

‘IT JUST LIFTS YOU UP’¹

Evaluation of the Transitions Service

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¹ Quote from a young person supported by Transitions, about their experiences of engaging with the service.

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Executive summary

Transitions is a programme which engages young people aged 17-25 at risk of involvement in serious violence. The Transitions programme provides bespoke, open-ended support designed to promote wellbeing, strengthen protective factors and address identified risk factors. Transitions sits within the voluntary sector organisation Future Projects and is co-located at the Baseline Centre (an organisational and community hub in Norwich).

This report details findings from an independent evaluation of Transitions, conducted by a research team from the Institute for Social Justice and Crime, at the University of Suffolk. The mixed methods evaluation included analysis of programme documents and qualitative service data, a stakeholder mapping and Theory of Change workshop with five Future Projects staff and commissioners, interviews with three (former or current) Future Projects staff linked to the programme, storytelling interviews with three young people and two family members supported by Transitions, observations and discussions with four professionals during fieldwork at the Baseline Centre, and a ripple effects mapping workshop with 12 professionals.

Findings indicate that Transitions is aligned with key principles of transitional safeguarding and trauma-informed practice, with the positive relationship between young people and the Youth Connector identified as particularly foundational to the service. Participants (including young people, family members and professionals who took part in the evaluation) described a range of positive impacts for young people linked to accessing Transitions, particularly regarding navigation and support with accessing services and increased hope for the future. Knowing that young people were being supported by a safe, trusted adult enhanced the wellbeing of family members.

During the ripple effects mapping workshop, professional participants described compelling impacts in addressing young people's support needs in relation to safety, justice and wellbeing. Participants also identified positive changes in professional practice and local systems.

Findings also highlighted areas for improvement regarding monitoring and evaluation and trauma-informed practice in relation to staff wellbeing and sustainability.

Recommendations include expanding the team of professionals delivering the Transitions Service (subject to funding), continuing to implement principles of trauma-informed practice to promote staff wellbeing, building capacity in relation to monitoring and evaluation, and investing in digital infrastructure to support data collection and analysis.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report details findings from an independent evaluation of the Norfolk-based Transitions Service (hereon Transitions) conducted by a team from the Institute for Social Justice & Crime at the University of Suffolk.

Transitions is a programme which works with young people who have been referred after being assessed as being potentially vulnerable to involvement in serious violence. At the time of evaluation, Transitions comprised one staff member: the Youth Connector who provides tailored, open-ended, one-to-one support to young people and their families in order to promote wellbeing, strengthen protective factors and address identified risk factors. The service focuses on engaging with young people aged 17.5-25 who are navigating the shift from youth to emerging adulthood, particularly those transitioning from children's services.

Transitions forms part of the Norfolk Community Safety Partnership's (NCSP) fulfilment of the Serious Violence Duty (Home Office, 2022). Transitions sits within the NCSP's overarching public health approach to implementing the duty². The public health approach to violence prevention involves systematically identifying and addressing risk across multiple systems, engaging multiple agencies and actors to promote protective factors and reduce vulnerabilities within the community, with the ultimate aim of realising population-level reductions in violence.

The "road map" for mounting an effective public health response entails four interconnected steps:

1. define and monitor the problem
2. identify risk and protective factors
3. develop and test prevention strategies
4. assure widespread adoption to inform implementation in the most affected communities

(D'Inverno et al, 2025: 1-2)

In line with this approach, under 25s were identified as a priority cohort as analysis of shared NCSP datasets highlighted that this age group was disproportionately affected by serious violence between 2018-23. Moreover, analysis of the NCSP dataset also indicated that children and young people living in Norfolk were more likely to be affected by risk factors associated with involvement in serious violence than their peers in comparator areas³, providing a critical opportunity for timely identification and intervention.

Transitions was developed by, and sits within, Future Projects, a Norwich-based voluntary sector organisation which seeks to address poverty, deprivation and disadvantage in Norfolk (Future Projects, 2025). The service is co-located with the multi-disciplinary Future Support team at the Baseline Centre community hub, which is the organisational

² See Appendix A for supplementary details regarding the NCSP shared dataset and joint strategic needs assessment

³ Based on police data for most similar force group (MSG) areas. MSG are defined as "groups of police force areas that have been found to be the most similar to each other based on an analysis of demographic, social and economic characteristics which relate to crime" (NODA, 2024: 27)

home of Future Projects. This co-location provides access to a range of specialisms including advice and guidance on finance, housing, unemployment, addiction and mental health.

2. Research design and ethics

2.1 Research design

The mixed methods evaluation had two strands, process and impact. The research team employed a participatory approach to explore programme mechanisms and impacts, incorporating programme document review, analysis of anonymised service data, semi-structured and storytelling evaluation interviews, and stakeholder and ripple effects mapping workshops. These methods are explained in further detail in Section 2.4.

The research team identified the following objectives for the evaluation:

1. Explore programme logic, implementation and reach
2. Identify how implementation context shapes, and interacts with, programme delivery and mechanisms of change
3. Capture the distance travelled in promoting capacity building, health and wellbeing among service users
4. Understand the identified risk factors for involvement in serious violence and recorded outcomes to date, assessed through intermediate indicators and stakeholder feedback
5. Explore the extent to which Transitions embodies principles of empowering and trauma-informed practice such as trustworthiness, clear and respectful communication, choice and collaboration, and cultural responsiveness
6. Explore the wider impact of Transitions, attending to unforeseen impacts and ripple effects throughout local systems

2.2 Research questions

To fulfil these objectives, the research team addressed the following research questions:

1. Does emerging/available data suggest that Transitions is building capacity and promoting health and wellbeing among service users?
2. Does emerging/available data suggest that Transitions is supporting service users in accessing protective factors?
3. How do contextual factors facilitate or inhibit the reach, effectiveness and accessibility of Transitions, and how can commissioners, local stakeholders and programme implementers support the mechanisms of change which contribute to positive outcomes for young people?
4. What impact is Transitions having on the local community, including unanticipated and emergent effects?

2.3 Ethics

Data collection, storage and analysis procedures were guided by the University of Suffolk's code of conduct for research policy, and the research design and materials received a favourable opinion from the University Research Ethics Committee in July 2025 (RETH24/087).

2.4 Methodology

The chosen methodology was informed by principles of realist evaluation. Realist evaluations emphasise the importance of taking a ‘theory-driven’ approach, enabling researchers to understand how, for whom and in what circumstances a particular intervention creates change. By exploring how contextual factors shape the effectiveness of an intervention, and the specific ways in which an intervention promotes (or fails to promote) positive change, realist and theory-driven evaluations can produce targeted recommendations for programme adaptation and improvements which are grounded in local experience and expertise. In order to understand the ‘theory’ of how the Transitions programme seeks to create positive impact, the research team employed Theory of Change, a framework which maps the relationship between programme resources, inputs, activities, intended outcomes and outputs. The methodology also incorporated aspects of appreciative inquiry (API) and storytelling evaluation method (SEM).

API is a strengths-based approach to organisational development and evaluation, which invites participants to reflect and build on positive experiences and successes. Researchers drew on API methods when engaging key Transitions stakeholders, including semi-structured API interviews with the current and former Youth Connector, Future Projects Service Manager, and paired participant API interviews during ripple effects mapping.

SEM is an innovative method of capturing and understanding the impact of social change initiatives (Spafford et al, 2025). The aim of SEM is to capture what is most important to storytelling interview participants (‘storytellers’) in their own words, and to understand how and why the intervention has changed things for them.

Similarly, ripple effects mapping (REM) is grounded in API and participatory approaches. REM is a qualitative method, which employs peer interviewing and group reflections, using collaborative mind mapping to visualise the radiating impacts or ‘ripple effects’ from an intervention (Chazdon et al, 2017).

All data collection methods were chosen with the aim of promoting accessibility, agency, safety and wellbeing for a range of participants, particularly young people and family members. However, as further discussed in section 3.7 (Challenges with data collection and lessons learned), the research team’s observations during interviews highlighted a need for increased accessibility and inclusivity, linked to co-production.

Process evaluation data sources

To identify key programme components and underlying Theory of Change for the intervention, evaluators analysed:

- programme documents and local data (see Appendix A for supplementary information)
- stakeholder mapping and Theory of Change workshop with Transitions and Future Projects staff and commissioners ($n = 5$)
- ripple effects mapping workshop with Transitions and Future Projects staff, commissioners and local professionals who have referred to or collaborated with the Transitions Service ($n = 12$)
- storytelling interviews with young people and family members ($n = 5$)⁴
- appreciative inquiry interviews with Transitions and Future Projects staff ($n = 3$)

⁴ To read these powerful stories in full, see the report addendum, which should be read in conjunction with the main report: Allen, K., Stevens, L. & Cooper, L. (2026) Transitions evaluation: Addendum. Stories of change from young people and family members. Institute for Social Justice & Crime, University of Suffolk.

- observations and discussions during fieldwork, engaging with Future Projects staff and local professionals who have referred to or collaborated with the Transitions Service ($n = 4$)

Impact evaluation data sources

In order to explore the distance travelled in building capacity, promoting health and wellbeing, and supporting access to protective factors for young people, researchers conducted a thematic analysis of a range of data, including:

- anonymised service data (qualitative, $n = 18$)
- anonymised service data (quantitative, $n = 13$)
- ripple effects mapping workshop ($n = 12$)
- storytelling interviews with young people and family members ($n = 5$)
- appreciative inquiry interviews with professionals ($n = 3$)
- observations and discussions during fieldwork ($n = 4$)
- publicly available creative outputs (podcast) from young people ($n = 1$)

Data analysis plan

Preliminary quantitative analyses sought to explore the distance travelled in young people's outcomes and wellbeing; however due to limitations with available service data (see section 3.7) this could only be done using descriptive visualisations, rather than engaging in more in-depth inferential analysis.

Qualitative data was mapped and interpreted using a mixture of deductive, or pre-defined, and inductive, or data-driven, codes. Deductive codes were established prior to analysis and designed to correspond to research questions; for example, 'Programme theory/components' or 'Supporting protective factors'. Inductive codes were developed during familiarisation and coding, based on labelling and grouping of potentially salient patterns in the data (for example, 'Being a human').

Anonymised service data, interviews with young people and family members, and discussions with professionals reflected a high degree of convergence in relation to the support needs of young people accessing Transitions, and perceived pathways to positive impact. Interviews with young people and family members were particularly rich and illuminating, providing in-depth insights into what engagement with the service meant to young people.

3. Programme information and key findings

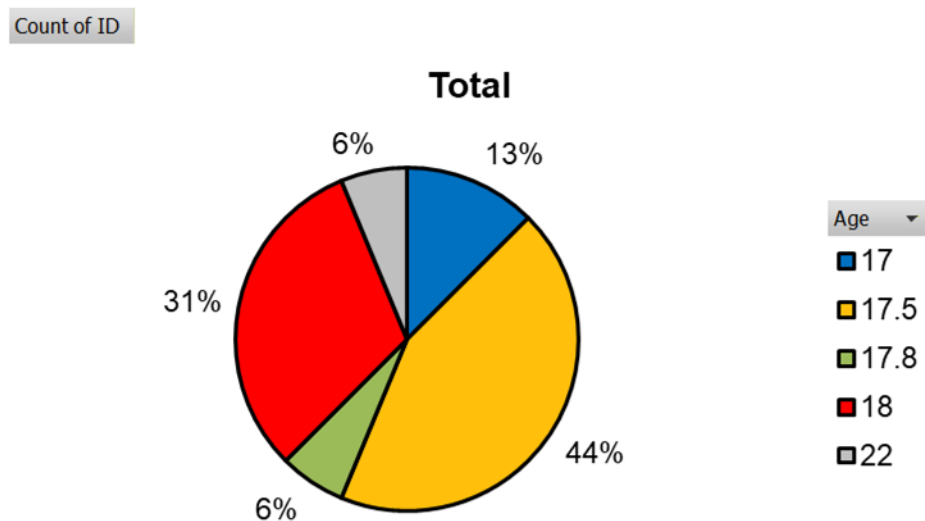
The results section will begin with an overview of Transitions programme participant information, before outlining findings in relation to programme logic and theoretical frameworks. The section continues by outlining how the programme supports wellbeing and promotes protective factors and concludes by exploring pathways to impact identified during ripple effects mapping.

3.1 Programme participant information

Service data for young people who had been referred into and/or engaged with Transitions showed that the age range of young people accessing the service extended from 17-22 years.

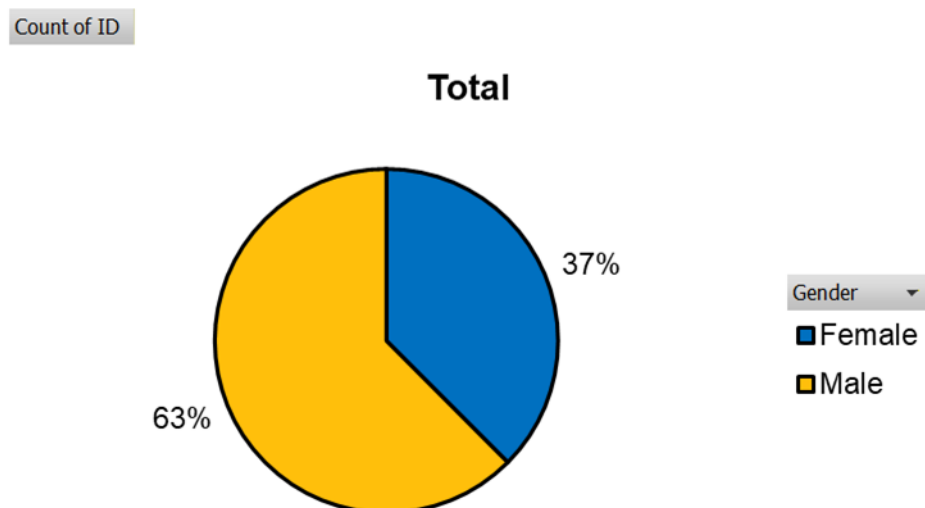
As Figure 1 shows, the highest proportion of young people ($n = 7$) were referred at 17.5 years old, reflecting the aim to engage young people entering this transitional period before they reach the cut-off for children's services at age 18. As further discussed in section 3, bridging this 'cliff edge' for young people nearing adulthood is a foundational aspect of the programme, and forms part of its unique selling point.

Figure 1: Demographics – age at referral/point of accessing service



Around two-thirds (63%) of young people referred into the Transitions Service were male, while just under a third (37%) were female (Figure 2). Given the programme's links to the Serious Violence Duty, this may be related to wider trends in youth justice, where data suggests that boys and young men are significantly overrepresented (Youth Justice Board, 2026).

Figure 2: Demographics – sex



During the course of fieldwork, researchers spoke with three young people and two family members of young people who had engaged with the Transitions Service. To safeguard their anonymity and to reduce the risk of deductive disclosure due to the rich level of detail in their stories⁵, their demographics are not included in the report.

3.2 Key findings: programme logic

3.2.1 Alignment with the wider evidence base

Emerging findings indicate that Transitions is aligned with key principles of transitional safeguarding and trauma-informed practice.

As one interviewee involved in developing the intervention described, Transitions emerged in response to a perceived drop-off in services for young people approaching adulthood, seeking to bridge the gaps in provision.

The idea of this project is that it was a pilot, it was a project of discovery. Services for young people really do drop off, and I don't mean drop off in a gradual manner, it's an absolute cliff edge. It is so abrupt and so stark, and it is literally at the point of them turning 18. The stroke of midnight, so much stuff is cut off from them and they are just expected to become adults and fully operational in an adult world at that point

Participant 3, Future Projects

Transitions focuses specifically on supporting young people who are undergoing transitions that the wider evidence base suggests may increase their vulnerability to harm; for example, when 'aging out' of children's services or leaving the care system as an emerging adult. UK and global literature suggests that care-experienced young people face distinctive challenges linked to navigating the "care cliff", or changing forms and levels of support at age 18, which has been linked to pronounced inequalities in educational attainment, economic stability, criminal justice system involvement, health and wellbeing (Stein & Munro, 2008; Sacker et al, 2021; Palmer, 2022; Picker et al, 2024).

This interviewee's perception of an abrupt and perilous 'cliff edge' is supported by the wider evidence base, which indicates that "older adolescents and young adults can fall through the gaps between children's and adults' services [...] potentially leading to poorer outcomes across the lifespan and heightening the need for costly interventions in later life" (Research in Practice for Adults, 2018: 112).

Analysis of programme documents, interview and workshop data reflected important parallels between the Transitions service's aim – to bridge service gaps and promote safety and wellbeing for young people – and principles of Transitional Safeguarding (TS). TS is grounded in the recognition that "becoming an adult is a process, not a single event" (Cocker et al, 2022: 205). In other words, binary categorisations of childhood/adulthood fail to reflect and respond to the complexities of risk, vulnerability and agency as they are lived and experienced by young people.

TS is a holistic approach for recognizing and meeting the distinctive needs of young people, which emerged in response to challenges such as young people's structural vulnerability to extra-familial harms and their reduced access to support due to age-related service boundaries (Holmes, 2022). The framework "learns from both children's

⁵ Deductive disclosure is when the cumulation of traits and details can lead to an individual becoming identifiable (Sieber, 1992)

and adult's safeguarding practices" (Holmes and Smale, 2018: 3) and is designed not only to keep young people safe but to prepare them for their adult lives, integrating protective and participative principles (Holmes, 2022).

By supporting young people negotiating critical transitions, Transitions operates in line with this body of evidence, seeking to mitigate these developmentally and contextually specific risks and facilitate access to protective factors such as stable housing, education and employment. Qualitative findings suggest that Transitions embodies core principles of both TS and trauma-informed practice (SAMHSA, 2014; Brown, 2017; Holmes, 2022), including:

- a relational and person-centred approach, which recognises the prevalence and significance of trauma:

[Trauma-informed practice] runs through everything that we do. We're always acutely aware of how well do we know this individual? You've got to take it that there's going to be some trauma there somewhere, you know, because you're safer to expect it than to suddenly discover it that it's there so. But also, we don't want to traumatise somebody in the first place⁶

Participant 3, Future Projects

- a participative way of working, which foregrounds choice, voice and the agency of young people, aiming at "working with, not doing to" (**Participant 15, commissioner**).
- a developmental and contextual lens, which is attuned to young people's evolving and individual needs, experiences and circumstances

It's not just that they are putting solutions in place for them, which are protective, it's that they're able to do that work to prepare them to then go on to do that, which I think is a real strength

Participant 6, commissioner

3.2.2 Programme components and Theory of Change

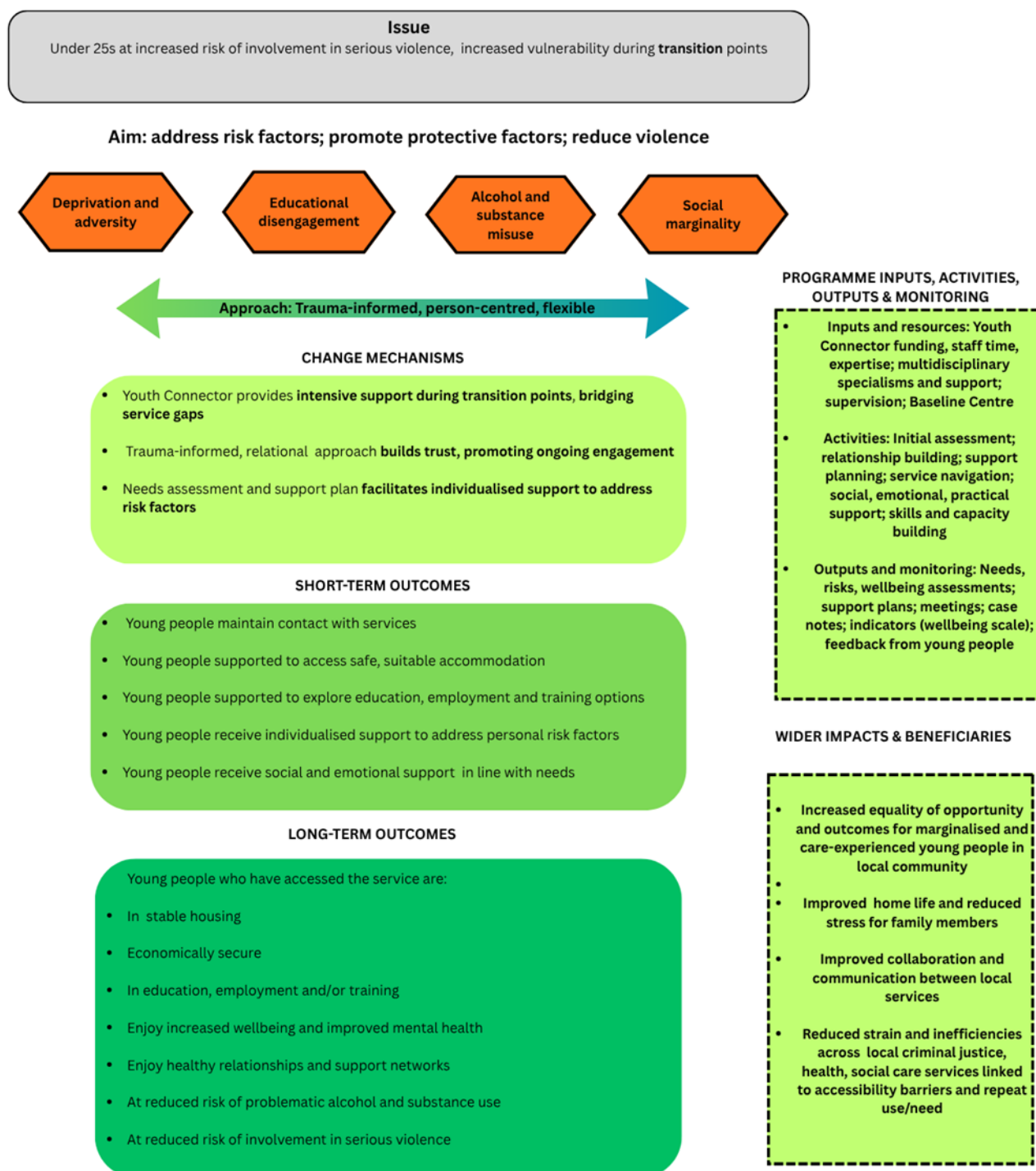
Preliminary document review and discussions during initial stages of the evaluation identified core programme aims, inputs and components, and how these had developed in relation to local context, resources and strategic needs such as:

- the identification of young people as a priority cohort for violence prevention activities
- the local prevalence of risk factors such as adversity and deprivation, substance use, social marginality, and disparities in educational attendance and attainment
- local trust/recognition of Future Projects, and the Baseline Centre as a community hub

A provisional mapping of programme logic (see Figure 3) was shared with key informants at a Theory of Change workshop, including commissioners, programme developers and implementers.

⁶ Participant quotes edited for concision and clarity

Figure 3: Theory of Change



Emerging findings from the qualitative data are broadly consistent with this idealised 'theory' of how the programme seeks to effect change while highlighting additional nuances and dimensions in how the intervention plays out in practice and in real-world contexts, including:

- the central significance of rapport and trust with the Youth Connector, and the open-ended nature of the intervention
- service navigation and advocacy
- evoking brighter futures

Relationship with the Youth Connector

The holistic, open-ended and relational approach of the Youth Connector, and Future Projects more broadly, was perceived to foster trust and promote ongoing engagement, empowering young people to feel that there was someone 'in their corner' as they entered adulthood.

Professionals, young people and family members characterised this way of working in strikingly similar terms, describing it as being 'human' or a 'person', and relating to people as 'names' rather than 'numbers':

It's all about them knowing that you're a person as well. I think that's a massive thing,

Participant 2, Future Projects

Being in the community, they know everyone by name. I think it's a bit different to just a big organisation, right? You're a bit of a number.

Participant 12, Community worker

Before she'd just shut off and wouldn't speak and "Everyone's useless", but she's never said that about Baseline. I think it's because they listen. They're people.

Participant 7, Family member

These lot [at Future Projects] are really laid back. I like the way they do things. They are professionals, but they also act themselves. You know what I mean? If you have your own personality whilst working in a professional manner, it works a lot better

Participant 8, Young person

This unhurried, empathetic and person-centred way of working with young people was seen to facilitate 'real' conversations and a deeper level of engagement, enabling young people to confide their problems and share difficult experiences.

That one-to-one opportunity we've had with the smaller caseloads and the real flexibility built in with the project is uncovering that. Having that time that they would then feel comfortable to open up about certain experiences, really dark experiences

Participant 1, Future Projects

I think that's nice when you just talk to one person, you've got one person in a service where you can go to, and then get that trust and open up. If you don't trust people, you ain't gonna open up, feel relaxed with them and tell them your problems.

Participant 13, Family member

Service navigation and advocacy

From its inception, Transitions was designed to include collaborative support planning and navigation to services, activities and resources which address risk factors and promote protective factors.

Interviews and workshops reflected the importance of this programme component, while also underlining the significance of emotional support and advocacy by the Youth Connector, particularly in relation to accessing services linked to key protective factors such as financial stability and health.

In addition to fulfilling a signposting role, and providing practical support with scheduling and attending appointments, qualitative data suggested that the Youth Connector at times acts as an intermediary and advocate for young people entering adulthood, cushioning the sharp edges of the adult world:

It's really crazy because it's [the change in support and status] literally within a matter of days. Like, you know, they could come to me at the day before their 18th birthday. And it'll be like, right, great. You're an adult now. So I need to teach you everything how to be an adult. And you know, they don't have the ability to be able to sit still in a job centre appointment and actually, if they kept not showing up, then they would get sanctioned and they wouldn't have any money. Then they wouldn't get their rent paid [...] Explaining to the job centre coach. 'This is what this person is like. This is what they've been through. Sometimes you need to take all this into consideration before you start handing out fines and sanctions'

Participant 1, Future Projects

As the quote illustrates, this finding was particularly pronounced in relation to young people's support needs regarding finances (access to welfare benefits), perhaps owing to the particularly high stakes and time sensitive nature of these services. While working to support young people's resilience and capacity building over the longer-term, the Youth Connector also provides a short-term safety net for those who may otherwise fall through the cracks.

Envisioning brighter futures

Before, I wouldn't even think about doing my GCSEs because I was so let down by myself not passing. Whereas now I believe I can do it.

Participant 9, Young person

Engagement with the Youth Connector was also perceived to support young people in envisaging alternative pathways for themselves, challenging the idea that a brighter future is unattainable, or that their lives are forever defined by their present situation or past actions.

The wider literature suggests that this may be a particularly important mechanism of change as hope for a better future – and the belief that this is personally attainable – is key for individuals working towards recovery from substance use (Ogilvie & Carson, 2025) and desistance from offending behaviours (Villeneuve et al, 2019)

A majority of ours have been in very complex situations, potentially in quite chaotic family households. And you know, it was kind of showing them the other side of the coin really. And that that doesn't need to define you.

Participant 3, Future Projects

These kids think that they've got absolutely no chance, no hope. This is all they're going to know. But we give them an insight into what a quiet life could be – not having to look over your shoulder, and not having to run from the law.

Participant 5, Future Projects

Hope “links people to their future” and builds resilience (Ogilvie & Carson, 2025: 10), empowering people to avoid potentially detrimental situations and behaviours in order to pursue their goals.

As one young person described, having tangible reminders of the future you want to build can support positive behaviours during stressful situations:

I had really dirty attitude problems and always wanted to have a fight. Just a really angry person. Learning how to deal with certain situations has helped a lot. There was constant reminding [by the Youth Connector] about the job I wanted to do, because I'd always forget and then just go “fuck it”. Obviously having someone there to fall back on and always message you helped a lot.

Participant 8, Young person

These findings regarding programme logic highlight the foundational role of the Youth Connector, whose enduring presence as a stable point of connection was seen to enable young people to engage with and trust in the service.

Challenges linked to the Youth Connector's role as a single point of contact

However, findings also shed light on the potential risks or ‘failure modes’ (Ashley et al, 2017) associated with a single professional working intensively, and over a long period, with young people in relation to multiple areas of need.

I understand as well with the service like the Transitions Service how it can all get quite muddly and people often present with multiple different issues which can put an awful lot of pressure on a worker in that service and also can create some unhealthy dependencies as well [...] It can mean that the worker can feel overwhelmed. It can mean that a worker is working outside of their comfort zone. And it also can teach young people [that] this one person will fix all my problems. And that's also not a realistic way to go about life.

Participant 10, Future Projects

The Youth Connector's singular, load-bearing role in the intervention means that they are not only subject to increased pressure but that the boundaries of their role are intrinsically 'muddly' or murky – requiring them to navigate and “boundary span” (Williams, 2002) complex systems and continually adapt their practice in line with young people's evolving strengths and vulnerabilities. This reflects the need in TS to work fluidly across professional borders in order to address multiple or cross-cutting needs which transcend organisational boundaries (Holmes, 2022). However, it may also increase the potential for overwhelm, working outside one's comfort zone, or nurture a sense of dependence on one individual professional.

In order to address these possible 'failure modes' and mitigate operational risk, service developers should consider expanding the team of Youth Connectors and continue to invest in robust clinical and peer supervision to enable sense-checking and reflexivity around professional practice.

3.3 Supporting protective factors

Analysis of qualitative data indicated that most young people engaging with the service had support needs in relation to several thematic areas, most commonly including health and wellbeing, education, employment and finances, criminal justice, safety, and support networks (see Figure 4).

Some of these thematic areas, such as criminal justice involvement and safety, were more prominent in contributions from professionals and family members. Support for the family and promoting a stable home life was also apparent across young people's and family members' contributions.

Indeed, as the following quote illustrates, some family members described life-changing (and even life-saving) impacts related to promoting safety and wellbeing.

If it weren't for Baseline, I think my daughter would be dead. And I think I'd have had a nervous breakdown because I was dealing with it all on my own.

Participant 7, Family member

Other impacts, such as those in relation to health and wellbeing, were widely prevalent across the dataset.

Young people and family members who shared their experiences described a range presenting needs which had been positively impacted through engaging with Transitions, particularly regarding navigation and support with accessing services, substance use and mental wellbeing.

The Youth Connector was really supportive, she would assist her with applications for things, she'd take her to doctors' appointments, she helped her when she was trying to get counselling.

Participant 7, Family member

The Youth Connector has helped me a lot, because I was in a bad place. Just having them there to support you, even though she's not there every second of the day, you know in the back of your mind that they're there and it's quite comforting. That time of the week when me and the Youth Connector see each other, it just lifts you up. It's just having that consistency and someone there that you actually think cares about you, someone you can trust.

Participant 9, Young person

Now I'm only using only two grammes [of drugs per week] and I've kind of just done that by myself only with the Youth Connector's help. That's down to the Youth Connector getting me out to do normal stuff and getting me a routine. She would just take me out if I felt bad, so then I wouldn't have that urge to then go out and be like, "Oh, OK, I need to go use".

Participant 14, Young person

In addition to providing crucial emotional and practical support for young people, the Youth Connector's presence in young people's lives as a trusted, extra-familial adult also increased peace of mind for family members. Having a supportive relationship with a safe, reliable adult outside the family home was framed as developmentally responsive and valuable, empowering young people transitioning into adulthood to navigate new environments and experiences, or manage difficult emotions, without relying solely on family members or being left to 'sink or swim'.

I can see the difference in my daughter, and I know if anything is bothering her the Youth Connector will pick up on it. I think she knows that she can turn to the Youth Connector for anything, and she feels that she can do that. I know if the Youth Connector thinks I need to know anything, she'll tell me. If not, I let them deal with it because I know teenagers don't want to tell their mums things.

Participant 7, Family member

This dynamic conferred wellbeing benefits for family members by re-distributing or sharing the weight of responsibility and concern. While family members remained deeply committed to young people's safety and wellbeing, they were also conscious that the scope for their guidance and involvement was shifting as young people transitioned into adulthood. Equally, they felt that their guidance may be less welcome than that of a trusted 'external' adult.

Participants described similar pathways to impact in relation to promoting financial stability and access to education and employment, with the Youth Connector providing service navigation, emotional support and advocacy that mitigated barriers to services and nurtured young people to see themselves moving forwards.

We're focusing on getting me into education this year, because I dropped out of college in my third year, so I couldn't get my Maths and English. This year is the year I'm gonna get my Maths and English, hopefully.

Participant 9, Young person

My daughter always had very high goals for herself and was set on doing certain things in her career. She wants to learn, she wants to succeed. She is incredibly bright. Her future, I think, is amazing, but her confidence is just rock bottom now. Life had a lot to offer and all of a sudden it feels like the rug's been pulled out. I think she would say she doesn't know what she's going to do now, because every avenue is closed to her in her mind. [...] To have somebody else who's not me and dad saying "It will be OK, there is still a future", and somebody to help her explore those avenues, that's great. It's that knowing how to move forward.

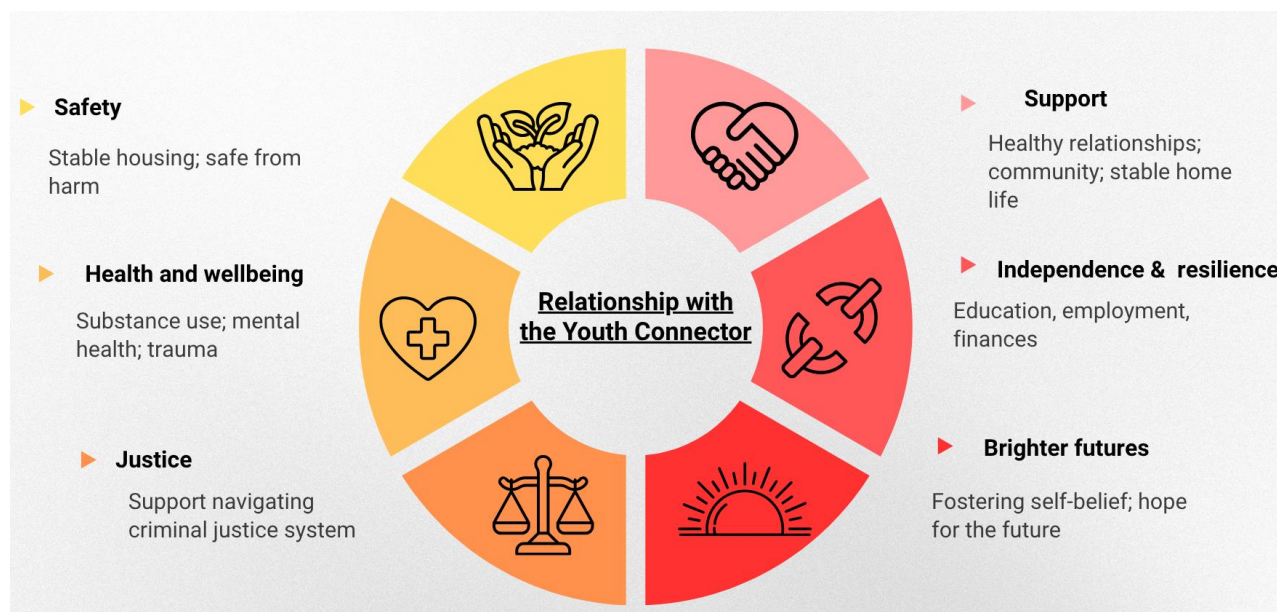
Participant 13, Family member

Notably, in one case the young person expressly characterised this support as enabling them to change their life for the better, with their increased financial stability empowering them to stop selling drugs.

If I didn't have help with the benefits that [the Youth Connector] helped put in place for me, I would have been selling drugs. And I'm happy to admit that because I want people to understand that because I had the right support, it changed my life in a way you can't even imagine

Young Person, Future Projects Podcast (public)

Figure 4: Thematic map of support needs for young people engaging with Transitions, including emergent themes from fieldwork



3.3.1 Quantitative service data

In addition to the rich qualitative evidence supplied by professionals, young people and family members, the research team was provided with quantitative service data about Transitions by Future Projects. This included recording of actions and outcomes and Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) scores, which were collected by the Youth Connector during meetings with young people.

Prior to analysis, this service data was identified as a potentially relevant source of quantitative evidence for the evaluation, specifically to explore the distance travelled in relation to young people's wellbeing over the course of their engagement with the programme. The WEMWBS is a validated scale which is widely used by health and voluntary sector organisations to measure and track changes in wellbeing among service users, and which can therefore serve as a relevant and reliable indicator of longitudinal change (University of Warwick, 2026). However, as further discussed in section 3.7 (Challenges with data collection and lessons learned), collection of this data was inconsistent, and there is insufficient data to conduct inferential analysis that would provide meaningful conclusions regarding impacts on young people's wellbeing. Descriptive visualisations of actions and outcomes and WEMWBS scores are included in Appendix B as supplementary information, but do not inform the key findings of the impact evaluation. Nevertheless, as elaborated in section 3.7, the way in which data is collected, categorised and analysed remains a key recommendation to promote robust monitoring and evaluation in future.

3.4 Contextual factors and risks

This section explores and provides a thematic map of the contextual factors and risks shaping programme delivery and impact (see below for Figure 5 which shows a thematic map of contextual factors and risks, based on emergent findings).

3.4.1 Gaps and barriers in services

As described in further detail in relation to programme logic and theoretical frameworks (3.1.1), the most significant contextual factor, and impetus for the service, is the reduction in service availability and intensity for young people and emerging adults. By bridging this gap in provision, Transitions was seen to mitigate the risk that young people experiencing this fall off in services would be at increased risk of involvement in serious violence, and increased vulnerability to harm more broadly.

Another important contextual factor, and one which was commonly acknowledged by young people, family members and professionals, was the tendency for young people to feel let down by other services, and therefore understandably wary of new professionals and organisations.

This hesitancy was particularly linked to a lack of continuity in services, with young people being expected to re-tell their story to multiple professionals before they had the opportunity to build a relationship.

I think the problem with social services nowadays is that they never really like to put you with the same person for too long. And then when that happens, you end up, you never feel comfortable with no one, you never build a relationship with no one. And then they're never going to be able to help you, if there's no relationship there

Young Person, Future Projects Podcast (public)

In another case, one family member described stigmatising and uncaring responses by professionals which they felt diminished the young person's sense of self-worth.

The school used to say to her that she's useless, she's going to end up in these naughty schools, "You'll become nothing". Once she went to the high school, all they kept wanting was just chuck her out. You know, not help, just chuck them out. Obviously, that's damaged her as well because she's been told she's useless and she'll never make nothing of herself.

Participant 7, Family member

This is a foundational aspect of the wider context in which Transitions is operating, both contributing to the need for the service and underlining the importance of engaging young people in an open-ended, trauma-informed and person-centred manner.

This also underlines why effecting a warm handover prior to young people reaching the 'care cliff' or drop off in services as they reach the threshold of adulthood is particularly important, and why the absence of this was identified as a barrier to effective engagement.

3.4.2 Funding climate

We need sustained long-term funding for interventions such as this because they make such a difference.

Participant 15, Commissioner

I just think we're all battling against changes in funding, and funding streams from central government have a huge impact on projects like this [...] You know, that shifting sands of trying to get money to fund projects is huge. And yeah, it's really important that we get some consistency, not only for the projects like Futures, but also for the young people themselves.

Participant 21, Health

The reliance on short-term project funding to staff and to deliver the service was widely perceived as an important contextual stressor, and a risk to the sustained and effective functioning of Transitions.

This finding echoes evidence from several recent studies engaging professionals from voluntary sector services in the UK, particularly those specialising in intensive, long-term support work with potentially vulnerable service users (Adisa et al, 2020; Barter et al, 2018; Cooper et al, 2025).

This precarity was seen to negatively impact both professionals – most notably the Youth Connector themselves – and young people, providing an additional source of anxiety and increasing the risk of further disruption and discontinuity. It was also felt to be at odds with the Transitions 'offer' of providing needs-led and open-ended support, creating an untenable contradiction between theory and practice.

I don't like that for young people. If we're starting something like we've got no end date by saying, "You know, you can work with us as long as you know, as long as you need". But then actually that's defined by someone saying, "Actually, you might lose your job and we can't recommission it".

Participant 1, Future Projects

I was not going to come back, to be honest, when the previous Youth Connector left. Then I actually met the current Youth Connector and it was alright. But I don't really get along with meeting new people, having to explain everything again.

Participant 9, Young person

3.4.3 Rurality and inequality

Norfolk's rurality – and the striking proximity of pockets of affluence and deprivation – was characterised as another significant contextual factor, not just for Transitions, but for Future Projects as a whole.

It's like this barrier. If there's a support service over there [in a different area of the city], it's a different community, it's a different world. I can walk 4 minutes that way and I will be standing in front of half a million-pound house by the river. Lovely, beautiful scenery, picnic spots, gorgeous place to live. I could walk 30 seconds that way and there'll be people who can't feed their kids. So they're very ultra-localised, so these pockets of neighbourhoods,

street-by-street. And that's something that I think larger services that aren't embedded in these communities, don't understand.

Participant 11, Future Projects

Professional participants noted that the size and rurality of the county made accessing services more challenging and time-consuming for young people, particularly those living outside of urban hubs.

One of the girls, there was nothing in her area. She'd have to take, like, an hour bus drive to get to something even close to her, but then they didn't have any space available. So then it was a 2 hour bus journey for her to get into [city centre], which I think she's still doing now.

Participant 1, Future Projects

Practical support from the Youth Connector in scheduling and attending appointments may act to mitigate some of these accessibility barriers, increasing young people's comfort in navigating unfamiliar services and locations, and reducing the time spent in transit for young people.

A lot of the time I'd be out in my car. So one day I'd be, you know, having to pick someone up in [coastal town] taking them to a counselling appointment in [city], then taking them back to [coastal town] and then coming back to the office

Participant 1, Future Projects

You obviously need your own car to do my job. Sometimes they can get the bus, but public transport is not the best in Norfolk, as you probably know, because some places are so rural. I mean, it's great if people live in [city], but if they don't it is harder for them. But I mean, I'm always of the view like, I'm more than happy to go and see them. I don't mind going for a drive to go and see them, or picking them up.

Participant 2, Future Projects

Workload and demand

However, there were important comments which underlined the extensive time commitment for the Youth Connector, and the potential operational challenges linked to a single peripatetic staff member covering a large, rural county, including increased vulnerability to overwork and burnout for staff members.

Lots and lots of driving. So it was really hard because I was only contracted for 30 hours and I was covering all of Norfolk. So it's really hard to like try and put all my notes together and kind of really try to schedule my time because also you turn your phone on and nearly every day we've some sort of manic incident that's happened with these young people. So you're responding to that whilst trying to do with the appointment that you've booked in with somebody and it's really, really difficult. You are fighting fires constantly

Participant 1, Future Projects

These experiences highlight both the pivotal role of the Youth Connector, and the increased risk, and reduced flexibility, associated with the service being delivered across a large area by just one staff member.

Strikingly, when reflecting on how Transitions could build on its successes and increase its reach locally, participants most commonly referred to a need for increased staffing and sustainable funding, underlining the centrality of resource issues to contributors' understanding of the local (and national) implementation context.

Participants who commented on these factors noted that having multiple Youth Connectors would both increase the reach of the intervention, facilitating countywide coverage and responsiveness, and serve to mitigate potential wellbeing risks associated with being a one-person team.

I would desperately like to have a team. You know, maybe four or five members of staff, full-time equivalents, so that we could take more [young people]. But also the sheer makeup of the county. You know, we have got some extremely rural areas and some real pockets of wealth against those pockets of deprivation. And, you know, just the whole landscape. To have a team you can navigate that really, really well. Having one person... Having one person, regardless of how many people are within Future Support, if you're the only one delivering a project you are, you are the only one delivering a project and that's really isolating.

Participant 3, Future Projects

3.4.4. Future Projects and the Baseline Centre as a community hub

Future Projects' reputation within the local community – and its organisational hub at the Baseline Centre, in Norwich – were identified both as crucial contextual factors for understanding the Transitions Service's role within the local ecosystem, and as powerful mechanisms in promoting local change.

The Baseline Centre was identified as a valuable resource for engaging young people and developing relationships because of its familiarity, access to positive activities and co-location of support services.

That is a real strength of this project. Future Projects are really well thought of. They're really highly thought of, and that in itself facilitates their ability to be able to link out to the right places and bring in the right expertise that these children and young adults require.

Participant 5, Commissioning

It also afforded a safe, comfortable 'third place' for young people to work and relax. Access to third places has been theorised as a crucial (albeit dwindling) resource for communities, fostering connections and a sense of individual and collective resilience (Platts Fowler & Robinson, 2016).

It's lively, there's music, there's food and people generally are having a laugh here and you know it's just a nice environment. So many people turn up and say, actually you can just feel it's a really supportive environment. And it just brings that different element.

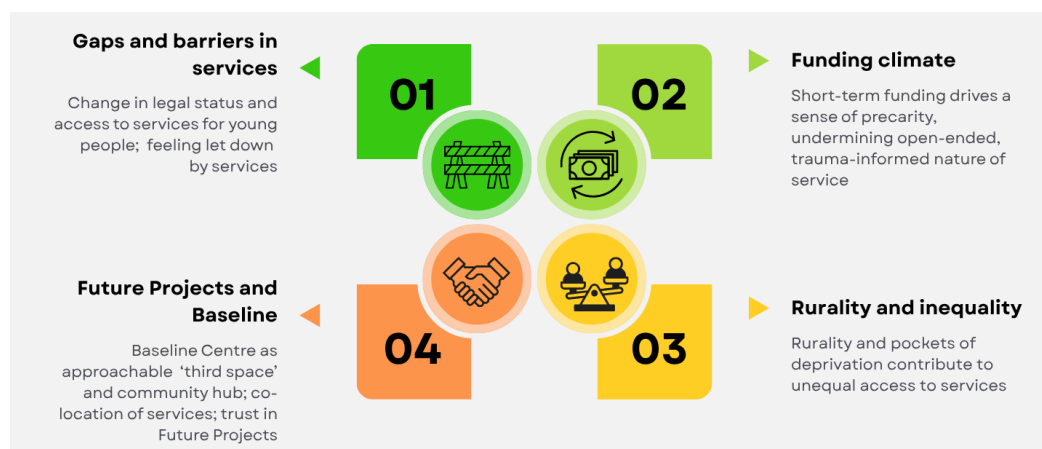
Participant 3, Future Projects

I used to come here [Baseline] every other day to begin with, with the first Youth Connector, and then they helped me get placements. These lot [at Baseline Centre] will do every activity but I just didn't really get involved in anything. It would just be me chilling really, and having somewhere to actually relax instead of hearing a lot of

negative stuff. I would either just do coursework for my current job or just chill or just have some conversations with some workers.

Participant 8, Young person

Figure 5: Implementation context – thematic map of key factors, based on emerging findings



3.5 Ripples to wider impact

During the concluding stage of the evaluation (January 2026), the research team engaged 12 professionals in a ripple effects mapping workshop, including Transitions and Future Projects staff, commissioners and local professionals who have referred to or collaborated with the Transitions Service.

Workshop participants described compelling impacts across the wider community, evoking a holistic, systems-aware approach to engaging young people, addressing risk and supporting protective factors across the individual, organisational and systemic levels. Due to the size of the map, a link is shared here and a full version can be found in Appendix C: <https://app.xmind.com/share/rMYNkdaO?xid=F6tpj00y>

Participants detailed a number of striking examples of positive change and capacity building linked to the domains outlined in Figure 4 (Thematic map of support needs for young people engaging with Transitions), notably including:

- **Health and wellbeing**

One workshop participant described how collaborating with the Youth Connector supported positive change not only for the individual young person, but in better equipping professionals and wider systems to meet young people's needs in future.

What we managed to do collectively from working closely with the Youth Connector was come and meet the client where they were at. We were able to share those skills that we had between us. It also meant that we were able to set quite firm boundaries with the client around where our part of that role ended and exactly what our part of their support and treatment was. It opened up those lines of communication on a much wider scale and alleviated some of the pressure that can be so present when working with a really risky and quite poorly young person.

Participant 10, Future Projects⁷

- **Safety and Justice**

Another participant observed how their consistent, non-threatening presence at the Baseline centre fostered trust in policing, empowering community members to share intelligence about potential risks to young people or access guidance about navigating the criminal justice system.

People, the younger generation who would come there regarding this project [Transitions], would see me always in here, having cups of teas with staff and chatting or sitting outside with members of public. And I think over a period of time, people see me coming in here and the Youth Connector can explain who I am and what I do.

A member of the public contacted the Youth Connector with concerns about a young person they were looking after. So this community member trusted the Youth Connector to make that phone call. So I gave her the advice. What needs to be done, what not to do, and we talked through it together and we've got that situation resolved.

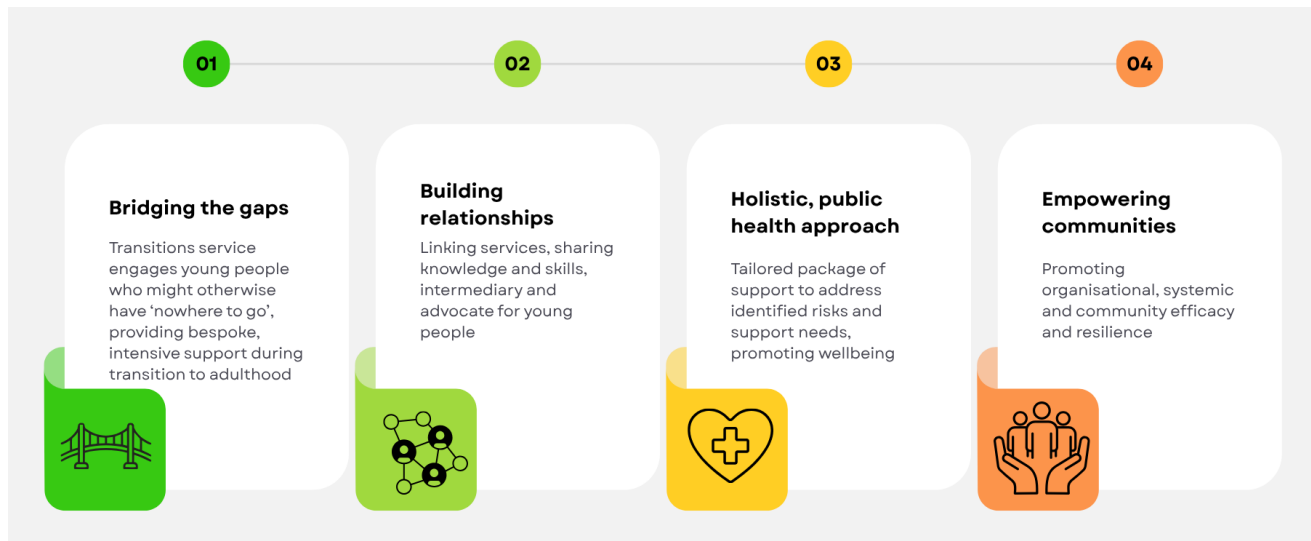
I've been asked as well in the past to talk to young people or give advice regarding criminal law. So that's where I can come in as well and give some advice what they need to do. Perhaps bail conditions, what they shouldn't be doing.

Participant 18, Policing

Following thematic analysis of the ripple effects map produced from participant contributions, we identified four key impact pathways which are summarised in Figure 6.

⁷ While this participant now works at Future Projects, they are describing experiences of collaboration which occurred prior to their joining the organisation.

Figure 6: Impact pathways identified during ripple effects mapping



These were:

- **Bridging the gaps** – engaging young people at risk of falling through the cracks of existing provision, closing a gap in the local support ecosystem
- **Building relationships** – connecting young people with relevant services, spanning organisational and system boundaries, working collaboratively with specialist professionals
- **Holistic, public health approach** – providing individually tailored support, service navigation and advocacy to reduce risk via promoting access to protective factors
- **Empowering communities** – promoting collective efficacy and resilience by facilitating cross-organisational collaboration and knowledge sharing, providing access to community resources

3.6 Exploratory findings regarding monitoring and evaluation

In addition to addressing the research questions articulated at the outset of the project, research activities and observations also generated unanticipated insights into the challenges and opportunities linked to monitoring and evaluating complex, long-term and 'boundary-spanning' interventions.

During interviews and workshops, professionals consistently alluded to the complexities of evidencing, attributing and explaining the implications of changes linked to the Transitions Service. This included tracing incremental progress occurring across systems and over a sustained period of engagement, identifying how and where Transitions may be preventing negative outcomes, and understanding and communicating the significance of "*small wins*".

3.6.1 Communicating the importance of 'small wins'

Participants noted that it can be challenging to convey the weight and meaning of 'small wins', or changes which might appear minor to those who are not familiar with the specific needs, context and trajectory of an individual young person, but represent an "incredible outcome" in light of this knowledge (Participant 1, Future Projects).

This might include changes in self-worth, which empower young people to attend to their health and wellbeing, or increased comfort in meeting people and accessing new services, which can ‘ripple out’ and positively affect other areas such as employment.

Those small wins where actually they [young people] start to take themselves and their physical and mental health into consideration are huge wins for me.

Participant 1, Future Projects

There’s been examples given today [during the REM workshop], such as just taking that young person to a doctor’s appointment. I just want to highlight how something that is so simple, one really simple action could probably have really far-reaching effects on the individual [...] It’s the confidence boost. It’s the benefit to their health, which will impact other areas of their life. It’s the confidence to speak to other professionals, strangers, adults, attend other types of appointments, you know, if they wanted to go to a job interview and all sorts of things. So I just wanted to make a point about the simplicity of, whilst there’s a lot that goes on in the Transitions Service, the smallest of actions could probably have quite a big ripple effect on an individual

Participant 20, Commissioner

3.6.2 Challenges with quantifying impact

Similarly, participants noted that capturing impact via quantitative and economic metrics can be challenging owing to the low caseload and bespoke nature of the intervention, as well as its preventive, long-term aims.

Moreover, participants’ comments indicate that the persistent emphasis in some evaluation contexts on quantification and calculating value in economic terms, was perceived as at odds with the core values of the service.

Our outcomes don’t fit into neat little tick boxes

Participant 3, Future Projects

Not all impact, not all monitoring, is about quantitative data. It’s about getting an understanding for what does it really mean for the participants, has it really made a difference for them? [...] So we often look at it as, yes, your caseload may be low, [but] the complexity, the level of work, the level of impact is really, really high

Participant 11, Future Projects

These are individuals with emotional, complex lives and, you know, if we do social return on investment, we’re just looking at one tiny snapshot at that one point in an individual’s life [...] And it’s really difficult as well when you’re in that preventative space, what have you prevented them from going on to?

Participant 15, Commissioner

Cumulatively, these contributions from professionals illustrate the need for ongoing capacity building regarding monitoring and evaluation, in order to co-produce and embed approaches to evaluation that are complexity-aware, trauma-informed and responsive to lived and professional experiences. This would empower those working within the

service to move beyond the 'tick boxes' and 'snapshots' that provide only a partial and unsatisfactory glimpse of its impacts.

As discussed in the following section on challenges with data collection (3.7), this may encompass the routine use of validated measures such as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale but may involve adapting or developing novel approaches that are a better fit for the programme and context.

3.7 Challenges with data collection and lessons learned

3.7.1 Co-production with young people and the Youth Connector

Observations during fieldwork highlighted the need for extended consultation and co-production with the Youth Connector and, where possible and appropriate, young people themselves to ensure that methods are a good fit for participants' needs and preferences.

For example, the minimal, open-ended storytelling interview prompts researchers developed were identified as a trauma-informed approach that would promote positive engagement and wellbeing, while minimising the risk that participants would feel pressured or obliged to disclose information they would prefer not to discuss. While open-ended questions are generally regarded as ethically and methodologically sound (Alessi & Kahn, 2023; Alessi & Kahn, 2025), this depends on the interview topic, participant group and context, and there are a number of factors that shape participants' readiness and ability to engage in extended discussions about topics and ideas.

During fieldwork, the Youth Connector fulfilled an important role in supporting and enabling young people's participation, effectively acting as a co-facilitator during storytelling interviews. This involved cueing responses by young people when they were unsure of the meaning or intent of the more open-ended questions and 'translating' where the original wording was unclear or did not match the language used by young people. For example, when a young person was initially asked when their involvement with "Transitions" had started and was unsure of how to respond, the Youth Connector prompted 'Think when you first saw [Previous Youth Connector]', rooting it in specific experiences and in more familiar language. This enabled the research team to undertake iterative adaptation of question wording during interviews to simplify and improve accessibility for the comfort and ease of young people taking part, and to maintain an ethical and trauma-informed approach.

Notably, during interviews researchers observed that the open-endedness and wording of the questions as they were initially formulated seemed to leave some participants, especially young people, feeling unsure of what was being asked of them or the kind of response the question was 'supposed' to elicit, contributing to a sense of anxiety about the interview. Therefore, we reflected on whether completely open-ended questions are the most accessible option for future research with vulnerable young people. This is particularly relevant for the present research as the wider evidence base indicates that specific groups of participants, such as autistic people and/or people affected by trauma, may find it difficult to recall personal episodic memories when prompted by open-ended questions, but are able to discuss these when provided with specific, supportive and non-leading cues (Norris et al, 2024). This may be particularly relevant when engaging in research with young people who are navigating the youth justice system, as evidence suggests young people with autistic spectrum condition and/or those who have experienced psychological trauma are overrepresented among those in custody (Justice Committee, 2016).

3.7.2 Quantitative data

Whilst the Transitions Service collects data on young people's progress, including actions, outcomes and wellbeing scores (i.e., Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale [WEMWS]), there are limitations with the quantity of the data, and how the data is collected and reported for analysis. Firstly, there is currently only data on 18 service users, therefore there is too little data to conduct inferential analysis that would provide meaningful conclusions. The service does have a large data set about the actions and outcomes reported by the Youth Connector in relation to contact with the young people. However, the current system used by the service provider outputs the data in aggregate format, whereby only total frequencies can be obtained for each action and outcome area (e.g., employment, substance use, housing) across all service users. This means that individual service user data cannot be easily filtered and extracted for analysis. Therefore, whilst the Transitions Service has a rich dataset and understanding of its service users' needs and progress, this cannot be analysed using statistical methods as we cannot identify which progress variable applies to which individual young person. This also means that conclusions cannot be drawn regarding the possible relationships between demographic variables (e.g. age, sex, ethnicity, disability), level of engagement with the service and outcomes. This forms a recommendation for future data collection.

There is an additional limitation with regard to the inconsistencies in data collection and reporting. Data shows that the WEMWBS was not consistently collected in sessions with each young person. Therefore, some young people have data from regular intervals, with others only completing the scale on entry to the service. This means that analysis of the WEMWBS was not possible for this evaluation. If the reason for this inconsistency is that consistently administering this scale when engaging with young people is experienced as intrusive or impractical, evaluators would recommend adopting – or developing – alternative methods that are a better fit for the intervention, cohort, organisational values and implementation context. This may include light-touch quantitative measures where feasible, but also may include the extended use of qualitative, narrative and creative approaches. For example, case studies are increasingly utilised for evaluations of complex, system-level interventions because they provide an in-depth perspective into programme delivery in real life settings (Paparini et al, 2020).

4. Conclusions

This independent evaluation supplies promising preliminary evidence regarding the perceived impact and accessibility of the Transitions Service, while also highlighting opportunities for ongoing service development and resilience and capacity building.

Analysis of programme documents, qualitative service data, interviews and workshops delineated compelling potential pathways to impact, reflecting a general convergence of professional and lived experience perspectives about how and why Transitions is making a difference in Norfolk. Participants' accounts also resonated with the wider literature on transitional safeguarding and trauma-informed service provision, positioning Transitions as an evidence-based intervention that is grounded in, and works through, holistic, relational and needs-led engagement.

Findings indicate that young people received intensive support, service navigation and advocacy in relation to key protective factors as part of a public health approach to violence prevention, promoting access to:

- Stable finances and employment

- Safe and secure relationships
- Physical and mental wellbeing
- Positive activities
- Community

Notably, qualitative evidence from professionals, young people and family members also suggested that Transitions may contribute to positive change by fostering self-belief and empowering young people to envision brighter futures for themselves. This finding chimes with the wider evidence base which shows that hope for, and belief in the realisability of, a better future fulfils an important role in recovery from substance dependency and desistance from offending behaviours. This finding may point to opportunities for future creative and participatory evaluation methods which reinforce and amplify the hopes and aspirations of young people who have accessed support through Transitions.

In relation to the contextual factors which were seen to shape programme implementation and effectiveness, findings highlighted the significance of national and local service gaps for young people, rurality and inequality, and short-term funding cycles. The latter emerged as a particularly critical factor, with uncertainties linked to longer-term funding impinging on implementation. As participants commented, while the Transitions programme is designed to provide open-ended and person-centred support, changes in funding and commissioning could result in a de facto ‘cliff edge’ in service, reproducing negative (and potentially retraumatising) experiences of abrupt cessations or changes in support for young people and family members, and placing staff wellbeing at risk.

In relation to positive or facilitative factors, local recognition of, and trust in, Future Projects was seen to play an important enabling role for the service, increasing buy-in by external stakeholders and promoting effective collaboration spanning boundaries and systems. Moreover, while the Youth Connector works flexibly across the county, the Baseline Centre itself was identified as a valuable resource based on contributions during interviews and workshops, affording access to a safe, accessible and welcoming ‘third’ space and allowing professionals and community members to form connections.

During the ripple effects mapping workshop, participants highlighted four key pathways to impact, including bridging gaps in service for vulnerable young people, building relationships with young people and professionals, addressing risk and promoting wellbeing through a holistic, public health approach, and empowering communities by facilitating knowledge exchange, collaboration and access to resources.

Exploratory findings which developed in addition to established research questions based on interviews and workshops with professionals also highlighted challenges in relation to evaluating complex interventions such as the Transitions Service, including capturing and communicating the significance of positive changes linked to the programme and quantifying impacts.

Observations during fieldwork and analysis related to challenges with data collection (discussed in section 3.7) additionally highlighted directions for enhancing future monitoring and evaluation, including:

- increased recognition of the Youth Connector's crucial role in data collection and evaluation, and ongoing capacity building and upskilling around this in line with evolving needs and priorities
- ongoing collaboration and co-production with the Youth Connector and young people to ensure that evaluation methods are developmentally appropriate and accessible
- co-produced methods of data reporting that can be used in meaningful quantitative analysis, and expanded use of alternative methods where appropriate

5. Recommendations

In order to sustain and amplify positive impacts for young people, promote staff wellbeing and organisational resilience, and support effective monitoring and evaluation, the researcher team identified the following recommendations:

1. Expand the team of professionals delivering the Transitions Service. This would enable those implementing the programme to distribute workload, increase capacity and mitigate risks associated with lone working (subject to funding).
 - Build capacity and supportive infrastructure (e.g. investing in software) around data collection, entry and analysis so that data can be presented individually and as aggregated frequencies. This will support efficient internal monitoring and reporting to funders, as well as assessing service reach and responsiveness in relation to key demographic variables.
2. If there are difficulties in consistently using indicators such as the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (for example, if it is impractical or invasive to routinely administer this when with young people, or if doing so undermines trust and rapport), consider retiring/reducing this approach and exploring alternative methods that are a better fit. This may include developing lighter-touch measures or working collaboratively with young people to employ creative and co-produced methods
3. Continue to implement principles of trauma-informed practice at the commissioning and staff levels, to promote psychological safety and wellbeing and reduce identified risks linked to short-term project funding and staff turnover.
4. Expand investment in supportive infrastructure within Future Projects, including extended clinical and peer supervision to promote wellbeing and reduce the risk of burnout and vicarious trauma.

The research team presents these findings for the funder and service provider's consideration, to inform their approach to future commissioning and delivery of the Transitions Service, and ensure that this is aligned with the developing evidence.

In relation to directions for future research and evaluation, researchers have identified a number of possible avenues to consolidate and extend the evidence base underpinning the service, including collaborative capacity building and knowledge exchange in relation to monitoring and evaluation.

There are also promising opportunities to advance wider research agendas in relation to transitional safeguarding and trauma-informed practice.

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Appendix A: Programme documents and NCSP data supplementary details

Table 1: Programme documents and NCSP data supplementary details

Document source/authors	Document title	Month and year of publication	Key information
Bidle, N.	Serious Violence Duty Shared Dataset: Summary of Key Findings	11/2025	Overview Shared dataset workstream designed to enhance Norfolk's SVD analytical work and strategic decision-making by joining up data on serious violence and risk factor indicators Linking of datasets enabled identification of most prevalent risk factors within local cohort of under 25s involved in serious violence Caveats Risk factors for involvement in serious violence are associative, not deterministic – most young people with relevant risk factors will not go on to be involved in serious violence Similarly, the presence of protective factors reduces the likelihood that an individual will be involved in serious violence, but cannot guarantee this Shared dataset is based on reported and recorded incidents of serious violence September 2023-September 2024 held by Norfolk Constabulary, and does not include the dark figure of unreported crimes during this period Similarly demographic patterns in recorded risk indicators may reflect differences in recording Findings Data highlights that children and young people who are both suspects <i>and</i> victims of serious violence have the highest prevalence of risk factor indicators, underlining the importance of embodying trauma-informed practices in all interactions and interventions with young people Disengagement and/or exclusion from education is a key risk factor for involvement in serious violence Early identification of SEN is crucial, as effective, timely intervention (i.e. high levels of SEN provision underpinned by an EHCP) linked to reduced likelihood of offending Young people where household drug/alcohol use concerns have been flagged in a social care assessment are more likely to be involved in serious violence as a victim and/or suspect Findings from the shared dataset can be used to tailor interventions for young people; for example, in adapting interventions to meet the needs of specific demographic groups, risk profiles or geographic areas

Document source/authors	Document title	Month and year of publication	Key information
			Drugs and alcohol are perceived as drivers of serious violence in Norfolk Shared dataset findings indicate that where household drug and alcohol concerns have been flagged in a social work assessment, it should be considered as a risk factor for a child or young person's involvement in serious violence
Bidle, N.	Serious Violence Duty: 2025 SNA Refresh V2	11/2025	Overview In line with national trends, the volume of recorded serious violence offences in Norfolk declined annually 2023-2024. Urban areas within Norfolk had the highest volume of recorded serious violence offences The priority cohort of under 25s accounted for a <i>lower</i> proportion of those affected by serious violence offences (including victims and suspects) in 2024 than in 2022-3 Caveats This trend is based on reported and recorded incidents of serious violence held by Norfolk Constabulary, and therefore may reflect changes in police activities, reporting and recording practices as well as underlying changes in offending Equally, this does not include the dark figure of unreported violent offending during this period Engagement with local community members indicates that some Norfolk residents experience reporting barriers linked to loss of trust and confidence in policing, (in)accessibility of reporting options and fear of repercussions from perpetrators Findings Violence against the person, sexual violence and knife-related serious violence offences declined 2023-24 – however, recorded sexual offences for the first nine months of 2025 were higher than the previous year The volume of possession of weapons offences increased year-on-year between 2021-2024 The ten Norfolk MSOAs with the highest volume of recorded serious violence offences in 2024 were concentrated in urban areas, including Norwich, Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn, and Breckland There was a reduction in the proportion of under 25-year-olds involved in serious violence offences as victims (35%) and suspects (32%) in 2024
Norfolk Community Safety Partnership – The Norfolk Office of Data and Analytics (NODA)	Serious Violence Duty Strategic Needs Assessment Refresh (V2)	10/2024	SVD underpins the government's commitment to understanding and reducing violence, taking a whole system and public health approach focused on prevention and early intervention

Document source/authors	Document title	Month and year of publication	Key information
			SNA first published in October 2023, mapping patterns and drivers of serious violence occurring in Norfolk to inform NCSP's collective approach to violence reduction and prevention Serious violence rates in Norfolk lower than, or in line with, national levels at <i>26.2 offences per 1000</i> population; however, mostly above rates of comparator areas Serious violence offences most common in urban hotspots, including specific areas of Norwich, Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn and Dereham Increasing yearly trend of 'possession of weapon' offences among under 25s, including suspects and victims Under 25s identified as a priority cohort for violence reduction and prevention, as they were overrepresented as both victims and suspects of serious violence between 2018-23. Analysis indicated children and young people in Norfolk at increased risk of involvement in serious violence relative to comparator areas, due to risk factors such as: • child poverty and deprivation • disparities in educational attendance and attainment • social marginality • unmet needs during transitions/emerging adulthood • Engagement with local children and young people by TYSS highlighted that serious violence is 'accepted as part of everyday life' Wider evidence base supports efficacy of relevant targeted (secondary) interventions for young people involved in serious violence including sports programmes, access to trauma-specific therapies and A&E 'navigators'. Sports programmes are intended to support protective factors by engaging young people in positive activities and providing positive peer groups/influences, enabling them to develop motivation and self-regulation Trauma-specific therapies such as TF-CBT, CPT and EMDR help young people to process and manage trauma linked to adverse experiences, reducing externalising behaviours such as aggression and involvement in serious violence Navigators develop trusting relationships with young people, mentor them and support access to services, thereby promoting protective factors.
Norfolk Community Safety Partnership	NCO Serious Violence Duty Theory of Change	05/2024	Young people identified as a strategic priority group for interventions preventing serious violence

Document source/authors	Document title	Month and year of publication	Key information
			In order to understand how and where violence is impacting young people locally, identify the risk factors that increase vulnerability, promote proactive data and intelligence-sharing and inform targeted strategy, planning, commissioning and delivery, NCSP commits to the following activities and interventions: • Collaborative data analysis to underpin effective prevention and early intervention, and facilitate identification of trends in victimisation and perpetration • Working in partnership to produce holistic multi-agency plans, and develop interventions tailored for community and school environments • Work with the Local First Inclusion programme for special educational needs and disabilities to support with data analysis, developing training and guidance and implementing new policy and practice • Take preventative action to address knife-carrying, including piloting and evaluating a local programme • Scope local multi-agency training needs on youth violence • Contribute to review of transitional safeguarding and explore opportunities for a pilot project engaging young people aged 18-25 years. • Develop understanding of risks, harms and potentialities of social media, including how it can be used to help empower young people and for law enforcement purposes • Use countywide awareness-raising programme to deliver tailored communications to young people Desired intermediate and long-term outcomes include: • young people feel safer in the domestic, public and digital settings where they spend time (I) • agencies are informed about youth violence and equipped to help young people feel safer (I) • reducing repeat involvement (L) • reduced risk of being affected (L)
Richardson, G., Future Support – Future Projects	Serious Violence Duty Project Outline	11/2023	Target group for intervention Young people assessed as being at risk of involvement in serious violence, including being at risk of child criminal and/or sexual exploitation (CCE and CSE) Focus on engaging young people aged 17.5- 25 years old, who are in transitional stage from childhood to emerging adulthood Referral pathways

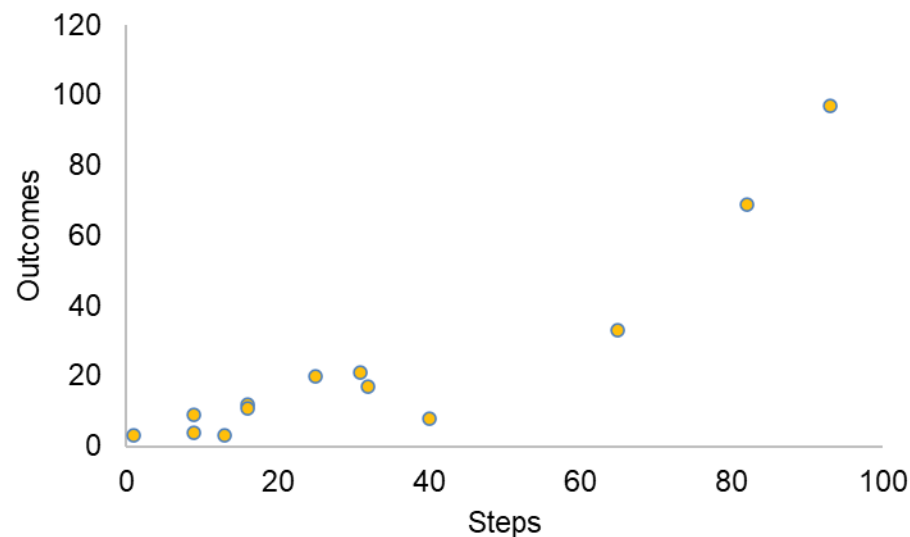
Document source/authors	Document title	Month and year of publication	Key information
			Primary referrals via multi-agency stakeholder panel including police and children's services Triage involving referrer and panel to determine scope and focus of support to be put in place Priority placements for young people aged 17+ transitioning from children's services Secondary referrals via wider system partners Project vision and aims Youth Connector to provide dedicated one-to-one support underpinned by a trauma-informed and person-centred approach, designed to model positive behaviours, promote protective factors and reduce risk factors Flexible, open-ended one-to-one support to promote engagement and prevent services 'losing sight' of young people in transitional life stage Support ultimately designed to foster resilience and independence, and empower young people to recognise and navigate risk to themselves and others Youth Connector role sits within multi-disciplinary Future Support team co-located in community hub of Baseline Centre, providing access to a range of specialisms Holistic package of support including: • relationship building • risk assessment • needs and ambition assessment • collaborative support planning • navigating services • support, resources and activities which reduce risk factors and promote protective factors • Practical, social and emotional support needs to be identified and addressed including: • tenancy, housing and homelessness • welfare benefits • training, education and employment • health and wellbeing (physical and mental) • finances, debt and budgeting • relationships • self-reflection • restorative practices • access to youth counselling services Target outcomes

Document source/authors	Document title	Month and year of publication	Key information
			Positive changes in relation to key protective factors such as: • increased confidence and wellbeing • sustained access to employment and education • increased access to volunteering and work experience within Baseline Centre • access to substance misuse treatment • positive social support/networks

Appendix B: Supplementary information (descriptive visualisations of quantitative service data)

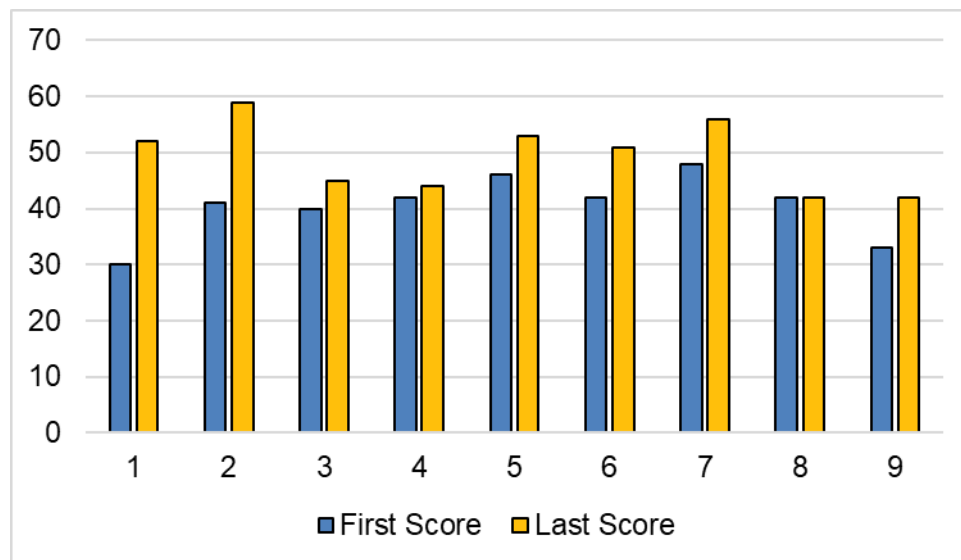
Researchers conducted a descriptive analysis visualising the relationship between the number of actions the Youth Connector noted within their sessions with the young people and their subsequent outcomes. As can be seen in Figure 7, for young people who possibly engaged more with the service and had more actions noted by the Youth Connector, they had more outcomes.

Figure 7: Descriptive visualisation – numbers of steps and outcomes for young people working with Transitions



Additionally, we explored service users' wellbeing relationally for those that had more than one recording of the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS).

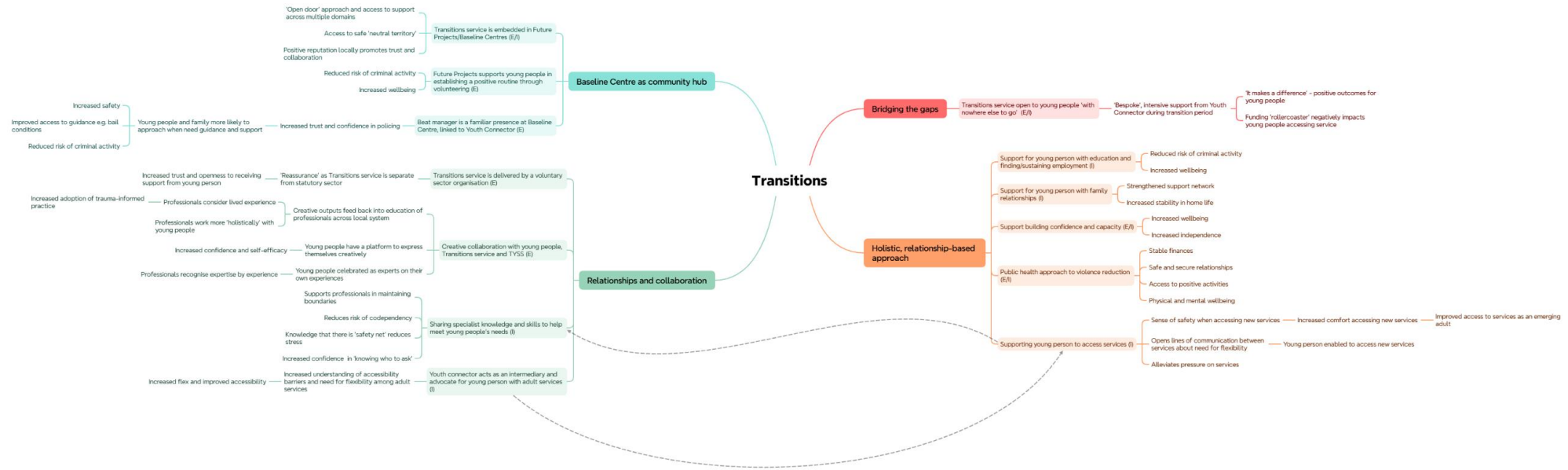
Figure 8: Descriptive visualisation – comparison of young people's earliest and most recent WEMWBS score



As seen in Figure 8, among young people for whom two or more WEMWBS recordings are available, wellbeing at final recording was increased at most recent recording in comparison to first recording.

Appendix C: Final ripple effects map - copy

Figure 9: Copy of ripple effects map



For enhanced legibility and accessibility, we recommend readers access the map via the following link: <https://app.xmind.com/share/rMYNkdaO?xid=F6tpj00y>