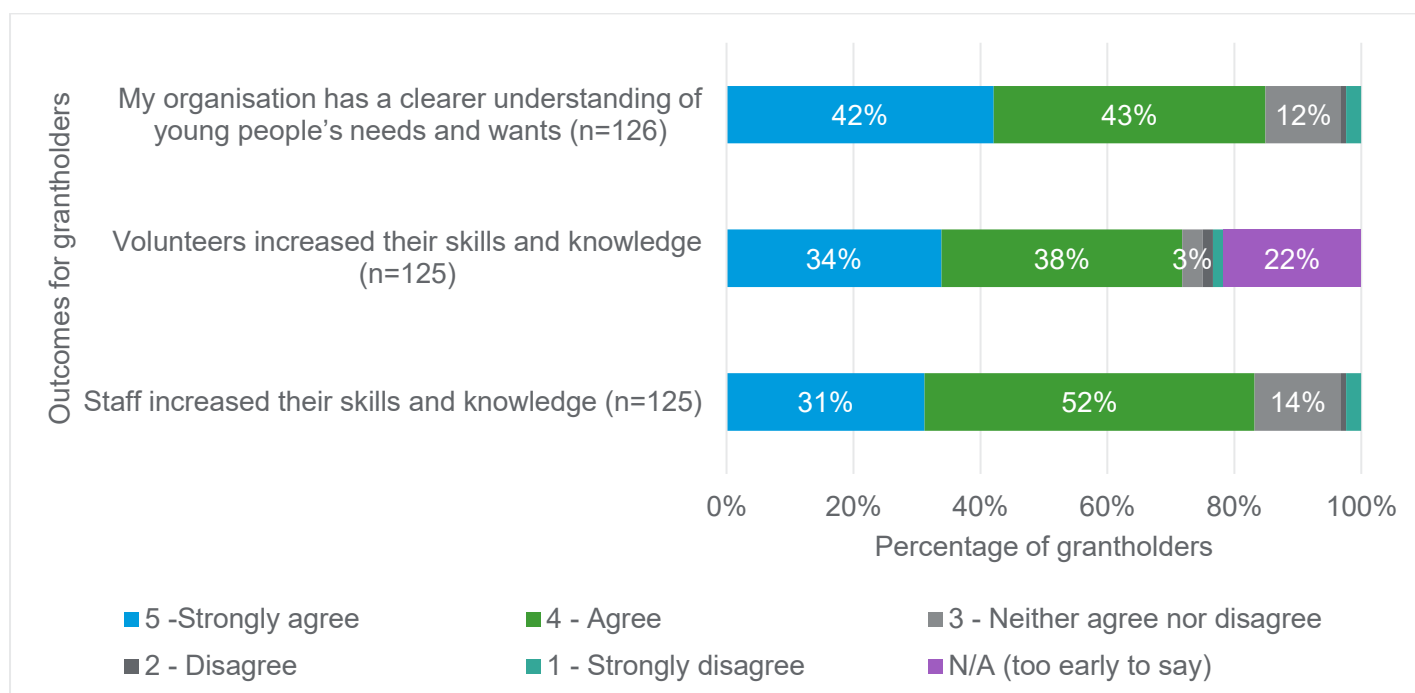
7.8 Understanding of ASB

The most common type of ASB the young people that grantholders work with were at risk of was intimidatory behaviour (eg threatening or unruly behaviour, harassment / loitering in public spaces).

We asked grantholders the extent to which they felt as a result of activities funded by their MHF grant, risk factors related to ASB have decreased for young people and protective factors related to ASB have increased for young people. We provided respondents with the following examples of risk factors and protective factors related to ASB to aid their understanding to respond to the associated survey questions:

- Examples of **risk factors related to ASB**: peer pressure and negative influences, unstructured free time, community disconnection and a lack of positive role models.

- Examples of **protective factors related to ASB**: skills development, community engagement, positive peer relationships and mentorship and guidance.

76 per cent of grantholders strongly agree or agree risk factors decreased for the young people participating in their activities, and 89 per cent strongly agree or agree that protective factors increased.

8. ANNEX C – DETAILED METHODOLOGY

8.1 Research questions

In our Evaluation Plan, we outlined the process evaluation research questions (RQs) we aim to address. Table 2 below shows the extent to which we have answered these RQs in this report and how we aim to address them in future reports. A green tick (✔) indicates that we anticipate that the research question can be fully answered, a brown tick (✔) indicates partial answering, and a red cross (x) indicates the question cannot be answered in that report. Being early in the delivery period and facing some data collection limitations (such as limitation number three) means we have been unable to fully address these RQs at this stage.

Table 2 - Process evaluation research questions.

Process evaluation research questions	Interim report (2024)	Interim report (2025)	Final report (2026)
RQ1: Who applied for the fund, what funding was given and to whom?	✔	✔	✔
RQ2: What are stakeholders' views of the fund, its set up and how it has been delivered?	✔	✔	✔
RQ3: How many hours and positive activities are being provided via the funding? Has there been an increase in activities? Has the diversity of activities provided increased? If so, how and by how much?	✔	✔	✔
RQ4: How many young people has the funding reached? (New & current attendees)	x	✔	✔
RQ5: Are there any external factors that have affected the delivery and functionality of the fund?	x	✔	✔

We also outlined the impact evaluation research questions (RQs) we aim to address. Table 3 below shows the extent to which we have answered these RQs in this report and how we aim to address them in future reports. Although we have begun reporting on outcomes and impacts for young people, grantholders, staff, volunteers, and the local community, the early timing of this report limits the observable outcomes and impacts at this stage.

Table 3 - Impact evaluation research questions.

Impact evaluation research questions	Interim report (2024)	Interim report (2025)	Final report (2026)
RQ6: Is there an increase in young people participating in youth provision in funded organisations?	✔	✔	✔
RQ7: Have more young people developed trusting relationships with youth sector adults, and do they feel safer?	✔	✔	✔
RQ8: To what extent have outcomes (wellbeing, social/emotional skills development or acquisition of 'skills for life') been experienced by young people who attend 'Million Hours' funded positive activities?	✔	✔	✔
RQ9: What is the change, if any, in ASB in funded hotspots? Can it be established whether the funding has contributed to any decrease? Have public perceptions of ASB in funded hotspots changed?	✔	✔	✔
RQ10: What, if any, are the short term benefits to the organisations taking part in the fund?	✔	✔	✔
RQ11: How many volunteers have been mobilised because of the funding? (new and existing)	✔	✔	✔
RQ12: What are the impacts (good/bad), if any, to volunteers who have taken part in the delivery of the fund?	✔	✔	✔

8.2   Management Information, Application and Award data

This includes data from grantholders as part of their quarterly monitoring to The National Lottery Community Fund. This is collected via an online form which covers various aspects of progress on delivery of funded projects. As two rounds of quarterly reporting are used in the analysis, we use cumulative figures for calculations. We analysed the following data points for this interim report:

- Total number of additional hours of youth work delivered.
- Total number of young people that attended activities.
- Average number of young people that attended activities.
- Total number of new young people that attended activities.

8.3   Summer Funding Survey

The Summer funding survey captures insights from grantholders supported by Phase One of the MHF in which The National Lottery Community Fund committed £3m to help grantholders in eligible wards expand their offering for young people over the summer holiday period (3 July – 4 August 2023). The survey formed part of our process evaluation and covered elements of delivery including number of young people engaged, number of additional hours of youth service provision, types of youth service provided, and outcome areas covered, and experience of their grant. An online survey link was sent via email to all **427** Summer Funding grantholders.

We received **198 responses** including 135 complete and 63 partial. The final analysis included **137 usable responses** after discounting duplicates and opt-outs (32 per cent).

8.4   Grantholder survey

The grantholder survey captured evidence towards process and impact evaluation questions not covered in the standard quarterly reporting. This included how grantholders planned to use the grant including the type of activities provided and where they expected to deliver activities. It also included questions on the profile of young people they support as well as expected outcomes and questions on ASB. The survey also covered grantholders' experience of their grant. The survey was live from 22 April to 10 May 2023. We distributed the survey directly to **238** grantholders via email and sent two reminders during this time period.

We received **180 responses** including 146 complete and 34 partial responses. The final analysis includes **144 usable responses** after discounting duplicates and opt-outs (61 per cent).

8.5   Young people survey

The young people's survey gathered insight directly from young people engaged in MHF activities. It has been initially piloted with 20 grantholders and then further refined based on feedback. We drew on standardised questions and tools to measure ASB when developing the questions. The final version included questions on demographics (age, location, gender and ethnicity), type, frequency and intensity of project activities they engaged in, outcomes from engaging in projects, relationships with project staff and types of ASB they may have engaged in. The survey was distributed to all grantholders along with information sheets and instructions on how to distribute the link to young people. The survey did not ask for information such as names and addresses of young people, nor for the names or addresses of the organisations whose activities they attended. This means neither the young person completing the survey nor the relevant grantholder is identifiable through the young person survey, and the responses cannot be linked with any other surveys (eg, the evaluation survey of grantholders). An opt-out consent process was adapted for young people under 16 in which parents / guardians were sent a letter by grantholders with information on the survey two weeks before the survey was due to be shared with young people. Parents and guardians were able to opt their child out from receiving the survey by contacting the MHF grantholder organisation. For young people 16 and above, their consent was sought via the cover page of the survey where they were provided information on the survey and could select an opt-out option. The survey was live between July and October 2024.

We received 679 responses including 440 complete and 239 partial responses. We were unable to calculate the base size of the survey as we do not have accurate information on the total number of young people engaged through the MI data. The final analysis includes **431 usable responses** after discounting

duplicates and opt-outs. During data cleaning 248 cases were deemed unsuitable to be included in the analysis for three main reasons:

- Partial Responses: duplicates were removed based on IP addresses, and a duplicate respondent to the gender question who explicitly stated that he was completing the survey twice due to an imputation error was also removed for consistency. A few valid partial responses were included as complete responses.

- Opt-out: respondents who opted out or did not answer key outcome questions were removed from the dataset.

- Location Data: Manual corrections were made to responses where participants listed their organisation instead of their location. Local authority and regional data were added where applicable.

8.5.1 Descriptive statistics and outcomes analysis

Approach to grouping responses

Age (Q1):

- Younger than 11
- 11–15
- 16–17
- Older than 17

Location (Q2): Responses were converted to align with the regions of England.

Gender (Q3): Responses were checked for invalid entries. Valid entries were grouped into three categories (n=429), with low counts in certain responses justifying the consolidation into:

- Male
- Female
- Other / Prefer not to say

Ethnicity (Q4): Responses were checked, and no further regrouping was necessary for the full sample (n=431).

Attendance per Week (Q5 and Q6):

- Q5 (times per week) was presented in the same categories as the survey question, with n=430.
- Q6 (hours per week) was similarly categorised, with n=429.

Participation in Last 6 Months (Q7): Presented as per the survey question, with a full sample of n=431.

MHF Activities (Q8): Due to low counts in some categories, the activities were grouped for analysis (n=391) as follows:

- Sports / Physical Activities
- Hanging Out
- Clubs and Workshops
- Mentoring and Volunteering
- Various Activities
- Activities and Outcome Measures

Wellbeing (Q9)

The scale for the Wellbeing question (Q9) was inverted from the survey's original format to make it more intuitive for analysis, where one = not happy at all, and five = completely happy. Responses were aggregated and grouped into a five-point scale based on the averages of the respondents' answers to sub questions about wellbeing. The categories were as follows:

- Very Low Wellbeing: ≤ 1.9

- Low Wellbeing: ≤ 2.9
- Moderate Wellbeing: ≤ 3.9
- High Wellbeing: ≤ 4.4
- Very High Wellbeing: ≤ 5.0

Confidence (Q10)

The scale for the Confidence question was based on respondents' agreement with confidence statements, where one = strongly disagree and five = strongly agree. 'Not sure' responses were excluded from the averages. Responses were grouped into the following five-point confidence scale:

- Very Low Confidence: 1.0 to 1.75
- Low Confidence: 1.76 to 2.75
- Moderate Confidence: 2.76 to 3.5
- High Confidence: 3.51 to 4.25
- Very High Confidence: 4.26 to 5.0

Life Skills (Q12)

As mentioned in the main body, the measures used to assess young people's life skills were adapted from the YPS, which includes domains such as Emotion Management, Empathy, Initiative, Problem Solving, Responsibility, and Teamwork. Respondents were assigned scores on a scale from one (low) to five (high) based on their self-reported life skills. Below are the breakdowns for each life skill:

- **Emotion Management (Q12a and Q12b):**
  - Q12a: "I easily calm myself down when upset."
  - Q12b: "I stop myself from doing things that might be bad for me."
  - Implemented categories for Emotional Management based on the averages of these two questions:
    - Very Poor Emotional Management: 1.0 to 1.9
    - Poor Emotional Management: 2.0 to 2.9
    - Moderate Emotional Management: 3.0 to 3.9
    - Good Emotional Management: 4.0 to 4.4
    - Excellent Emotional Management: 4.5 to 5.0
- **Empathy (Q12c):**
  - Q12c: "I feel bad when someone's feelings get hurt."
  - Implemented categories for Empathy:
    - Very Poor Empathy: one
    - Poor Empathy: two
    - Moderate Empathy: three
    - Good Empathy: four
    - Excellent Empathy: five
- **Problem Solving (Q12d):**
  - Q12d: "I take time to think about how others might react before saying something."
  - Implemented categories for Problem Solving:
    - Very Poor Problem Solving: one
    - Poor Problem Solving: two

- Moderate Problem Solving: three
- Good Problem Solving: four
- Excellent Problem Solving: five

- **Teamwork (Q12e and Q12f):**
  - Q12e: "I seek help from others when I need it."
  - Q12f: "I respect others' points of view, even if I disagree."
  - Implemented categories for Teamwork based on the averages of these two questions:
    - Very Poor Teamwork: 1.0 to 1.5
    - Poor Teamwork: 1.6 to 2.5
    - Moderate Teamwork: 2.6 to 3.5
    - Good Teamwork: 3.6 to 4.5
    - Excellent Teamwork: 4.6 to 5.

Relationship with Staff/Volunteers (Q11)

Young people were asked to agree or disagree with statements regarding their relationship with staff at the organisation where they participate in youth activities. These statements focused on trust, staff reliability, and whether staff listened to the young person. Average responses for sub questions a: "I feel able to trust them", b: "They do what they say they'll do", c: "They have listened to me") were aggregated and grouped into the following four-point scale. Responses marked as "Not Sure", and N/A were excluded from the averages:

- Very Poor Relationship: 1.0 to 2.0
- Poor Relationship: 2.01 to 3.25
- Good Relationship: 3.26 to 4.25
- Very Good Relationship: 4.26 to 5.0

Q 11d (Feeling of Safety)

Respondents to Question 11d were asked about their feelings of safety, and their responses were categorised into five levels with the following thresholds:

- Very Unsafe: ≤ 1.9
- Unsafe: ≤ 2.9
- Neutral: ≤ 3.9
- Safe: ≤ 4.4
- Very Safe: ≤ 5.0

Anti-social Behaviour (Q13)

Respondents were grouped into four categories based on the averaged of the frequencies of ASB throughout the different sub questions. 'Don't Know' responses were not counted in the calculation of averages. The categories implemented are as follows:

- Very Low Frequency: 1.0 to 1.75 — Rarely exhibits anti-social behaviour.
- Low Frequency: 1.76 to 2.5 — Occasionally exhibits anti-social behaviour.
- High Frequency: 2.51 to 3.25 — Frequently exhibits anti-social behaviour.
- Very High Frequency: 3.26 to 4.0 — Very frequent anti-social behaviour.

Limitations for survey analysis and interpretation

Social desirability bias[24]: As delivery staff have distributed the survey there is a risk of bias. This has been mitigated by designing the questions using existing and relevant validated surveys, as well as allowing participants to self-complete, whilst having staff there to support them if issues of literacy arise.

Attribution issues: The MHF is one of several funds delivered by both DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund. Participating young people may have taken part in other programmes before, during, or after their engagement with MHF. Although each programme / fund aims to develop a specific set of skills, they are all designed to enhance young people's personal skills. This created an attribution challenge for the evaluation, whereby it is difficult to be sure whether the outcomes achieved by participants are due to their participation in the MHF.

Survey design: Some of the validated scales used were not used in their entirety, and this may have affected their validity (ie they would have been validated on the full scale). This approach was used to reduce survey length and adjust timeframes to the programme delivery timescales.

Survey sample size: Not all young people taking part in the programme completed a survey. Findings are based on a sample size which may not fully reflect the broader range of MHF participants.

Lack of counterfactual group: The feasibility of a comparative counterfactual analysis was explored during the inception phase: a comparison group was not identified. Due to the absence of a comparator group, the evaluation cannot make a robust assessment to determine whether or not the changes (both positive and negative) in any intended outcomes are directly attributable to MHF programme activities, as opposed to other factors.

8.6   Grantholder interviews

MHF grantholders were interviewed as part of our process and impact evaluation. The purpose of the interviews was to gain deeper insight into the types of activities funded by the MHF, grantholders' experiences of applying for and managing their grant, and how their projects benefitted young people, their organisation and the wider community and how they contributed to the broader MHF programme outcomes. The sampling approach for grantholder interviews ensured representation from all geographical regions in England, different grant sizes, and based on type of activity offered to young people where possible (broadly including a mix of general youth provision, detached youth work, arts clubs and sports activities).

31 grantholder interviews were conducted between August and October 2024.

8.7   Site visit interviews and focus groups with young people

Through a partnership with Leaders Unlocked (LU), a group of young evaluators was trained to conduct site visits which involved interviews and an interactive focus group with young people in five different locations. Site visit locations were selected based on the concentration of MHF projects and project type (physical activity vs open access provision). After an initial call to assess suitability, five sites were selected for visits in:

- Blackburn
- Bristol (two were selected from this location)
- Lambeth
- Newcastle

Due to unavailability of one organisation in Bristol the final number of site visits was four, conducted between August and October 2024. Site visit grantholders were given a letter and information sheet to gain consent from parents for young people under 16. These consent forms were confirmed with young evaluators and LU ahead of interviews. YP interviews covered similar themes to the YP survey, including their motivation for joining, what they enjoyed about activities, the benefits or changes they experienced following participation, their relationship with staff and volunteers and their views on ASB. Young evaluators were trained to gain consent from participants above 16 in person in advance of the interviews. Participants had two weeks to withdraw their statements following their interview in case they wished to. Separate interview guides were developed for under 16s to ensure the topics covered were age appropriate. In total, the young evaluators conducted **41 interviews** and **three focus group discussions** across the four sites.

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[24] Social desirability bias, ie the respondents might wish to please the delivery staff and try to provide answers to the survey they though were 'right' in the eyes of this key reference person/ delivery staff.

Some young people interviewed may also have taken part in group discussions. Following the conclusion of the site visits, the young evaluators presented the analysed results of the site visit interviews and focus groups in an online workshop to DCMS, The National Lottery Community Fund and the evaluation partners.

8.8 Wider stakeholder interviews and community group discussions

Wider stakeholders were identified across the four sites where site visits took place to provide further context on youth service provision and ASB in the local area. We used a combination of web search and contacts from MHF grantholders at each site to identify potential interviewees. Participants ranged from local PCCs, council members and local VCS organisations. Interview topic guides were tailored to each participant group but broadly covered their role and activities, local context for ASB, perceptions of young people and whether they were aware of or had thoughts about the MHF programme.

Ultimately, we reached out to 81 contacts and were able to interview **11 participants** between August and October 2024. Most participants were from local VCS organisations that worked with young people with representation from local councillors. No PCCs were available for interview despite multiple emails and reminders. It is likely that this will continue to be the case in future rounds of data collection. We will explore using existing relationships and contacts to source these interviews in future rounds. The evaluation also conducted an in-person group discussion with older people in one of the site visit locations to gather insights into community perceptions of young people, ASB and MHF funded activities. The team plans to conduct further community group discussions for future site visits but has not drawn on data from this individual group discussion for this interim report as the insights from it are not in any way generalisable to wider MHF activities.

8.9 DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund interviews

As part of our process evaluation, we interviewed members of staff from DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund to understand MHF design processes, its objectives, how DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund worked together and key decisions around programme development.

Four interviews have been conducted in total of which three are with The National Lottery Community Fund's staff (three interviews were in June with an earlier interview in February 2024) and one was with DCMS staff.

8.10 Analysis

8.10.1 Summer Funding survey

We received 198 raw survey responses consisting of 135 complete responses and 63 partial responses. A thorough data cleaning process was conducted. Partial responses were assessed to identify 'strong partials' for inclusion in our survey analysis. This process yielded 137 usable responses (comprising of 127 complete and ten partial responses). We conducted a review of the quality of responses and identified and removed outliers in the dataset. Data cleaning ensured all responses were in the appropriate format for analysis in Excel. The survey included a routing question to determine if the respondent's organisation had finished delivering activities funded through the MHF summer funding, or if they were still ongoing. Based on this, respondents were asked nearly identical questions, with wording tailored to fit their delivery status. We combined responses for the corresponding finished and ongoing questions and analysed them as a single group rather than splitting responses for analysis.

We conducted an analysis of survey results, producing descriptive statistics for each question. For questions requiring respondents to provide a numerical response, we first offered the option to provide an exact number. If respondents did not know the exact number, they left the box blank. On the following page they were asked to provide an estimate within a range. When developing charts and graphs, we assigned exact numbers to the ranges used by those providing an estimate.

When calculating the minimum totals (eg calculating the number of additional hours of youth provision per week), we used exact numbers for those who provided them. For respondents who provided an estimate, we used the lower bound of the range selected to avoid overestimating the totals.

8.10.2 Grantholder survey

We received 180 raw survey responses consisting of 146 complete responses and 34 partial responses. A thorough data cleaning process was conducted. Partial responses were assessed to identify 'strong partials' for inclusion in our survey analysis. This process yielded 144 usable responses (comprising of 144 complete responses as all the partial responses were unusable due to either duplication with complete responses or insufficient completion of questions). We conducted a review of the quality of responses and

identified and removed outliers in the dataset. Data cleaning ensured all responses were in the appropriate format for analysis in Excel. We conducted an analysis of survey results, producing descriptive statistics for each question.

8.10.3 Qualitative analysis

Interviews with grantholders, stakeholders and DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund staff were conducted online over MS Teams and lasted between 45 to 90 minutes, depending on the stakeholder groups. These were recorded for transcription purposes. Interview recordings were transcribed directly into an analysis framework with separate spreadsheets dedicated to each stakeholder group. Qualitative data from young people interviews and focus groups was compiled into notes by LU and then shared with RSM in MS Word format. The data was coded into the analysis framework with relevant sections from the interviews and focus groups transcribed to corresponding sections in the framework. This framework was structured around the interview guides for each stakeholder group which were driven by the MHF research questions and objectives.

Themes and trends were identified for each section of the framework for different stakeholder groups with keyword searches employed to draw out evidence against specific outcomes. The qualitative framework will be updated iteratively as we conduct interviews and find new themes that will stimulate targeted discussions in forthcoming interviews.

Whilst most outcomes and impacts are expected to be realised in later years of delivery, the interviews provide important context on the set-up processes and initial delivery of projects and emerging outcomes and impacts.

8.10.4 Dose-response

In the absence of a suitable comparison or control group, we have proposed that the most feasible approach to examine the impact of the MHF would be a dose-response study with clearly defined key evaluation questions (KEQs). A study employing dose-response analysis aims to detail the relationship between a dose (an activity funded by the MHF, or multiple activities) and the resulting response (outcomes for young people). It does so by examining how differences in activity frequency relate to outcomes, with the hypothesis that greater participation leads to better results. We recognise that the dose-response analysis does not address issues such as selection effects, but this approach allowed for an assessment of the potential impact that these effects might have on the results (e.g., by comparing the impact for those with various levels of engagement, characteristics, geography).

However, as an observational method, it identifies associations rather than proving causality. It is important to account for differences in risk levels among individuals, as those more "at risk" may receive more interventions. Without fully controlling for such factors—observable or not—findings may be biased. While statistical adjustments (e.g., regression) can address some disparities, unobservable factors like family or peer influences may still skew results. To examine this does-response relationship, we formulated a set of Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) that the young people survey was designed to address.

Inferring group size and statistical significance from demographic and engagement data using the dose-response approach is theoretically feasible but impractical due to low response rates among certain sub-groups, which likely prevent meaningful statistical conclusions.

8.10.5 Contribution analysis

The evaluation team formulated five contribution statements in consultation with DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund. Collectively, these statements reflect the different ways in which the MHF was expected to contribute to impacts for young people, organisations and communities, as illustrated by the MHF ToC (see Annex A – Theory of Change).

Contribution analysis is an iterative approach that draws on evidence as it emerges to determine whether a programme or project is contributing to desired impacts, how strong the evidence for this contribution is, or whether other factors potentially explain observed impacts.

For this interim report, the evaluation assessed what early evidence exists against each contribution statement to reflect on the validity of the ToC and the likelihood that the evaluation will be able to assess different impacts for different groups.

9. ANNEX D – DATA TABLES

9.1.1 Description of young people survey sample tables

Q1: Age – n = 431

Age categories	N of respondents	% of respondents
Younger than 11	20	4.64%
11 years old	52	12.06%
12 years old	76	17.63%
13 years old	74	17.17%
14 years old	53	12.30%
15 years old	60	13.92%
16 years old	42	9.74%
17 years old	26	6.03%
18 years old	11	2.55%
older than 18	17	3.94%

Q2: England's Region – n = 426

England's Region	N of respondents	% of respondents
North West	81	19.01%
West Midlands	65	15.26%
London	59	13.85%
North East	57	13.38%
Yorkshire and the Humber	55	12.91%
East Midlands	44	10.33%
East of England	32	7.51%
South West	22	5.16%
South East	11	2.58%

Q3: Gender Identity – n =429

Gender	N of respondents	% of respondents
Male	257	59.91%
Female	162	37.76%
Other/ prefer not to say	10	2.33%

Q4: Ethnic Background – n =431

Ethnicity	N of respondents	% of respondents
White	207	48.03%
Asian or Asian British	109	25.29%
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	57	13.23%
Dual or multiple ethnic groups	37	8.58%
Other ethnic group	13	3.02%
Prefer not to say	8	1.86%

Q5: Times per week attending MHF activities – n = 430

Times a week	N of respondents	% of respondents
Once a week	139	32.25%
2 times a week	141	32.71%
3 times a week	50	11.60%
4 times a week	48	11.14%
5 times a week	37	8.58%
More than 5 times a week	15	3.48%

Q6: Hours per week attending MHF activities – n = 429

Hours a week	N of respondents	% of respondents
1-2 hours per week	87	20.19%
3-4 hours per week	161	37.35%
5-6 hours per week	57	13.23%
7-8 hours per week	32	7.42%
9-10 hours per week	18	4.18%
11-12 hours per week	20	4.64%
13-14 hours per week	9	2.09%
15+ hours per week	18	4.18%
Don't know	27	6.26%

Q7: Change in participation in MHF activities in the previous six months – n = 431

Change in participation	N of respondents	% of respondents
Increased	249	57.77%
Stayed the same	128	29.70%
Decreased	17	3.94%
Don't know	37	8.58%

Q8: MHF activities – n = 391

Activity	N of respondents	% of respondents
Sports / physical activities	193	49.36%
Hanging out	86	21.99%
Clubs and workshops	80	20.46%
Mentoring and volunteering	22	5.63%
Various activities	10	2.56%

Q9: Wellbeing

	1 – not happy at all	2	3	4	5 – completely happy	Total
a. Your school or work	11.67% (49)	11.43% (48)	30.48% (128)	28.10% (118)	18.33% (77)	420
b. Your appearance	3.57% (15)	8.81% (37)	21.67% (91)	33.10% (139)	32.86% (138)	420
c. Your family	3.33% (14)	4.29% (18)	13.33% (56)	24.52% (103)	54.52% (229)	420
d. Your friends	0.95% (4)	3.33% (14)	14.05% (59)	30.24% (127)	51.43% (216)	420

Q10: Confidence

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
a. I feel confident to make new friends	27.10% (116)	45.79% (196)	21.26% (91)	3.27% (14)	2.57% (11)	428
b. I like to try new activities	39.86% (171)	43.11% (185)	12.35% (53)	3.50% (15)	1.17% (5)	429
c. I feel confident talking to adults	35.05% (150)	44.39% (190)	14.49% (62)	4.67% (20)	1.40% (6)	428
d. I feel confident saying 'no' to my friends	34.19% (146)	37.94% (162)	17.79% (76)	8.43% (36)	1.64% (7)	427

Q11: Relationship with staff

	1 – Strongly disagree	2 – Disagree	3 – Not sure	4 – Agree	5 – Strongly agree	N/A – did not engage with any staff	Total
a. I feel able to trust them	10.31% (44)	1.17% (5)	6.32% (27)	27.63% (118)	53.17% (227)	1.41% (6)	427
b. They do what they say they'll do	9.62% (41)	1.88% (8)	9.86% (42)	35.92% (153)	41.55% (177)	1.17% (5)	426
c. They have listened to me	8.67% (37)	1.41% (6)	4.45% (19)	36.53% (156)	47.07% (201)	1.87% (8)	427
d. I feel safe while participating in MHF activities at my youth organisation	8.73% (37)	1.18% (5)	4.01% (17)	25.71% (109)	59.20% (251)	1.18% (5)	424

Q12: Life skills

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Total
a. I easily calm myself down when feeling upset.	4.88% (21)	17.21% (74)	38.84% (167)	30.23% (130)	8.84% (38)	430
b. I easily stop myself from doing things that might be bad for me.	3.97% (17)	11.92% (51)	29.44% (126)	36.92% (158)	17.76% (76)	428
c. I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt.	4.19% (18)	9.32% (40)	28.89% (124)	35.66% (153)	21.91% (94)	429
d. I take time to think about how others might react before saying something.	6.34% (27)	15.02% (64)	37.32% (159)	29.34% (125)	11.97% (51)	426
e. I seek help from others when I need it.	6.28% (27)	20.00% (86)	34.88% (150)	27.67% (119)	11.16% (48)	430
f. I respect other points of view, even if I disagree.	3.27% (14)	8.18% (35)	35.51% (152)	35.28% (151)	17.76% (76)	428

Q13: ASB

	Never or almost never	Sometimes	Frequently	Very Frequently	Don't know	Total
a. I have annoyed, or sworn at strangers (adults or people older than me)	44.94% (191)	32.71% (139)	10.82% (46)	7.53% (32)	4.00% (17)	425
b. I have got into fights with other young people	51.53% (219)	29.88% (127)	8.24% (35)	8.24% (35)	2.12% (9)	425
c. My neighbours complained to my family because I was being loud	71.63% (303)	15.13% (64)	3.07% (13)	4.49% (19)	5.67% (24)	423
d. I have hung out with my friends outside shops or on the streets at night	40.33% (173)	30.54% (131)	13.29% (57)	14.22% (61)	1.63% (7)	429
e. I have deliberately broken, scratched or damaged things of public use (in streets, cinemas, dance halls, railway carriages/stations, buses, etc.)	71.76% (305)	19.76% (84)	2.82% (12)	3.29% (14)	2.35% (10)	425
f. I have spray painted walls, traffic signs or other signs	84.43% (358)	9.67% (41)	2.36% (10)	1.89% (8)	1.65% (7)	424
g. I have used drugs (balloons, weed, pills, etc.)	80.14% (339)	10.87% (46)	3.07% (13)	2.84% (12)	3.07% (13)	423
h. I have dropped litter in the street.	34.91% (148)	41.27% (175)	13.44% (57)	8.02% (34)	2.36% (10)	424

9.1.2 Data tables for KEQs where a trend was identified

KEQ 1: Do those who receive more activities report higher levels of wellbeing and confidence?

- NO. The dose-response analysis provided **moderate evidence** that those who receive more activities report fewer positive feelings about school or work. There was no variation by individual characteristics due low sample size.

Level of wellbeing question categories (Q9a)	Average attendance a week (times a week) (Q5)	No. of respondents
1 – Not happy at all	3.10	49
2	2.77	48
3	2.44	128
4	2.25	118
5 – Completely happy	2.13	77

Variation calculated between Q9a (one and five categories) over Q5 categories: [(3.10-2.13)/6] = 16.16%.

- YES. The dose-response analysis provided **moderate evidence** indicating that those who receive more activities report a higher confidence to say no to friends (ie resilience to peer pressure). There was no variation by individual characteristics due low sample size.

Level of confidence question categories (10d)	Average attendance a week (times a week) (Q5)	No. of respondents
1 – Strongly disagree	2	7
2	1.97	36
4	2.43	162
5 – Strongly agree	2.51	145

Variation calculated between Q10d (one and five categories – category one has a low n) over Q5 categories: [(2.51-1.97)/6] = 9%.

KEQ 2: Is there evidence that those receiving a specific activity report higher levels of wellbeing and confidence?

- PARTIALLY. The dose-response analysis provided **weak evidence** indicating those attending sports and physical activities report higher positive feelings about the way they look / their appearance. There is no variation by individual characteristics due low sample size.

Type of activity (Q8)	Average of wellbeing level 1 - not happy at all; 5 – completely happy (Q9b)	N of respondents
Sports/ physical activity	4.08	193
Hanging out	3.60	86
Clubs and workshop	3.73	80
Mentoring	3.77	22
Various activities	3.10	10

Variation calculated between Q8 (Sports/ physical activities and hanging out / clubs and workshop) over Q9 categories: [4.08 - (3.60 + 3.73)/2] /5 = 8.3%.

KEQ 6: Do those who receive more activities develop a trusted relationship with GH staff / volunteers?

- PARTIALLY. The dose-response analysis provided **weak evidence** indicating that those who receive more activities: are less able to trust staff; do not feel listened to; feel less safe. There is no variation by individual characteristics due low sample size.

Relationship with staff statements categories (11a)	Average attendance per week (times per week) (Q5)	N of respondents
1 – Strongly disagree	2.70	44
2	2	5
4	2.20	118
5 – Strongly agree	2.44	226

Variation calculated between Q11a (one and five categories – category two has a low n) over Q5 categories: (2.70 - 2.44) /6 = 4%.

'Feeling listened to' categories (11b)	Average attendance per week (times per week) (Q5)	N of respondents
1 – Strongly disagree	2.71	41
2	2.88	8
4	2.33	153
5 – Strongly agree	2.40	176

Variation calculated between Q11b (one and five categories – category two has a low n) over Q5 categories: (2.71 - 2.40) /6 = 5%.

'Feeling listened to' categories (11c)	Average attendance per week (times per week) (Q5)	N of respondents
1 – Strongly disagree	2.76	37
2	2.67	6
4	2.22	156
5 – Strongly agree	2.47	200

Variation calculated between Q11c (one and five categories – category two has a low n) over Q5 categories: (2.76 - 2.47) /6 = 4.87%.

'Feeling safe' categories (11d)	Average attendance per week (times per week) (Q5)	N of respondents
1 – Strongly disagree	2.76	37
2	1.8	5
4	2.23	109
5 – Strongly agree	2.44	250

Variation calculated between Q11c one and five categories – category two has a low n) over Q5 categories: (2.76 - 2.44) /6 = 5 %.

KEQ 10: Do those who receive more activities report better life skills?

- PARTIALLY. The dose-response analysis provided **weak evidence** indicating that those who receive more activities report higher emotional skills and empathy. There is no variation by individual characteristics due low sample size.

Higher emotional skills and empathy (12a – frequency of statements)	Average attendance per week (hours) (Q6)	N of respondents
1 – Never	5.17	18
2	4.76	73
3	4.86	149
4	5.29	126
5 – Very often	6.13	35

Variation calculated between Q12a (two and four plus five categories) over Q6 categories: [4.76 - (5.29+6.13)/2] /8 = 9%.

Higher emotional skills and empathy (12c – frequency of statements)	Average attendance per week (hours) (Q6)	N of respondents
1 – Never	6.70	15
2	4.13	35
3	5.36	115
4	5.01	146
5 – Very often	4.92	89

Variation calculated between Q12c (2 and 4+5 categories) over Q6 categories: [4.13 - (5.01+4.92)/2] /8 = 10%.

- PARTIALLY. The dose-response analysis provided **weak evidence** indicating that those who receive more activities report higher levels of impulsivity. There is no variation by individual characteristics due low sample size.

Higher impulsivity (12d – frequency of statements)	Average attendance per week (times a week) (Q5)	N of respondents
1 – Never	2.81	27
2	2.25	63
3	2.36	159
4	2.44	125
5 – Very often	2.24	51

Variation calculated between Q12d (one plus two and four plus five categories) over Q5 categories: [(2.81+2.25)/2 - (2.44+2.24)/2] /6 = 3%.

KEQ 11: Is there evidence that those receiving a specific activity report better life skills?

- PARTIALLY. The dose-response analysis provided **weak evidence** indicating that those who hang out with other young people or adults that work in the centre have a lower need to seek external help. There is no variation by individual characteristics due low sample size.

Type of activity (Q8)	Average of frequencies of need for external help 1-never; 5–very often (Q12e)	N of respondents
Sports/ physical activity	3.31	193
Hanging out	2.96	89
Clubs and workshop	3.26	80
Mentoring	3.14	22
Various activities	3.40	15

Variation calculated between Q8 (Sports/ physical activities and hanging out / clubs and workshop) over Q9 categories: [3.31 - (2.96+3.26)/2] /5 = 4%.

KEQ 15: Do those who receive more activities report lower levels of ASB?

- NO. The dose-response analysis provided **moderate evidence** indicating that those who receive more activities report higher levels of ASB activity, particularly annoying strangers and participating in fights with other young people. There is also **emerging evidence** indicating that those receiving more activities tend to hang out outside shops or on the streets at night, and litter in the streets more frequently. Due to low sample size, there is no variation by individual characteristics.

Higher level of ASB – annoying strangers (13a – frequency of statements)	Average attendance per week (hours) (Q6)	N of respondents
1 – Never or almost never	4.92	182
2	4.96	127
4	5.73	43
5 – Very frequently	5.57	30

Variation calculated between Q13a (one plus two and four plus five categories) over Q6 categories: [(4.92+4.96)/2 - (5.73+5.57)/2] /8 = 8.88%.

Higher level of ASB – fights with other young people (13b – frequency of statements)	Average attendance per week (hours) (Q6)	N of respondents
1 – Never or almost never	4.90	205
2	5.13	118
4	5.80	33
5 – Very frequently	5.74	34

Variation calculated between Q13b (one plus two and four plus five categories) over Q6 categories: [(4.90+5.13 - (5.80+5.74)/2] /8 = 9%.

Higher level of ASB – hanging out outside shops (13d – frequency of statements)	Average attendance per week (hours) (Q6)	N of respondents
1 – Never or almost never	4.92	165
2	5.17	122
4	4.52	49
5 – Very frequently	6.02	58

Variation calculated between Q13d (one plus two and four plus five categories) over Q6 categories: [(4.92+5.17)/2 - (4.52+6.02)/2] /8 = 2.8%.

Higher level of ASB – littering (13h – frequency of statements)	Average attendance per week (times) (Q5)	N of respondents
1 – Never or almost never	2.30	148
2	2.45	174
4	2.18	57
5 – Very frequently	2.82	34

Variation calculated between Q13h (one plus two and four plus five categories) over Q6 categories: [(2.30+2.45)/2 - (2.18+2.82)/2] /8 = 2.08%.