

# *'It's about cameras, and your future, and your life'*

**The Reporters' Academy Paul Hamlyn Project Evaluation  
Combined report at end of Year 2**

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## Executive Summary

The Reporters' Academy (TRA) media production company offers a long term structured programme of education and training for young people aged 14-23. This document is an evaluation of their work with 57 young people in care, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, in three local authorities. The process and outcome evaluation comprised critical reflection, an online pre and post intervention survey (25 paired responses over 2 years), focus groups (13 young people), individual interviews (conducted by TRA staff with 21 young people), annual surveys with 20 adult stakeholders, non-participant observation of two sessions and documentary evidence.

Whilst statistically significant impact was not proved The Reporters' Academy Paul Hamlyn Pathway Preparation Project (PPP) was seen by young people and professionals to have a positive impact on young people's social and group work skills, employability, inclusion in opportunities, self-confidence and ability to reflect on learning. TRA also had an impact on Local Authority career planning and professional's employability building capabilities.

### Theme 1: Engaged in group learning activity to improve media, social and employability skills

*'recognized by criminal justice system as having a positive impact and outcome for YP.'* (Professional, Survey Respondent)

Recruitment and retention levels were around target levels (57/60) at the early stages of the project but this tailed off to around two-thirds of the target by the end of the programme. Young people reported exercising their own choices about whether to attend and young people and professionals perceived TRA as supportive and beneficial. The media outputs planned were produced.

There was no significant increase in media skills, nor increased verbal and written communication skills recorded in the quantitative measure. However, qualitative data suggests that for some young people improved media and social skills were employability skills and professionals noted the benefits of exposure to work environments and engagement in positive activities. For two young people this had enabled them to reduce offending and to exit the looked after system.

### Theme 2: Supported and included in opportunities

*'it helps young people build up a lot of skills they may not realise they need it allows you to feel as though they are a part of something'* (Young Person, Survey Respondent)

In both Year 1 and Year 2, 20 hours of core sessions were held with each of the three local authorities based on a mix of group work and individual tasks. An extensive range of enrichment opportunities were also provided to 10 young people in Year 1 and 19 in year 2, including filming at major sporting events and at conferences related to young people's areas of career interest.

The vast majority of young people experienced the group as a positive environment in which they were included and respected. This approval of the provision was echoed by 80% of the professionals surveyed who said the quality of the RA work was 'very good'. Young people's recommendations for improvements tended to focus on making the opportunities available to young people who had not yet been recruited, or having more time themselves to engage in more activities.

### Theme 3. Raised self-esteem and confidence

*'This has given my young person the confidence to realize that he can achieve and that he is capable of going to university.'* (Professional, Survey Respondent)

Young people reported a learning environment that catered to them as individuals and professionals contrasted this favourably with other learning experiences young people had encountered in their lives. Success was celebrated through individual praise and group events.

Statistical measures showed that although changes in positivity moved towards improvement, significant changes in feeling positive and self-esteem were not observed. Despite the lack of

significant change, qualitative data reveals that improved self-esteem was observed by professionals in three young people. Improved self-confidence was widely reported by both young people and professionals, at times leading to raised educational aspirations.

#### **Theme 4: Experience leadership and responsibility**

*'I'm a mentor... [my job is] helping other people. I started by going round making videos of other people and I edit them.'* (Young Person, Focus Group Participant)

Young people were provided with information and opportunities to enable choices, within tight parameters set by TRA staff and media production needs. Progress towards opportunities for leading their own work and the work of others increased over time for some young people.

Although young people remain in roles assigned to them by TRA staff, focus group participants described experiencing enhanced responsibility for resources and group decision than in other learning environments. A few young people progressed into more responsible mentoring type roles within TRA and their own local authorities.

#### **Theme 5: Progress career plans**

*'I learned a lot more about myself, about what I enjoy doing... I learned what I want to do in the future and, more important, how I can get there.'* (Young Person, Focus Group Participant)

At least 21 young people in year 2 were provided with individualised opportunities to reflect on their career goals. The extent to which they produced CVs was variable.

There was no significant change in young people's future aspirations. By the end of the programme all young people indicated they had someone they would turn to for general and career advice and most were able to cite career goals. Many young people were clear about the educational steps needed to progress these plans. Both young people and professionals identified that some young people had accessed relevant opportunities and networks to further their career goals.

#### **Theme 6: Young people develop their chosen transferable capabilities**

*'mostly communication, low confidence and learning how to work in a team ... building all them skills up'* (Young Person, Video Interview)

Capability interviews and written activities were conducted with at least 18 young people. In these sessions they identified the need to develop a wide range of capabilities.

In both Year 1 and Year 2 young people identified gaining communication, media and reflective learning skills. In year 2 improvements in team working, Confidence, patience, concentration, determination, relationship building and people skills were also identified. Improvements some young people sought in memory, decision-making and cultural awareness were not recorded.

#### **Theme 7: Local Authorities develop Looked After Children's career opportunities and outcomes**

*'RA has illustrated the motivation that comes from having a clear career plan and so plans are in place to provide... all cared for young people ...[with] careers interviews at least once per year from Y9.'* (Professional, Survey Respondent)

In Year 1 TRA offered career focus activities, advice and training opportunities that local authorities engaged with in a variety of way in Year 2, including linking in to Corporate Parenting Boards and attending designated teacher (responsible for looked after children) training.

TRA had an impact on local authority approaches to providing educational and career planning and opportunities for work experience. TRA provided young people with additional opportunities. The majority of individual professional survey respondents reported that TRA had a significant or substantial impact on their professional employability building capacities.

## Introduction

The Reporters' Academy Paul Hamlyn Pathway Preparation Project (PPP) seeks to build a supportive 'triangle' framework between education, young people and the employer by enabling young people to develop high quality media outputs and build their personal education portfolios to increase their life chances and maximise employability.

The Reporters' Academy (TRA) is the only media production company which provides a long term structured programme of education and training for young people aged between 14 and 23, where they are supported in moulding their own future. They also provide inspiring opportunities (such as accreditation at the London 2012 Olympics and 2014 Commonwealth Games). Aspirational Futures was a capability building organisation that worked with TRA in the first year of the project. In year 2 TRA delivered this element of the work themselves.

This report details the findings of the evaluation of the PPP programme that started in July 2013 and ended in July 2015. The introduction gives an overview of the programme and the data gathered. Details of the data gathered and theory of change detailed in Appendix 1, sections 1-8 of this report provide details of aims, process, outputs, outcomes and future strategies in relation to 7 themes where the PPP sought to bring about change for the young people and local authorities they were working with.

## Initial Plans for the PPP Programme

The PPP programme was designed to work exclusively with Looked After Children (LAC), specifically young people in care in three Local Authorities. This was the first time the Reporters' Academy had worked on a long term consistent project with this population and our aim in this project was to try to develop ways of addressing some of the disadvantage and poor education and career outcomes that young people in care and leaving care have previously experienced. Once children and young people enter out-of-home care they are part of a population who are statistically at risk of poor outcomes on several important measures. In terms of education, and despite several national, regional and local programmes, children and young people in out-of-home care are likely to do less well at school than their peers (Department of Education 2013). The transition to adulthood is not always effective or appropriate and this results in care leavers having limited support once they leave care in terms of access to further and higher education, training, employment, housing and welfare benefits, very often they not able to rely on the support of parents unlike their peers (Dixon 2006; Wade 2008). Young people leaving care are not prepared for independence (Wade and Dixon 2006), have poorer outcomes in terms of (Department of Education 2013) and have consistently been shown to face personal, institutional, localised and structural barriers to employment (Dixon 2006).

**For young people**, the tailored package of activity involved 'Core Activity' of 20 hours and additional 'Enrichment Interventions' up to a maximum of 56 hours. These activities were designed to provide young people in care with opportunities to gain media skills in video production alongside media professionals and access to aspirational venues. Young people were to be given opportunities to influence the design and delivery of the programme so that it suited their interests. This was to involve young people developing an idea for their own media output and making choices about which enrichment interventions they took part in.

Some key common elements of this tailored package were also identified from the start. The media training would include research skills to help them develop a Transition Toolkit. This was conceived as an 'e' menu of information designed by the young people to support other young people at the point of transition with practical tips and advice. The activities also sought to produce a creative tool to showcase and market the young participants in the education and employment world. This was to be supported by a process in which they reflect on the capabilities for work, learning and life, and to explore and understand these in the live context of media training.

**For the participating Local Authorities**, the menu of staff development opportunities aimed to widen potential work and training networks by putting them in contact with exciting partners including BBC, Universities and local industry. In addition discrete staff and carer interventions were to be offered, which might include informal opportunities to share practice, shadowing of the Reporters' Academy process or targeted training. The process was to be supported by a 'Looked After' Champion.

### The Evaluation data

This was a process and outcome evaluation aimed at supporting The Reporters' Academy staff to identify the extent of their impact on the knowledge, skills, experience and understanding of the young people and care providers they work with, and the capacity of their own organisation and partner organisations in associated local authorities. Data for the evaluation was collected by a research team at the University of Central Lancashire and by TRA staff through a range of evaluation methods, as detailed in table 1.

Table 1: Data collection activities and participant numbers, Years 1 and 2.

| <b>Data Collection Activity</b>  | <b>Conducted by</b> | <b>Year 1 (2013-14)</b>  | <b>Year 2 (2014-15)</b>    |
|--|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Numbers attending</b> core group for first time (and retained for at least 4 sessions); + numbers engaged in enrichment retained from previous year | TRA                 | 24 (20) young people     | 33(26) + 4 young people    |
| <b>Online survey completed by young people</b> Pre (and post); – numbers completing both pre and post  | UCLan               | 19 (14) -13 young people | 20 (18) -11 young people   |
| <b>On-line survey completed by adult stakeholders</b> in contact with the PPP  | UCLan               | 18 adults                | 20 adults                  |
| <b>Critical Reflection Interviews</b> with TRA staff   | UCLan and TRA       | 4 sessions (2 staff)     | 4 sessions (2 staff)       |
| <b>Non-participant observation</b> of TRA PPP sessions   | UCLan               | 2 sessions               | -                          |
| <b>Focus Groups</b> with PPP participants  | UCLan               | -                        | 4 groups (13 young people) |
| <b>Reflective interviews</b> with individuals (and groups of young people) monitoring capabilities with PPP participants                               | TRA                 | 19 individual            | 21 individual (& 4 groups) |

|  |     |  |  |
|--|-----|--|--|
| <b>Internal monitoring and evaluation</b> –<br>group feedback (and individual<br>worksheets) | TRA |  | 1 group (12<br>documents by<br>young people) |
| <b>Practice Impact Questionnaires to<br/>local authorities</b>                               | TRA |  | All 3 Local<br>Authorities                   |

PLEASE NOTE: The data in the tables describing quantitative data below are presented for descriptive purposes only and should not be taken as a definitive conclusion on the impact of the programme. The number of young people contributing data at both time points is small and it can be difficult to detect a significant effect over time since one or two young people with dramatically different scores (called statistical outliers) can have a large influence over the mean/average score for the group.

TRA internal monitoring data should be treated cautiously, as befits internal evaluation data, as it was at times generated with significant coaching from TRA staff and mentors.

## Theme 1: Engaged in group learning activity to improve media, social and employability skills

The PPP aimed to annually recruit 30 young people from 3 Local Authorities to attend Core Offer sessions (1.1) in which each group of young people would create a media output of their choice (1.2) and through this develop media (3.3), social (3.4) and employability skills (3.5).

### OUTPUTS Theme 1: Attendance and Media Products

#### 1.1 Attendance

In Year 1, the three local authorities recruited to the project recruited 24 young people and only 20 were retained. In Year 2, 33 young people attended a first session with TRA and 26 were retained for at least 4 sessions and 19 for at least 8 sessions (Table 2). Attendance for some young people was occasionally irregular for reasons outside TRA control, for example one young person was only permitted to attend when his Social Worker considered his behaviour appropriate during the school day. There was also variability between local authorities as TRA staff described one area as having “fantastic retention” whereas another area dropped from eight to three young people. TRA ascribed this difference to problems with transport and lack of proactive recruitment by the LA.

Table 2: Attendance at PPP sessions

| Local Authority | No. Young People (recruited) and retained in core TRA activities Year 1 | No. Young People (recruited) and retained after session 1 of core TRA activities Year 2 | No. Young People from year 1 who continued to participate in Year 2 |
|-----------------|---|---|---|
| LA1             | (9) 9   | (15) 10   | 5   |
| LA2             | (8) 6   | (8) 7   | 2   |
| LA3             | (7) 5   | (10) 9  | 4   |

The voluntary nature of activities was seen as an important part of making the environment supportive but there were mixed views about whether young people felt pressured into attending. Some young people also described a certain amount of arm twisting / heavy persuasion by support to encourage them to attend the program initially and for the first few sessions - until they had got over the initial uncertainty. A small number of young people felt they would not be confident enough to attend initially on their own. One young person described this as support rather than pressure:

*‘They don’t make you do something you don’t want to do ... but they try their best to get you involved’*

(Young Person, focus group participant)

Professionals’ survey respondents had a good understanding of the objectives of Aiming Higher, and a positive view on the organisation’s aspirations. They said:

*‘An amazing opportunity for young people to learn new skills and develop their existing skills. [Staff] are experienced professionals who care and encourage the young people in a way that encourages their communication, confidence and individual interests’.*

(Professional, survey respondent)

*'Chance to gain skills and confidence through media and to widen their ideas about employment opportunities within this sector'.  
(Professional, survey respondent)*

In the professionals' survey 87% of respondents said there were 'many' benefits to RA's work, with 13% indicating that were a 'few'. Many of the benefits described related to media and social skills.

*'The involvement of young people in media could lead to greater opportunities. The programme assists young people in working as a team which has improved their own skills'.*

(Professional, survey respondent)

*'People that care and give them a chance. Constructive and interesting things to do in a social setting'.*

(Professional, survey respondent)

The shortcoming a few professionals identified may be relevant to attendance as they concerned transport and travel to events and the limit in the number of places available. It may also relate to relevance

*'There was a drop off in the number who started the programme but for those who continued it has been really useful'.*

(Professional, survey respondent)

## **1.2 Media Outputs**

The number and range of media outputs created has been extensive, including films which were conceived of and led by the PPP participants and responses to other opportunities.

In year one the three media outputs the groups decided to create were: 'Understanding Youth Homelessness in Cheshire East'; 'Beating Bullying'; and, 'Understanding those who work with us.'

In year two the three media outputs the groups decided to create were: A promotional video of The Greenhouse, Media City, UK; 'The viewpoints of other young people in care'; and design decisions on the local authority website for young people in care.

For example, in Year 2, in these short films, looked after young people planned the questions and conducted the filming and interviews as a result of deciding that they wanted to know more about the role of people who help them.

90 seconds with our Designated Teacher

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuts2OQYm3Y>

90 seconds with our Virtual Head teacher

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jBZrqq1kxY>

Additional media outputs created through enrichment activities are detailed in theme 2.

As well as producing media outputs themselves, connection to media environments was a positive experience for some of the young people attending:

*"You get to meet actors from Coronation Street – I was so excited!"*

*(Young Person, focus group participant)*

## OUTCOMES Theme 1: Participating young people have improved Media / Social / Employability Skills.

### 1.3 Media Skills

A brief measure of media skill confidence was created formed of 6 questions<sup>1</sup>. Young people responded to each question using one of four options (ranging from very confident (4) to not at all confident (1)) and a total score was calculated by summing all the 6 items together. Table 1 below provides the average score (mean) and spread of scores (standard deviation, SD) for the group at each time point. A paired t-test was conducted comparing the baseline and follow-up scores for those that provided data at both time-points during the year (n= 13 Year 1; n=11 Year 2) to examine whether the change in scores was significant.

The increase in confidence approached statistical significance (t = 1.86; p = 0.08) in year 1 but in Year 2 was not significant (p = 0.63).

Table 3: Confidence in media skills score

| Confidence in media skills score |        |            |        |            |
|----------------------------------|--------|------------|--------|------------|
| <b>Baseline</b>                  | N = 18 | 18.9 (3.2) | N = 20 | 18.4 (2.8) |
| <b>Follow-up</b>                 | N = 14 | 20.5 (2.6) | N = 18 | 19.7 (3.7) |
| <b>Repeated Measures</b>         | N = 13 |            | N = 11 |            |
| Baseline                         |        | 20.0 (2.9) |        | 18.3 (3.0) |
| Follow-up                        |        | 20.6 (2.6) |        | 18.5 (3.5) |

The area where most young people expressed a lack of confidence at baseline was in presenting in front of other people, where 34% of young people felt 'not at all' or 'not very' confident. By follow-up, only 27% said they felt 'not very confident', with the majority indicating they were 'very confident' (45%). From focus group data it appears that the anticipated increase in media skills may have only been minimal, as many young people started with a keen interest and competence in this field.

### 1.3 Social Skills

Young people were asked to rate their written and verbal communication skills on a 1-5 scale at both baseline and follow-up assessment. The scale rated skills from 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good) and asked young people for their own assessment of their current ability. At baseline in Year 1, 18 young people responded. The average score (mean) for *written* communication skills was 3 (out of 5), with 3 young people saying their skills were 'very poor' and only 1 young person saying 'very good'. Scores for *spoken* communication were similar with an average score of 3.3 out of 5, and 3 young people claiming to have 'very good' skills. By the follow-

<sup>1</sup> How confident do you feel to present in front of people, for example talking to others in a large group or giving a presentation?; How confident do you feel to share your ideas out loud with other people?; How confident do you feel working with numbers, for example doing simple addition or subtraction, or calculating percentages?; How confident do you feel about asking questions of other people to get the information you need?; How confident do you feel to use a computer?; How confident do you feel about using equipment such as video cameras, recording equipment and microphones?

up assessment, for the 14 respondents, the average score for both *written* and *spoken* communication was nearly 4 out of 5, with no young people claiming to have ‘very poor’ skills and 4 saying they were ‘very good’. In Year 2 at baseline, 20 young people responded. The average score (mean) for *written* communication skills was 3.5 (out of 5), with no young people saying their skills were ‘very poor’ and 2 young people saying ‘very good’. Scores for *spoken* communication were similar with an average score of 3.8 (out of 5), and 5 young people claiming to have ‘very good’ skills. By the follow-up assessment, for the 18 respondents, the average score for both *written* and *spoken* communication was 3.7 and 3.8, again with no young people claiming to have ‘very poor’ skills and 6 saying they were ‘very good’ at spoken communication.

The communication skills of the young people participating in Year 2 were higher at baseline than the young people in Year 1; it is therefore unsurprising that there is less improvement in these skills for young people in Year 2. However qualitative data suggests relationship skills developed as focus group participants identified the main learning from this group based media training as focused on soft skills including the ability to develop new relationships, social skills, confidence, and particularly confidence to speak to a range of others. The opportunity to developing new social relationships with others participants and collaborate with other participants to take decisions about film projects was a key element of the development of these skills.

*‘it’s a group thing. It helps with your team work.’*

(Young Person, focus group participant)

*‘You get to know new friends as well’*

(Young Person, focus group participant)

The opportunity to develop new social relationships and collaborate with other participants to take decisions about film projects was a key element in the development of social skills.

A small minority of young people felt TRA had not helped them to develop their social skills significantly, because they felt these skills were already strong to begin with.

*‘It kind of increased my media skills...I had pretty good social skills already’*

(Young Person, focus group participant)

For some professionals the benefits of TRA appeared to all be linked:

*‘Confidence, life experience, media skills and a deeper understanding of the manipulations of information, interpersonal skills, technical knowledge, working as team’.*

(Professional, survey respondent)

#### **1.4 Employability**

In focus groups, young people’s concepts of the learning and activities that would contribute to employability was very narrowly focused on the ability to identify career paths, write CVs and understand which formal educational pathways were required

or their chosen career. For example, when asked what employability skills they had developed, members of one focus group responded:

*'-We did a sheet on our skills for work and our CVs  
-Knowing how to go and get a job  
-How to sell yourself  
... it's about CVs and stuff  
...but this programme will look really good on your CV.'*  
(4 Young People, focus group participants)

However it was clear to interviewers that the social skills they described developing would be of direct benefit to finding employment. Two focus group participants recognised that the development of social skills could have a direct contribution to securing employment and employability. Young people with a career focus on media, particularly the four who continued beyond the core activities, also identified that the development of media skills was a direct contribution to their employment skills.

*'I got to know more stuff about computers and to increase my media skills and apple macs and stuff and my social skills...It's increased my confidence...before, sometimes I was shy until I get to know you.'*  
(Young Person, focus group participant)

Exposure to real-life work environments was seen as an employability enhancing benefit by one professional practice questionnaire respondent:

*'By having continued exposure to a field of work young people have been able to gain a far greater understanding and have the chance to find out more.'*  
(Professional, practice questionnaire respondent)

For two young people in one local authority employability might be seen as enhanced as the programme appears to have helped reduce their offending behaviour:

*'LAC who have been or are currently experiencing complications that may limit their options are made a priority to attend Reporters [TRA]. Currently this has ensured that two attendees have reduced offending orders and been able to progress in education without detriment, both YP becoming no longer LAC - another real success.'*  
(Professional, practice questionnaire respondent)

This professional described the TRA programme as activities that 'show skills that are recognized by criminal justice system as having a positive impact and outcome for YP.'

## Theme 2: Supported and included in opportunities

The PPP aimed to ensure that all participating young people were actively included in core group activities (2.1) and could access enrichment opportunities that reflected their interest and developing capabilities (2.2) in order to provide young participants with a positive and supportive group experience in terms of how opportunities are distributed (2.3), whether they would recommend it to a friend (2.4) and the inclusiveness of the PPP environment (2.5).

### OUTPUTS Theme 2: Supportive core group activities and enrichment opportunities are provided

#### 2.1 Core activities

From our observation core activities were run in a relaxed style to encourage participation through highlighting successes. This was particularly effective when young people mentored and encouraged others. Experts at times present their own experience in film making enabling young people to ask technical questions. From video data recorded by TRA and viewed by the evaluation team, group work is clearly seen to be used as the predominant vehicle across the entire programme with all cohorts.

In Year 1 the evaluation raised some concerns about whether all young people were included in these sessions, but in the video data provided to us group work process appears to engage all young people that are present well - in the footage showing entire groups, young people's body language, room positioning and verbal contributions indicate that everyone present is consistently engaged. Opportunities for group interaction appear to be maximised throughout. When activities are used that require young people to work individually, such as reflecting on their own skills or learning objectives, they are coupled with group interaction either before or after. For instance when young people are asked to individually complete sheets identifying their competencies and development goals, they are then asked to interview each other on camera about their responses.

During video group footage viewed by the evaluation team, TRA staff were seen to visibly and effectively manage the group interaction to ensure that all young people are included. It is possible to see them take charge of assigning roles to the group, rotating roles between young people. This control seemingly exerted extensively in the earlier stages of the programme. TRA staff are seen to provide encouragement and support to young people who are unsure how to participate in activities, and also challenge to young people who are seen to be not participating, or supporting the team effectively. This is less present in the later weeks, and seems to be required less. Opportunities to directly engage with media equipment and have hands on experience of media also appear to be maximised throughout the programme. There are clear examples of young people who do not want to be filmed engaging though the programme by being interviewed off camera/audio only.

In the survey with young people, when asked what TRA group leaders might do differently in future sessions, seven respondents in Year 1, and five in Year 2, said 'nothing' and that the group was 'good as it is' or 'amazing'. A few young people none the less made recommendations for improvements. In Year 1 they suggested they offer 'other types of food' at sessions, that the programme should have a 'solid timetable' to enable planning and that leaders could 'speak more loudly'. In

Year 2 these issues did not reoccur but suggestions for developing the programme were made:

*'Get more children involved example children from different schools who can't make friends where as if they came to this group they could make some new friends and become more confident'.*

(Young Person, survey respondent)

*'have more hands on work'.*

(Young Person, survey respondent)

*'Provide more incentives for the members when they help with big projects e.g. filming an event and then editing it could result in a reward for the people involved, to spur them on to work harder'.*

(Young Person, survey respondent)

When asked to rate the quality of the RA's work with young people, 80% of professionals surveyed said 'very good', 13% said 'good' and 7% said 'reasonable'. Some of the reasons for the positive ratings included:

*'My young person has been given top quality experiences, help and guidance from the reporters academy.'*

(Professional, survey respondent)

*'[Young people] have been able to talk with many types of people, carers and SW alike have commented on their engagement and development. [TRA] have helped the young people practise 'real life' skills in a supportive environment and learn to deal with mistakes and competing personalities whilst still being able to make their point'.*

(Professional, survey respondent)

*'The staff at the Reporters' Academy quickly learn about how to find positives about the young person and develop their interests and offer different opportunities which they would never have had before'.*

(Professional, survey respondent)

From video data it appears that dependency on support workers at the later stages of the programme may be an issue. In some interviews it is possible to see young people look off camera to their support worker when they are unsure how to answer a question, rather than interacting directly with the young person interviewing them.

## **2.2 Enrichment Activities**

In year 1, 10 young people, with at least three from each local authority PPP team, had the opportunity to take part in the further enrichment opportunities listed in table 4 below. In year 2 this increased to 19 young people. In year 2 we changed how we recorded this to ensure that numbers of opportunities per young person were more accurately recorded. In year 2, then, we know that of the 19 young people engaged in enrichment opportunities, eight took part in just one activity, but 11 participated in two to seven enrichment activity sessions.

Table 4- Enrichment activities experienced

| Local Authority | Nos of activities per LA Year 1 | Nos of young people (and activity sessions) per LA Year 2 |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|---|
| LA1             | 4                               | 8 (23)  |
| LA2             | 4                               | 3 (12)  |
| LA3             | 2                               | 8 (14)  |

The range of Enrichment Activities experienced in Year 1 were:

1. Rugby League World Cup production
2. Shadowing a paramedic
3. NHS national conference coverage
4. Support to produce , promote and film his own charity campaign
5. CV masterclass
6. Editing and production masterclasses
7. Presentation to 25 Designated Teachers at Forum meeting
8. Script writing workshop for TV
9. BBC studios career visit

The range of Enrichment Activities experienced in Year 2 are detailed below, with links to outputs where TRA have informed the research team they permission to make these publicly available:

1. University Technical College (UTC) - Promotional media at their Open Day  
<http://youtu.be/44Osx35I52Q>  
<http://youtu.be/cXqUaqfYuQM>
2. Behind the scenes of test match special



3. Dec 2014 - Everybody - Athlete Performance Academy, Reach Your Potential  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxb3pxFzHFM>
4. Jan 2015 - British Youth Council 'Our Ambitions'  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-HU2b2XUR8>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bcMQwMdd-I>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w\\_np0JmG5kU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_np0JmG5kU)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCyHPQsMFDw>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSSlzTe-eC8>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJhtmHYM7qg>

5. The Reporters Academy/Sandymoor School Open Evening – Extended Diploma BTEC L3 in Sports Media
6. Feb 2015 – Cheshire East Care Awards  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74wpuBSGIDc>
7. NHS England – Youth Forum, Mental Health Event
8. May 2015 –Health Care Consultation for Young People in Care  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYb\\_9pif8Xw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYb_9pif8Xw)
9. May 2015 – Join the Conversation  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_f\\_FB8kdK2Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_f_FB8kdK2Q)
10. June 2015 – St John Ambulance, Big First Aid Lesson  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7gF7WbSEg4>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPBtw7-uNN4>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ot4bizuUgQ>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgLsjXWpPmA>
11. May 2015 - Progression Day at media City

Young people surveyed had an opportunity to reflect on the activities they particularly enjoyed. In Year 1, there was an overwhelming positive response around the ‘filming’ activity and ‘the filming of Manchester Met sporting facilities’, which young people felt had both improved their skills and been interesting and enjoyable. Two young people said that they would have liked to get involved in ‘a new magazine that was being written for young people’ and ‘gaming experience and software development’ but had been unable to do so because times did not suit or the activity hadn’t been offered to them. In Year 2 only a few young people indicated particular activities, including ‘The rugby league world cup filming’; ‘filming about the homeless people on a whole’; and ‘Editing recorded content’.

**OUTCOME THEME 2: Participating young people have had a positive group experience, in which they felt supported and included.**

### ***2.3 Distribution of opportunities***

The Year 1 evaluation raised a concern about the uneven distribution of enrichment activities so young people were asked to comment on this in focus groups. In year two the number of young people who participated in enrichment increased substantially. Whilst not all young people were offered every enrichment activity, there was not a sense that enrichment should be offered evenly or democratically across all participants. It was seen as acceptable for Glynn to invite individuals to participate based on their skills; it seemed to be seen as more of the way that TRA staff individualised opportunities for young people who participated, as many of the enrichment activities linked directly to the interests of the people who participated. There was also a recognition from some that some opportunities required higher levels of media skills than others, and that not everyone’s skills were equal.

*‘He picks us and we get to say yes or no...he asks all of us.’*

(Young Person, focus group participant)

*‘We’ve got a person ... who was in my group...he’s into climbing and Glyn and Katy helped him make a video of his climbing.’*

(Young Person, focus group participant)

## 2.4 Recommending it to a friend

In the survey, feedback about the sessions provided was very positive from the young people that completed the follow-up questionnaire. Over half (57% Year 1) rising to more than three quarters (79% Year 2) of young people said they would recommend the programme to a friend, with only one young person (in Year 1) saying they would not. The remaining respondents were unsure. When asked why they would or wouldn't recommend it, the young people in Year 1 had the following to say:

*'Because it teaches people useful skills that could come in handy in later life'*

(Young Person, survey respondent)

*'Because it helps young people build up a lot of skills they may not realise they need it allows you to feel as though they are a part of something'*

(Young Person, survey respondent)

*'Because it's great opportunity to try something new and meet new people and enable yourself to have connections with people in specific jobs or higher end jobs. It challenges you to develop as a person and challenges you to complete specific everyday tasks'*

(Young Person, survey respondent)

*'This is a fun activity and is good to learn new skills and I think I have learnt a lot than I did when I started here at reporters academy'*

(Young Person, survey respondent)

The young people in the year 2 survey recommended it for slightly different reasons, many emphasising the potential for personal growth or progressing along career pathways:

*'I would recommend this group to my friends because I feel like i have grown in a person since i came her i have become more confident in front of people and i would like my friends to feel the same way'*

(Young Person, survey respondent)

*'I would recommend this group to my friends, it is in a very chilled out environment and I think this works well to my needs'*

(Young Person, survey respondent)

*'Because they can learn valuable skills that are compatible outside of media as well as within skills such as communication group work , leadership and adaptability'*

(Young Person, survey respondent)

*'I would on one hand recommend this group to my friends because it provides you with a good insight into your career options, as well as giving you confidence and hand on experience. However, I would not because I do not know if they meet the requirements to be in the group'*

(Young Person, survey respondent)

## 2.5 An inclusive environment

Asked in the survey whether they ever felt bored or left out when they attended a group session, in Year 1 and Year 2 79% of young people responded with 'hardly ever'

or 'not at all'. The remaining young people said 'sometimes' (21% Year1; 7% Year 2) or 'quite a lot' (14% Year 2). This sentiment was echoed in the focus groups where young people repeatedly talked about TRA as fun, not boring, and generally enjoyable and positive and a supportive environment to be in. However many young people described time get used to the environment. A common theme was the initial uncertainty of coming and one said that you have to "give it a chance" and suggested that it takes two to three sessions. TRA staffs ability to interact with young people and way of being with them was seen as a key part of the process and being at TRA. All young people identified that the environment was very supportive both from TRA staff, other participants, and their support workers. They used words such as "freedom", "respect" and "equal"

*'what people you have here...like mentors... they are dead understanding you can talk to them real easy'*

*(Young Person, focus group participant)*

*'they [TRA staff] help you with anything....you're not nervous to ask...You have more of a one to one connection with people'*

*(Young Person, focus group participant)*

*'you respect them [TRA staff] and you respect yourself'*

*(Young Person, focus group participant)*

*'I feel very included'*

*(Young Person, focus group participant)*

## Theme 3. Raised self-esteem and confidence

The PPP aimed to recognise and value each individual's talents (3.1) and celebrate individual and group success in producing media outputs (3.2) in order to increase young people's feelings of positivity (3.3), self-esteem (3.4) and self-confidence (3.5).

### OUTPUTS Theme 3: Personalised learning opportunities provided and success celebrated

#### 3.1 Personalised learning

The young people in focus groups contrasted the TRA environment with school or other programs for young people. The method of facilitating learning was seen to be different, more practical, with smaller numbers and well explained and personalised. TRA Staff members were seen to '*know[s] how you learn and caters for just you*' and '*answer questions you ask*'. Young people reflected that it was alright to make mistakes at TRA as '*if you get it wrong they don't shout at you ...they help you.*' Professionals surveyed also contrasted young people's experience of TRA with other more difficult learning experiences:

*'[young person] has had many difficulties at school but has made great strides with confidence and social skills with the help of the reporters academy.'*

(Professional, survey respondent)

*'The young people I have seen pass through for the last two years have embraced the opportunities offered to them and it has helped them develop a view of the world outside of LA3 and their previous experiences. I have seen them mature in confidence and ability to access challenges that previously they may have avoided.'*

(Professional, survey respondent)

#### 3.2 Success celebrated

Throughout the core sessions, TRA staff engage in giving encouraging feedback, celebrating small and large successes and sharing positive work. In core group session observations we saw young people's success in enrichment activities receiving praise and young people's attempts at interviewing being met with feedback that focused primarily on the positive. This individual feedback is underlined by specific group events, listed below, which aim show young people how their work within the PPP is valued. Celebration event are details in table 5

Table 5- Celebration events

| Local Authority | Celebration events experienced Year 1  | Celebration events experienced Year 2 |
|-----------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| LA1             | Awards and celebration ceremony<br>TRA open day<br>Group meal<br>Whole TRA group meal<br>Taster even at Manchester Airport | Group meal                            |
| LA2             | TRA open day<br>Whole TRA group meal   | Group meal                            |
| LA3             | Group meal   | Group meal                            |

**OUTCOME THEME 3: Participating young people have increased positivity, self-esteem and confidence.**

**3.3 Feeling positive (and negative)**

The PANAS-C scale (Laurent et al. 1999) was used to measure young people’s positive and negative affect or feelings. It comprises a list of adjectives describing recent emotional experiences, such as ‘happy’, ‘miserable’, ‘nervous’, ‘excited’, etc. 12 items explore positive affect or feelings and 15 items ask about negative affect. Children select one of five response options from ‘very slightly or not at all’ to ‘extremely’. Higher scores indicate more positive or negative affect, respectively, with an upper limit of 60 on positive affect and 75 on negative affect. We hypothesised that young people exposed to the PPP would show an increase in positive emotional experiences and a reduction (or at least no increase) in negative feelings.

Table 6 below provides the average score (mean) and spread of scores (standard deviation, SD) for the group at each time point. A paired t-test was conducted comparing the baseline and follow-up scores for those that provided data at both time-points (n = 14 Year1, n= 11 Year 2) to examine whether the change in scores was significant. Although the scores moved in the expected direction, the change was not statistically significant for either positive (t = 0.69; p = 0.50 Year 1; p = 0.79 Year 2) or negative affect (t = 1.45; p = 0.17 Year 1; p = 0.83 Year 2).

Table 6 - PANAS-C scores

| Year 1                   |        |                              |                              | Year 2 |                              |                              |
|--------------------------|--------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
|                          |        | Positive Affect<br>Mean (SD) | Negative Affect<br>Mean (SD) |        | Positive Affect<br>Mean (SD) | Negative Affect<br>Mean (SD) |
| <b>Baseline</b>          | N = 19 | 33.6 (7.3)                   | 22 (7.1)                     | N = 20 | 39.9 (9.3)                   | 22.5 (12.9)                  |
| <b>Follow-up</b>         | N = 14 | 36.3 (6.7)                   | 19.1 (4.6)                   | N = 18 | 41.4 (11.3)                  | 22.7 (10.2)                  |
| <b>Repeated Measures</b> | N = 14 |                              |                              | N=11   |                              |                              |
| Baseline                 |        | 35.2 (6.3)                   | 21.0 (6.6)                   |        | 39.2 (11.2)                  | 23.8 (16.9)                  |
| Follow-up                |        | 36.3 (6.7)                   | 19.1 (4.6)                   |        | 40.5 (12.9)                  | 22.7 (12.7)                  |

**3.4 Self-esteem**

Self-esteem was measured using Rosenberg’s (1965) self-esteem scale. It comprises 10 items; with responses on a 4-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A total score is calculated by summing the scores for all 10 items, with a maximum score of 40. The higher the score, the greater the self-esteem of the young person.

Table 7 presents the average score for the group at baseline and follow-up. As before, both the mean and the spread of scores (SD) is presented. We hypothesised that the PPP would lead to an increase in self-esteem for the young people. The change for the young people who managed to complete the assessment at both points in time (n = 14 Year 1, n=11 Year 2) is not statistically significant (p = 0.29 Year 1; p = 0.79 Year 2).

Table 7 - Self-esteem scores

| Year 1                   |        |            | Year 2 |            |
|--------------------------|--------|------------|--------|------------|
|                          |        | Mean (SD)  |        | Mean (SD)  |
| <b>Baseline</b>          | N = 18 | 29.3 (6.7) | N = 20 | 31.0 (5.0) |
| <b>Follow-up</b>         | N = 14 | 30.4 (3.6) | N = 18 | 29.7 (5.9) |
| <b>Repeated Measures</b> | N = 14 |            | N = 11 |            |
| Baseline                 |        | 31.6 (5.1) |        | 29.5 (6.1) |
| Follow-up                |        | 30.4 (3.6) |        | 29.1 (6.9) |

The mean scores for the two cohorts reflect national norms (see Bagley et al 2001, p 119) where the average score for 16-17 year olds is 30.5. There was only one young person in each of the Year 1 and Year 2 cohorts that achieved a very low self-esteem score (below 21) compared with 4% nationally in this age range. This suggests that the Aiming Higher cohorts had good self-esteem on average, reducing the likelihood that improvement might be possible from intervention. Nonetheless, three professionals commented in the survey that one of the benefits to young people of TRA relates to self-esteem

*‘Raising self-esteem, Positive role models... Positive experiences’*

(Professional, survey respondent)

*‘The course has built his self-esteem around other young people in similar circumstances’.*

(Professional, survey respondent)

*‘Enhanced self-esteem An opportunity for success in a different environment from school’*

(Professional, survey respondent)

Raised self-worth was also attributed to recognition of transferable skills by a professional who completed the email questionnaire:

*“The work young people have completed on skills and strengths has been a crucial part of helping them to develop a sense of their own self-worth/realized their transferable skills”*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

### 3.5 Self-Confidence

Despite the lack of statistically significant change on the self-esteem scale, nearly all young people who participated in the focus groups in Year 2 identified that the programme had raised their self-confidence in some way, particularly their confidence to deal with young people. Increase in confidence was subtle, but even those with already high self-confidence levels experienced some improvements in some instances but young people who felt it had not boosted their confidence in every area of their stated this was because it was already high in relation to some issues.

*'I was already confident but not super confident [before attending, but it has] boosted my confidence'*

(Young Person, focus group participant)

*'They have helped me be more like confident in front of a camera, but in everyday life I was pretty confident anyway.'*

(Young Person, focus group participant)

Many were able raised self-confidence gained through TRA to other aspects of their life where the development at TRA had positively affected them elsewhere. They mentioned the ability to speak to new people or give presentation as examples or accessing mentoring work with TRA in their second year

*'Confidence, yeah they have really helped me with that, cos now I work here'.*

(Young Person, focus group participant)

Professionals who completed the online survey repeatedly indicated that young people's confidence was significantly improved for young people engaged in the PPP programme.

*'Great for confidence and employability skills. Excellent facilities and equipment which may not be experienced outside of this programme'.*

(Professional, survey respondent)

*'Increased confidence, Communication, Involvement, Feeling valued, Teamwork'.*

(Professional, survey respondent)

*'My son has flourished through his involvement with RA gaining confidence and skills to assist him with his future. I have seen a difference in my foster son and others in his group with confidence etc.'*

(Professional, survey respondent)

One professional noted that this increased confidence had raised educational aspirations.

*'This has given my young person the confidence to realize that he can achieve and that he is capable of going to university.'*

(Professional, survey respondent)

## Theme 4: Experience leadership and responsibility

The PPP aimed to provide young people with opportunities to take key decisions within their own core activities (4.1) and lead work more widely within TRA (4.2) so that they could increase their self-efficacy or sense of being able to do things for themselves (4.3), influence the use of resources and experience enhanced responsibility (4.4).

### OUTPUTS Theme 4: Provide opportunities to take decisions about own activities and lead work with others

#### 4.1 Deciding about your own activities

Young people described being fully informed about the programme before attending and everyone being free to make their own choice whether to continue or not:

*'Someone suggested it to me and sat down and talked to me and I thought it sounded good...The first few weeks are like icebreakers...you do some work...some people left'*

(Young Person, focus group participant)

Choices within core group activities occurred at the first sessions where young people were observed to set the aims for the projects, for instance in a session facilitated by an older TRA experienced young person choosing a focus on producing a radio programme on homelessness. Once products like this had been chosen, however, there was less flexibility as a goal had been set and needed to be achieved. TRA staff saw tight deadlines and immediate results as an inevitable part of media environments and positive because *'a lot of the fun is really quick deadlines and, and the immediate gratification on some of these things'*.

Analysis of the video data suggests that the initial stages TRA staff are clearly leading the activities, taking control of the group and how and where young people participate. By the end of week 1 and fully in week 2, the extent to which young people are taking the lead in activities increased. In most instances, they were assigned roles (interviewer, camera operator, interviewee etc.) by the TRA staff and then encouraged to fulfil those roles, interacting as a group for a few minutes at a time. This process watched over by TRA staff, who are quick to correct mistakes, or take charge of the process again. In effect TRA staff remain in the lead, standing by the side of the group but attempt to devolve the smaller decisions to team member. By week 5 video data shows groups of young people interviewing each other independently, whilst TRA staff work with another group in the background.

#### 4.2 Leading work with others

At the end of year 1, four young people moved towards leadership roles in enrichment activities, putting together briefs on how to put a production crew together. There are plans in place for graduates from the PPP first year to take on roles with next year's cohorts - recruiting, running icebreakers and facilitating the Media City Quiz.

In video data we observed a creative use of roles for second years on several occasions, which enabled them to take part in a parallel but not separate activity to the first years. For instance 2nd years interview TRA staff about what the course will involve with questions written by the first years, and film evaluation footage of first years participating in activities. In this situation they are still in effect being assigned a role and overall session content remains set by TRA staff. When young

people lead film teams on location, however, they are enabled to direct work of their own team. In year 2 of the project, four of the young people in care led small teams on location filming. Examples include a young person in charge of a film team working to a brief set by a client at an NHS Youth Forum residential. Two of the young people also planned the brief for an information film for the British Youth Council, before leading on filming and interviewing. In two local authorities, young people in Children in Care Councils, advised TRA on activities.

#### **OUTCOME Theme 4: Participating young people have increased self-efficacy, influence and responsibility**

##### **4.3 Self-efficacy (and task-focused behaviour)**

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's *ability* to perform a task and to have influence over events that affect one's life. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. The concept is much related to a person's sense of esteem and feelings about themselves, as described above. In addition to good esteem and a belief in one's ability, however, efficacy also requires appropriate task-focused behaviour. Looked after children are at particular risk for poor emotional control; leading to behaviour that is impulsive, emotionally reactive and rooted in negative attributions about themselves or others. This often leads to a failure to achieve tasks set or to inappropriate behaviour. We hypothesised that the PPP would increase young people's self-efficacy related to career and employability goals by not only improving self-esteem (as above) but also reducing their impulsivity (i.e. improve planning and thinking) and increasing their control over their emotional reaction to difficult events or hurdles.

Emotion control was measured using two sub-scales (aggression control and benign control) from Roger and Najarian's (1989) emotional control questionnaire. The benign control scale measures the degree of impulsivity, while aggression control measures reactions to trying circumstances. The sub-scales comprise 14 items each, for example 'I often take chances crossing the road'; 'Almost everything I do is carefully thought out'; 'I often say things without thinking whether I might upset others' and 'If a passing car splashes me, I shout at the driver'. Respondents answer true (1) or false (2), reflecting on how they would respond in the given situation. A total score is calculated for each sub-scale, with higher scores indicating greater control.

Table 8 below presents the scores for each sub-scale at baseline and follow-up in Year 1. Emotion control scores actually declined between baseline and follow-up, suggesting those that completed both assessments (n = 14) did not gain greater control over impulsive behaviour, improve their planning/thinking ability or emotional reactions. Paired t-tests suggested the difference was not statistically significant, however, for both aggression control (t = 1.7; p = 0.11) or benign control (t = 0.7; p = 0.52).

Table 8: Emotion Control

| Year 1           |        | Aggression Control | Benign Control |
|------------------|--------|--------------------|----------------|
|                  |        | Mean (SD)          | Mean (SD)      |
| <b>Baseline</b>  | N = 19 | 21.3 (3.8)         | 22.4 (3.6)     |
| <b>Follow-up</b> | N = 14 | 19.9 (3.3)         | 21.4 (3.0)     |

After discussion with TRA staff the evaluation team decided to remove this measure in Year 2 as the programme did not seem to address emotional control in any clear way. Instead, young people were asked about their experience of responsibility and leadership through focus groups. We also reviewed video data for evidence of influence and responsibility.

#### **4.4 Influence and responsibility**

When asked about leadership in the focus groups, most young people described group decision-making processes in which they had worked collectively with other young people to make decisions as a team, taking responsibility for different tasks.

- ‘-We kind of swap every time, we swap roles for the camera....*
- None of us have gone to the shop yet*
- We don’t really lead it...we just decide who gets the camera*
- It isn’t really a leading thing...it’s a group thing. It helps with your team work.*
- I think if some had a [leading] role it would be too formal as well.’*

(4 Looked After Young People, Focus Group Discussion)

The extent to which decisions devolve seem to increase of the course of the programme, with young people taking on greater responsibilities for longer periods at each session. However, the core programme does not seem to reach a stage where young people are taking the lead by initiating activities, at all times young people remain in roles that are assigned by TRA staff, albeit roles with more flexibility and greater responsibility.

Nonetheless, focus group participants felt this process had enabled them to build up their ability to take on responsibilities and have more of an influence over their learning resources and environment than they usually experienced at school:

*‘Responsibility is like using the computers, cameras...you get to use everything’.*

(Young Person, focus group participant)

**Researcher’s Question:** *Is there an assumption that you are responsible?*

- ‘-Yeah, that’s different from say like school.’*
- Here you are all like equal [not age based year groups].*
- You don’t have teachers moaning at you*
- You don’t get told what to do*

...

*-You could say oh I don’t want to do this and they respect your opinion’*

(3 Young People, focus group participants)

In focus groups, young people did not generally articulate that they had been able to initiate and lead projects or delegating tasks to others. Echoing the video analysis, there was a sense that they had taken responsibility for tasks and decisions within the parameters of the project, and in a supported but controlled environment. Some young people who had progressed from year 1 into leadership roles in year 2 did however describe more in depth responsibility, but this was still articulated in the

sense of taking responsibility for aspects of a project rather than leading and initiating something overall.

*'I'm a mentor...[my job is] helping other people. I started by going round making videos of other people and I edit them.'*

(Young Person, focus group participant)

The opportunity to experience leadership was also mentioned, alongside other benefits, by one professional survey respondent:

*'Widened experiences. Meeting new people. Allowing young people to make decisions and take charge'.*

(Professional, survey respondent)

And young people who had previously attend TRA were reported to be taking on new responsibilities within one local authority.

*'The YP who attend are being used as mentors and links are made directly through social workers and carers to those other LAC YP who would benefit from their experiences.'*

(Professional, Practice questionnaire respondent)

## Theme 5: Progress career plans

The PPP aimed to provide young participants with the opportunity to reflect on their own personal career goals (5.1) and to produce CVs (5.2) so that they could develop their own career plans by having higher aspirations (5.3), greater advice seeking competence (5.4), clearer plans for their own futures (5.5) and access relevant networks and opportunities (5.6).

### OUTPUTS Theme 5: Provide opportunities to reflect on personal career goals and CVs

#### 5.1 Reflect on career goals

In year 1 the evaluation recommended that TRA should consider how to monitor young people's CV writing and career advice seeking. Video data of the early session shows 21 young individuals and four groups reading or stating their career goals and aspiration to camera, as well as identifying the steps they need to take to get there. Focus group data suggests that in some cases TRA staff helped them identify these goals and steps and in other cases they were pre formed. Some 18 young people have completed progression plans identifying actions they need to undertake. TRA staff have also provided specific support through their media resources and professional and social networks for some young people to pursue their career paths.

#### 5.2 Produce CVs

TRA staff describe their work on CVs as:

- Preparation of young people's individual content for a one minute 30 second speech to camera as their CV on a DVD
- Completing of CV worksheets
- Encouraging the young people to update CVs as part of the programme
- Filming individualised CVs on locations that are special to individual young people

Young people were asked how confident they felt to prepare a CV or complete job application forms. At baseline in year 1, 21% of young people felt 'somewhat confident' while 42% felt 'very confident'. The remaining 37% felt 'not very' or 'not at all confident'. By year 1 follow up, 21% felt 'very confident' to do this and 43% felt 'somewhat confident'. Surprisingly, despite focused effort on CV preparation as part of the PPP programme and most young people being very aware of where to access help related to career options, 36% of young people still described themselves as 'not very confident' in preparing a CV or job application. However no-one said they were 'not at all confident'.

In Year 2 at baseline, only 1 young person (5%) felt 'very confident' with most young people (80%) indicating that they were 'somewhat confident' in preparing a CV or job application. The remaining 15% felt 'not very confident'. By follow up in Year 2, this has risen to 33% feeling 'very confident' to prepare a CV or complete job application forms and 44% feeling 'somewhat confident'. 22% still felt 'not very' or 'not at all confident'.

The extent to which each young person completes a digital CV still remains limited, and TRA attribute this to insufficient time. However, 10 examples of this individualised process leading towards CV creation have been provided by TRA. Together with the evidence from the survey this suggests that the focus on creating

CVs has improved from year 1 to year 2 of the programme, even though only 2 young people have completed these as multimedia outputs.

**OUTCOME THEME 5: participating young people access relevant networks and opportunities to progress own career plans**

**5.3 Future Aspirations:**

The Future Aspirations scale (see Dahlberg et al. 2005) was used to assess the importance the young people placed on future education, employment, health, and community connectedness. It is a 6-item scale with 4 response options, from ‘very important’ to ‘not at all important’. The total score is calculated as an average of the young person’s response to all six items, i.e. ranging from 1-4. The higher the score, the greater their aspiration.

Children and young people who are looked after often show lower aspirations for their future than those not cared for away from home. We hypothesised that the PPP would increase young people’s aspirations for their future, particularly in relation to education and employment. Table 9 below shows that the average score for the group was high at the start, with a baseline average of 3.3 (out of a possible 4) in both year 1 and year 2. For the young people that completed the follow-up questionnaire, the aspiration score had increased slightly by the end of the programme for the Year 1 cohort but decreased slightly for the Year 2 cohort. A paired t-test revealed that changes over time was not statistically significant ( $t = 1.17$ ;  $p = 0.26$  Year 1;  $p = 0.48$  year 2).

Table 9: Future Aspirations scores

|                   | Year 1 |           | Year 2 |           |
|-------------------|--------|-----------|--------|-----------|
|                   |        | Mean (SD) |        | Mean (SD) |
| Baseline          | N = 18 | 3.2 (0.5) | N = 20 | 3.3 (0.6) |
| Follow-up         | N = 14 | 3.4 (0.4) | N = 18 | 3.3 (0.5) |
| Repeated Measures | N = 14 |           | N = 11 |           |
| <b>Baseline</b>   |        | 3.3 (0.4) |        | 3.4 (0.4) |
| <b>Follow-up</b>  |        | 3.4 (0.4) |        | 3.3 (0.4) |

Gains were equally strong for aspirations related to education and employment as they were for connectedness, borne out in the free-text analysis. Young people were asked an open question at baseline and follow-up about what they consider most important to them for their future. At baseline, 6 (Year 1) and 10 (Year 2) young people indicated that the ‘a job’ was important to them. In Year 1, four suggested ‘family’ and ‘good friends’ were most important. In Year 2, three said good grades at school were most important and two said having a family and good friends were most important. A number of the young people in Year 1 made claims for the importance of ‘loads of money’ and ‘to marry [a pop star]’. A small number in Year 1 said they didn’t know or couldn’t say what was important for the future. At follow-up in Year 1, 5 of the 14 young people said ‘getting a good job’ or ‘well paid work’ was most important to them. It was interesting to note the addition of the adjectives ‘good’ and ‘well paid’ as this suggests an increase in the esteem or value of the work sought, rather than ‘any’ job. Five young people stressed the important

of being 'happy', having a 'family and friends' and 'security'. At follow up in Year 2, 8 of the 14 young people said getting a job they could enjoy and be happy in was most important to them: "Being able to do a job that I enjoy and have fun in doing", "to get a good job what I enjoy". There were a number of young people that also expressed an aspiration to lead a happy, healthy life, and to be in a "good physical and emotional state".

#### 5.4 Seeking Advice

At both baseline and follow up assessment, young people were asked which of the following individuals they would turn to for a) general advice and b) career advice: friends; parents/carers; extended family; teacher/someone at school; a religious leader; social worker or other professional; or anyone else. There was the option to indicate that 'there is no-one I could ask for advice/help'.

At baseline in Year 1, most young people indicated that they would seek *general* advice from friends and parents (74% and 79% respectively). The picture was slightly different for *career* advice, where fewer young people would seek advice from friends or family (42% and 68%). A significant minority at baseline said they had no-one they could ask for general advice (15%). Approximately a third of young people said they would ask professionals (32% said social workers and 42% said teachers) for general advice. This was higher for career advice (42% said social workers and 68% said teachers). By follow-up assessment, fewer young people said they would seek general advice from friends or family (53% and 68%) but a greater number would turn to professionals, especially their teachers or someone at school (53%).

At baseline in Year 2, most young people indicated that they would seek *general* advice from friends and parents (80% and 70% respectively). The picture was slightly different for *career* advice, where fewer young people would seek such advice from friends (50%). Only 1 young person said they had no-one they could ask for general advice. Approximately half of the young people said they would ask professionals (50% said social workers and 55% said teachers) for general advice. This was higher for career advice (75% said teachers). Three of the young people that had been involved in the Cohort 1 evaluation indicated that they would "ask Katy and Glyn" for both general and career advice, highlighting the influence that Aiming Higher staff have had on their lives. Many of them (n =8) also mentioned seeking advice from specific career advisors in their schools. By follow-up assessment, similar numbers of young people said they would seek general advice from friends or family (85%) but a greater number would turn to professionals, especially their teachers or someone at school (72%). This indicates more young people in Year 2 than Year 1 would seek advice from professionals.

A particularly significant finding was that by follow-up assessment in both years, no young person reported having no-one to turn. Proportions for those they would seek career advice from professionals remained similar, though also included reference to members of staff from Aiming Higher.

#### 5.5 Career Planning

In focus groups most young people were able to cite career goals, and many were clear on formal educational steps toward them. Most felt that TRA had helped them achieve this, primarily through direct discussion of these issues. Generally when young people did not feel TRA had contributed to this, it was because they were already clear on their goals and choices. The activities young people tended to

perceive to have contributed to their employment skills were *individually* focused, such as direct conversations with the TRA staff, or the Our Skills activity. They felt that these individual activities had made a significant contribution to the development of their career goals and plans.

*“it helped me pick my options for my career...we had a conversation about what I enjoy doing...I learned a lot more about myself, about what I enjoy doing and what I don’t enjoy. I learned what I want to do in the future and, more important, how I can get there.”*

(Young Person, focus group participant)

The reflection on careers has enabled some young people to develop detailed plans, and we have 10 clear examples of this. One example is a young man from LA1 who made this plan for his steps towards a career as a paramedic:

1. First aid experience with St John Ambulance at sports matches
2. Go to a radio station and watch how to interview people
3. Go out a number of times with TRA (secured)
4. Talk to a number of professionals in media and paramedic/NHS (secured)
5. Interview a wide range of different people (secured)
6. Learn and talk to a number of different people on how to interview different people who don't think the same. E.g. People with learning difficulties
7. Practice teaching basic first aid

In a second example, a young woman from LA3 identified steps towards achieving her goal to improve concentration, so that she could become a social worker, other young people had a shorter term focus on improving success in school:

### **Smart Goal: Help on concentration to improve grades**

#### **Three key decisions:**

1. Tutor trust – ask tutor where I lose concentration
2. Try out two ways of concentrating
3. Ask the tutor if I'm improved

Even when the young people knew what career they were aiming for before attending, they described TRA having enabled them to consolidate those plans and in some cases access relevant work experiences.

*‘I already knew a lot about media, I had a lot of social skills, I was feeling confident about myself but I didn’t know what I wanted to do...now I know and [I learned more about my career path]’*

(Young Person, focus group participant)

However, video data suggests that to a certain extent some of the career goals young people identify feel idealistic and not fully connected to the local labour market opportunities. A few professionals, however, showed a clear grasp of these difficulties:

*'We live in a provisional town which has lost the manufacturing job opportunities we once had, we are reliant on a couple of large companies'*

(Professional, survey respondent)

Work with local authorities could therefore be developed by considering how to provide young people, and the staff working with them, with accurate information about employment opportunities.

### **5.6 Access relevant networks and opportunities**

In focus groups young people gave examples of TRA identifying work experiences or opportunities for them as individuals. The young people seemed to feel a real sense of dedication from the staff to doing this, but at the same time recognised that they were predominantly a media company and this was where many of their links were.

Local authority professionals also recognised that young people have access relevant opportunities

*'Work shadowing and link to employers have been offered and taken up by individual and small groups of youngsters – eg a young person committed to becoming a paramedic involved in NHS activity ... Work experience has been offered and taken up by members of TRA group with TRA staff.'*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

*'It provides an additional opportunity for them to gain the skills necessary to enter the workplace.'*

(Professional, survey respondent)

*'Offers young people a unique insight into a range of pathways and careers, allows them to access a range of opportunities and extends their skills and knowledge.'*

(Professional, survey respondent)

*'Students involved feel 'special' and are part of a good system to help them.'*

(Professional, survey respondent)

In two LAs, the PPP also linked into universities to give young people visits to a university and day visit with a view to raising aspirations.

Individualised knowledge of young people was key to providing opportunities that are relevant

*"[TRA Staff member has] helped me a lot, because he understand where I'm coming from and he's opened up a lot of boxes and opportunities for me"*

(Young Person, focus group participant)

## Theme 6: Young people develop their chosen transferable capabilities

The PPP aimed to engage all participating young people in sessions in which they would reflect upon their capabilities and identify personal capability targets (6.1) so that through their work with TRA they could reflect on and achieve improvements in their identified areas (6.2).

### OUTPUTS Theme 6: Provide capability monitoring sessions

#### 6.1 Capabilities to work towards

Individual and groups sessions were held at regular intervals in the programme (usually sessions 1, 5 and 10) described on a TRA capability task sheet as to:

1. Identify 3 skills/qualities that you are proud of and give an example where you have put them into practice.
2. Tick off all the skills/qualities that you are good at from the skills/knowledge/capabilities list provided.
3. Identify three areas that you would like to develop
4. Discuss and complete your progression Plan
5. Now work towards it, with support from those you have identified alongside yourself!

Progress towards identifying transferrable skills was monitored through TRA monitoring systems. These included peer and staff interviews, written worksheets and questionnaires. In Year 1, the transferable capabilities suggested to the young participants were: Proactive, Aspirational, Flexible, Empathetic, Resilient and Prepared. They were encouraged to identify others.

Year 2 young people reflected on a wide range of capabilities they identified as needed for their career goals. Most frequently, skills identified were related to media, communication and confidence:

*"I need to be able to address large groups of people, I'm part of LA1 youth council and I struggle performing and giving presentations to large groups of people"*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

*"because if I do write something I want people to be able to read it"*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

*"being impatient because I get pretty impatient with other people, and self-confidence because I get shy when I meet other people"*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

*"discretion because sometimes I say the wrong things in bad situations...sometimes when people are talking to me all at once I feel like shouting at them"*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

Capacities related to social and help seeking skills also included not being afraid of asking people for help, being able to project your voice and speak to groups and expression.

Memory was important for three young people:

*"good memory, because I haven't got a good memory I can't remember things that well, so I remember something, and then the next day I will forget"*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

*"I'm very forgetful, I forget very basic things such as ties books, anything like that"*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

*"I often forget to organise things say for example I forgot to organise my work experience properly so therefore I'm being placed by [a training agency]"*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

Two young people mentioned cultural awareness and sensitivity:

*"understanding, because in school, I've got a few friends that aren't like... well they are thingy Muslim and like Jewish and I've got lots of different cultures in the school and I need to understand their cultures so I can do things right and not offend them in any way."*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

*"sensitivity - because sometimes I say what I think, and sometimes it hurts people's feelings"*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

Decision making and analysis skills featured for two young people:

*"I'm not very good at making decisions fast"*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

*"I'm not very good at like picking out little things and how they fit into one big thing"*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

Two young people named the ability to act independently lead or take charge. Two young people mentioned professionalism and capability to do a job. And two young people mentioned positivity - the need to not be afraid of failure and to have a positive attitude.

The increased capacity to reflect on and develop skills was also noted as a benefit of the TRA programme by one professionals' survey respondent:

*'Recognising existing skills and developing new ones'.*

(Professional, survey respondent)

Video recordings show that 18 young people identified aspiration, and of these 13 gave clear accounts of the capabilities they would need to develop in order to achieve their career goals. Documentary evidence shows that seventeen young people also completed this element of the programme through a strengths and developments questionnaire. It is not clear from our data whether these are the same people.

**OUTCOME THEME 6: Participating young people have made progress in reflecting on and enhancing their chosen transferable capability targets.**

**6.2 Capabilities developed**

In Year 1, when asked whether they had improved none, one or both of the capabilities they had identified, 16 stated they had improved both, one had improved only one and two said they had made no improvement.

The capabilities that were improved were:

- Communication (by 8 young people)
- Transferability (by 8 young people)
- Creative problem solving (by 1 young person)

The young people referred to transferability as being able to learn new skills learned as part of the programme and use them in a different situation. Those who had improved capabilities thought this could be seen in the fact that they felt more confident (13) and also because they were:

*'I'm more prepared to have a go at things'*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

*'I work better in a team or on my own'*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

*'I'm not as quiet'*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

*'I think I've matured and don't mess around as much.'*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

Young people reflected on their capabilities in a variety of ways in Year 2. One mechanism, a TRA questionnaire, was only completed by one young person so other data capture tools were used. An extract of the questionnaire response in figure 1 below provides an insight into how capabilities are developed and then how young people are encouraged to reflect on how these can be transferred to other working environments.

The questionnaire in figure 1 was completed by a young person from the Year 1 cohort who continued to engage in enrichment activities with TRA in year 2.

Figure 1 - Questionnaire on capabilities



Of the at least 18 young people who identified areas for development in Year 2, 10 individuals identified capabilities they had developed (6 on video interview recordings, 1 via a questionnaire and 2 on pro forma). In addition cohorts from all three local authorities were asked to note skills gained in a group post-it note activity. The data show that young people draw tangible links between their

experiences, the soft skills they have developed relating to them, and their personal strengths and qualities, in a way that would be appropriate to answering a job interview question.

Despite the wide range of areas for improvement identified, the individual capabilities improved in year 2 tended again to be mostly related to media and communication, but through group work a wider range of capabilities were identified (see table 10). These data should be treated cautiously as they were generated with substantial coaching from TRA staff and adult mentors.

Table 10: Capability developed in Year 2

| <b>Capabilities</b>                                 | <b>Interviewed of young people</b> | <b>Post-it note skills identified</b> |
|---|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Communication</b>                                | 6                                  | 2                                     |
| <b>How to talk to Professionals / people skills</b> |                                    | 2                                     |
| <b>Interview Skills</b>                             |                                    | 1                                     |
| <b>Teaching others</b>                              |                                    | 1                                     |
| <b>Camera skills</b>                                | 3                                  | 4                                     |
| <b>Editing Skills,</b>                              | 2                                  | 2                                     |
| <b>Computer skills</b>                              | 2                                  | 1                                     |
| <b>Group work / teamwork</b>                        | 3                                  | 1                                     |
| <b>Confidence</b>                                   | 2                                  |                                       |
| <b>Patience</b>                                     | 2                                  | 1                                     |
| <b>Concentration and determination</b>              |                                    | 1                                     |
| <b>Networking</b>                                   |                                    | 1                                     |
| <b>building significant relationships</b>           |                                    | 1                                     |

Young people therefore identified developing capabilities in a wide range of areas related to communication, media, social and personal skills. Although some young people identified the need to improve their decision making skills, memory and understanding of other cultures we have no data regarding whether progress was made in these areas.

By improvement in communication the young people tended to mean being more willing to talk in front of others and to a range of audiences, it was often linked to confidence.

*"it's helped because I can learn how to communicate, whereas I didn't know how to communicate with other people before"*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

*"I have enjoyed working with staff and the students because I have managed to get my confidence talking in front of people"*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

*"yes its benefited me a lot, I'm able to speak a lot loudly when I'm talking to people, I'm not as nervous when I'm in public...I'm able to project what I'm saying properly...I've learnt how to better word what I'm saying"*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

Progress in communication and group work skill development also tended to coincide:

*"From the reporters academy [my communication skills] have improved a lot ... mostly communication, low confidence and learning how to work in a team ... building all them skills up".*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

*"I've learnt communication skills, because before I came [to] Reporters Academy, I'd just speak over everyone, and I've learned to listen because I've been working in a group"*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

*"I have enjoyed group work, like discussing our future plans and careers and learning about each other."*

(Young Person, TRA Internal monitoring)

These improvements in capabilities in both Year 1 and Year 2 cohorts demonstrate progress toward outcome 1 (media/social/employability skills) and outcome 3 (raised confidence). They reveal the complexity of trying to evaluate change using quantitative measures but also the need to consistently evaluate change for young people against their own objectives.

As evaluators we would also suggest that this data is evidence of young people developing reflective learning skills.

## Theme 7: Local Authorities develop Looked After Children's career opportunities and outcomes

In addition to working directly with young people, the PPP programme aimed to provide Local Authority staff and carers with opportunities to consider the development of career aspirations and career opportunities for looked after young people. The Reporters' Academy multi-layered approach has been to work with Local Authorities to inspire a greater focus on looked after children's careers within local authorities in a flexible way that responded to Local authorities own agendas (7.1). The purpose of this approach was to enhance career planning within local authorities (7.2), encourage promotion of career enhancing opportunities to young people (7.3) and to improve staff capabilities (7.4). Details of the online survey participants can be found in Appendix 1.

### OUTPUTS Theme 7: Provide guidance on career planning and training for staff

#### 7.1 Engage with local authority career focus

In Year 1 Three Local Authorities engaged as stakeholders in the PPP. TRA staff reported that each LA had the opportunity to negotiate with TRA the type of additional staff opportunities to be offered and to whom. This negotiation typically took place through a nominated staff member who acted as a link between the authority and the RA.

In Year 2 the local authority practice questionnaire respondents indicated that TRA staff had engaged with the local authority in the following ways, linking in with other groups for young people:

*"TRA presence at Care Awards at which Mayor/Lord Lieutenant/carers/social workers/other agencies are present. TRA young reporters interviewed people in attendance"*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

*"A member of LA1 Care Council is part of the current cohort of TRA youngsters from our authority"*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

Linking to designated teachers:

*"TRA attendance at Designated Teacher Forums"*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

*"TRA attended and supported the designated teacher training and explored why the intervention is suitable for all LAC"*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

Feeding into educational planning:

*"Information and updates fed up to Corporate Parenting Board through education sub-group (in 2 LAs)"*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

*"Updates through social care/carers and schools, looking at impact and reflected in the PEP meetings"*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

Practice questionnaire respondents requested further engagement. These elements were subsequently delivered by TRA:

*“Put on event for Y9/10 which would promote TRA opportunities and employment possibilities that would be both a standalone event and a taster/recruitment event for the next cohort. [Completed]”*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

*“Be involved in other across county events. TRA was asked to be part of Rights and Participation month and attended all the planning sessions. Logistics of the R and P group affected the ultimate role TRA could play in this. [Ongoing]”*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

Local authorities have also requested further engagement:

*“TRA information to be included on Virtual School website to include further information and staff development resources around employability skills and preparing for adulthood”*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

Training and group discussions have also been delivered as of those who completed the professionals' online survey, over one third (37%) had had involvement with Reporters' Academy training or discussion groups for adults.

## **OUTCOME THEME 7: Participating local authorities promote career planning, career enhancing opportunities and develop professional capabilities**

### **7.2 Enhance career planning within LAs**

The TRA have had an impact on LA planning for looked after children's careers in a number of ways:

Practice questionnaires completed by a key professional in each participating local authority described TRA having impact on their work by inspiring them to change the way they conduct career planning with young people. This includes in one Local authority, planned access to work experience and career interviews for all looked after young people:

*‘RA has confirmed the value of work experience and so plans are now in place to ensure that all cared for young people are able to access work experience if they so desire’*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

*‘RA has illustrated the motivation that comes from having a clear career plan and so plans are in place to provide a service to all cared for young people so that they can have face to face careers interviews at least once per year from Y9.’*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

Impact on LA planning in a second local authority includes an earlier focus on careers in educational planning backed up by support to achieve these targets organised by Looked After Children Virtual School staff.

*‘Preparing for adulthood section’ added to the PEP for all children (from Reception to Y11 and Post-16) so that raising aspirations and*

*improving employability are a key priority in the planning for all children'*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

*'Virtual School Connexions PA arranges aspirational visits, mentors, work placements etc in line with targets identified within the 'Preparing for Adulthood' section of the PEP'*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

TRA were also seen to have raised awareness of career and employability agenda in the third local authority:

*'RA input at DT [designated teacher] Forum has helped to develop awareness of this agenda'*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

### 7.3 Promotion of opportunities by LAs to young people

When asked how they rated the opportunities offered to young people leaving care within their Local Authority, through Reporters' Academy, and through other social care/partner organisations, professional survey responses (in Table 10) suggest that most feel there are reasonable or good opportunities for LAC young people, particularly when connected through Reporters' Academy. Respondents also pointed to other opportunities offered via apprenticeships and the Virtual School personal advisors.

Table 10: Opportunities for young people (Year2)

|            | Local Authority | Reporters' Academy | Social care / partner organisations |
|------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Don't know | 20%             | 10%                | 20%                                 |
| Poor       | 15%             |                    | 15%                                 |
| Reasonable | 55%             | 15%                | 35%                                 |
| Good       | 5%              | 40%                | 30%                                 |
| Very good  | 5%              | 35%                |                                     |

TRA was consistently described in professional practice questionnaire responses as a way of providing opportunities to young people, rather than as inspiring local authorities to deliver opportunities in-house.

However, professional practice questionnaire respondents describe TRA as raising awareness within two local authorities of the ways in which LAC with media skills could contribute in new ways to the work of local authorities

*'Other Virtual School staff, and those within the LA see TRA as a way to increase the role of cared for children in events which affect them and also as a way to showcase the positive opportunities for them.'*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

*'There was a project to bring this together with Culture and link with developing film clubs, changes in the LA have delayed this embedding'*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

*“There is a plan to use the skills of the RA YP to film college settings to reduce the difficulty of transition for some of our LAC with additional needs, this may be expanded to show alternative work placements career paths in the LA.”*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

This has the potential to be mutually beneficial – offering young people opportunities to use and develop their skill within Local authority settings whilst the local authority also benefits from their skills by having media outputs produced.

Again there was a request for TRA support with this to be ongoing:

*“Continuing to ensure that the media skills are embedded in the attendees of Reporters academy so there is skill base to call on when required”*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

One local authority respondent also suggested new ideas for working together with TRA to enhance the career awareness of schools and carers.

*“to film and produce a DVD library that could be share with secondary settings and carers around transition and progression to college/apprenticeship”*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

*“RA to link in with the Virtual School Connexions PA to support her with taking the work forward”*

(Professional, Practice Questionnaire Respondent)

#### **7.4 Improve staff capabilities**

The Reporters' Academy aimed to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and experience with and between carers and workers through formal training and informal contact. They aimed particularly to increase the knowledge and skills – what TRA see as four professional employability raising capabilities - that would enable staff to support young people's access to employment. These four capacities are:

- **Developing networks with employers and providers of extra-curricular activities**
- **Addressing employability as a core component in planning**
- **Accessing resources and using strategies to develop employment opportunities for young people**
- **Using knowledge and skills to contribute to wider change for care leavers and young people**

Many online survey respondents (40-63%) rated these four professional capabilities as very relevant or critical to their role. For some (around 35%) TRA was seen as having no impact (presumably because it was not relevant to their role). For those that did indicate an impact of the RA training, the majority felt that this had been a significant or substantial impact on the capabilities listed (Table 11).

Table 11: Impact of TRA training on four professional employability building capabilities

| <b>Four professional capabilities</b>  | <b>No impact</b> | <b>Small impact</b> | <b>Significant impact</b> | <b>Substantial impact</b> |
|--|------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Developing networks with employers and providers of extra-curricular activities</b>               | 6%               | 25%                 | 25%                       | 13%                       |
| <b>Addressing employability as a core component in planning</b>                                      | 0%               | 25%                 | 19%                       | 13%                       |
| <b>Accessing resources and using strategies to develop employment opportunities for young people</b> | 6%               | 19%                 | 19%                       | 19%                       |
| <b>Using knowledge and skills to contribute to wider change for care leavers and young people</b>    | 0%               | 33%                 | 20%                       | 20%                       |

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## Appendix 1 – Evaluation methods and participants

### Demographic details of young people participating in the evaluation

#### Year 1

The first Year 1 on-line survey with young people (Y1 baseline) took place between October and December 2013. The sample comprised an almost equal gender split of 10 males and 9 females. Most young people were aged 14 years (58%), followed by 15 years (32%) and 16 years of age (10%). The young people were drawn from three local authority areas: LA1 (42%); LA2 (32%); and LA3 (26%).

14 young people responded to the second Year 1 survey (Y1 follow-up) between April and June 2014. This sample comprised more males (9) than females (5) and 70% of the young people were 15 and 16 years old. The response was greatest from young people in LA1 (58%) in the second survey than that for LA2 or LA3 (21% each).

#### Year 2

A total of 27<sup>2</sup> young people responded to the online evaluation surveys. This breaks down as follows:

20 young people responded to the first Year 2 survey (Y2 baseline) between November 2014 and February 2015. The sample comprised an almost equal gender split of 9 males and 11 females. Most young people were aged 13-14 years (45%), followed by 15 years (40%) and 16 years of age (15%). The young people were drawn from four local authority areas: LA1(30%), LA2 (20%), LA3 (40%) and LA4 (10%);

18 young people responded to the second year 2 survey (Y2 follow-up) between April and June 2015. This sample comprised equal number of males (9) as females (9) and 56% of the young people were 15 and 16 years old, followed by those aged 14 (22%) and 17 (22%). The response was greatest from young people in Cheshire East (39%) in the follow up survey followed by Tameside (33%) and Trafford (22%). Stockport only accounted for 6% of responses.

In total, 11 young people responded at both time points, allowing for the repeated measures data analysis below. It is important to note that 4 of these young people were included in the Cohort 1 analysis, i.e. they have had a greater dose, 2 years of the Aiming Higher programme.

The four focus groups with 13 young people (4 female, 9 male) each contained between two to five young people. All were mix-gendered and grouped by local authority. The young people were drawn from all three participating local authorities LA1 (15%), LA2 (23%) and LA3 (62%), so young people in LA3 were over represented in this data collection.

The 21 young people (10 male, 11 female; 33% LA1, 19% LA2, 48% LA3) took part in the individual capability interviews on up to 4 different occasions, being interviewed by TRA staff or their peers to reflect on capabilities. Of these, 14 (7 male, 7 female;

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<sup>2</sup> 9 of the 27 young people completing the surveys had been Cohort 1 participants in the 2013/2014 Aiming Higher evaluation.

36% LA1, 7% LA2, 57% LA3) completed follow up interviews in which they identified capabilities they had identified through the course of the programme.

The use of young people interviewing other young people on camera as a vehicle to explore capabilities, identify soft skills or set career goals has some limits. To a certain extent the interviews become about performing a set piece or reading from a prewritten script for the camera. It is rare that a young person appears to answer questions freely, or appears to gain fresh insight/reflection into their skills through this process - however in the context of practicing for job interviews, this may be entirely appropriate. In terms of evaluation data this should be treated cautiously.

## **Adult Stakeholder Demographics**

### **Year 1**

The year 1 online survey with adult professional stakeholders took place in June 2014. There were substantially more female respondents than male (13:5) and again substantially more respondents were from LA1 (44%) than from LA2 or LA3 (28% each). Five respondents were Foster Carers, five had roles associated with virtual schools, five had another role focused on education and learning, one was a social worker.

### **Year 2**

In year 2, there were 20 responses to the online professional's survey, received in June 2015. Most respondents were female: n=13 (65%). All three LAs were represented: LA1 60%, LA2 10% LA3 30%. Most (55%) respondents were (foster) carers. One respondent was a student and. The rest of the respondents were professionals: 1 social worker, 1 safeguarding lead, 6 teachers including 2 virtual school headteachers and 1 specialist intervention teacher for LAC.

## **Observations and Guided Reflection**

The process evaluation was achieved through three observations of sessions with young people in year 1 and four guided critical reflection sessions in both year 1 and year 2. Two observations were conducted by one researcher, a third observation of activities happening in multiple rooms, was conducted by two researchers. Visual methods were used to capture images of the situations and the sessions were documented using a visual framework drawing on themes emerging from the critical reflections and outcome measures. Non-participant observation allowed the researcher to remain separate from the activity whilst enabling them to record the activities taking place (Allan 2012) and provided researchers with insight into group dynamics.

The critical reflection sessions focused on the challenges and opportunities which RA staff encountered and reconstructing narratives about how to try to bring about change (Morley 2013). In this way the evaluation team supporting Reporter's Academy staff to reflect on and develop both their effectiveness in working with looked after young people and care providers, and their capacity to evaluate their work.

## **TRA internal recording and evaluation methods**

In these elements of data collection, TRA staff balanced the need to be obtaining feedback for data to fulfil bid and and the desire to give young people opportunities

to provide feedback to enable ongoing development within the agency. Rather than having periods of evaluation Katy began to consider debriefing/evaluation as part of the activity (building in a feedback space in situ on location) and using gadgets they are using within their work (whatsapp, phone voice recorder, video). Example being a meal after the event and voice record using prompt questions such as:

What did we do?

What did we enjoy?

What did we learn?

What future learning needs do we have and how will we address them?

Their desire to improve service / opportunities is evident rather than just fulfil obligations within the bid. Thought about using a volunteer/mentor to facilitate the 'informal atmosphere' evaluations and capturing feedback long term within the agency.

In year 2 TRA developed a wider range of internal monitoring and evaluation tools. These included individual questionnaires and reflective worksheets (asking young people to identify capabilities developed during the programme); a group ideas storm on post it notes (asking each LA cohort of young people to identify highs and lows and recommendations for the future); a policy and practice questionnaire (asking a representative from each LA to identify changes in policy and practice that they would attribute to TRA) and video data recorded with or by young people.

The volume of data is extensive but edited, so it represents the picture of sessions which the TRA staff have chosen to present, to illustrate the group activities mid flow or interviews which were most effective from a media perspective. In line with media interviewing the questioning techniques are often leading. With young people's consent, TRA staff have chosen which of this data they have shared with the evaluation team, the results are therefore interpreted cautiously.

### **Ethics**

The study received ethical approval from the University of Central Lancashire. The Reporter's Academy received permission from each local authority to invite young people and staff to take part in the evaluation. Signed informed consent was then obtained from all participants and from parents/carers or social workers with parental responsibility for young people aged under 16. The names of local authorities and young people have been changed to protect anonymity and video footage and photographs included are in the public domain.

### **Outcome framework**

Through the process of critical reflection TRA staff and the Evaluators identified six area in which the PPP programme sought to achieve change for young people:

1. Engagement in group learning activity to achieve media, social and employability skills
2. Feeling of being supported and included
3. Confidence & Self-esteem
4. Experience of leadership and responsibility
5. Action to progress career plans
6. Development of self-identified transferable capabilities.

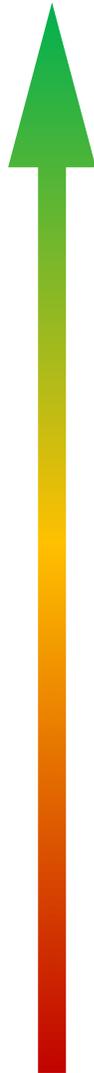
And two further themes of related to Local Authority and Reporters' Academy ways of working:

7. Improved LA working towards widening LAC's career opportunities and outcomes
8. Sustainability of TRA

Our theory of change on the following page explains the ways in which we aimed for the PPP interventions to result in related outputs and the outcomes identified in the same column. We do of course recognise that in an evaluation of this kind we cannot directly attribute outcomes to outputs, and that further evaluation of these connections would be useful. The eighth theme is beyond the scope of this evaluation, but data from the critical reflection process has contributed to this strand in TRA internal evaluation and development processes.

PPP Theory of Change

NB- read from bottom up in columns



| Themes   | Participating Young People  |  |   |   |  |   | Local Authorities  | Reporters' Academy                             |
|--|---|--|---|---|--|---|--|--|
|  | 1. Engaged in group learning activity   | 2. Supported and included  | 3. Raised self esteem                         | 4. Experience leadership and responsibility   | 5. Progressing Career Plans  | 6. Capabilities   | 7. Improved working re careers   | 8. Is sustainable                              |
| OUTCOMES   | Increases confidence in their Social/ Employability/ Media Skills   | Feel supported and included in TRA Activities they attend        | Feel positive and have improved self-esteem   | Self efficacy / Greater capacity for leadership and to exercise responsibility and influence. | Progress own career plans – develop aspirations, advice seeking, planning and networks | Progress Transferable Capabilities: e.g. Proactive, Aspirational, Flexible, Empathetic, Resilient, Prepared | Career pathway planning embedded in LA; <b>Increase in staff skills</b> ; More LAC work/experience opportunities available | Capacity in TRA built                          |
| OUTPUTS  | Numbers recruited and retained Media outputs  | Are included and participate in enrichment activities            | Success is celebrated                         | Young People lead own films / become core members of RA                                       | CVs produced   | Capability Monitoring sessions  | Staff trained, Other development activities delivered  | Roles, funding and time clearly managed        |
|  | 30 young people in 3 Local Authorities Engaged in Core Offer  |  |   |   |  |   | LA Career focus interventions  | Deliver to budget / time                       |
| RA Learning about the Process and strategies                                       | Provide activities Develop Recruitment strategies   | Inclusive Peer Cooperation balanced with Aspirational Leadership | Recognise and value each individuals' talents | Lead own learning Self-direct own activities Care council informs work                        | Are supported to identify career plans   | Identify and monitor goals for capability building  | Deliver a limited but responsive menu of CPD opportunities and inspire change  | Identify challenges Enact innovative solutions |
|  | Questioning dominant ways of thinking about how to do things - Engage with emotions and/or procedures - Manage concerns re Behaviour and risk<br>Balance flexibility with clear boundaries and limits - Reflect on how are young people in care the same or different – Consider how existing resources can be redeployed |  |   |   |  |   |  | Reflective dialogue with UCLan and within RA   |
| PPP Intervention   | Deliver media based activities in a supportive environments and aspirational venues<br>Reflect on, identify and develop capabilities  |  |   |   |  |   | Deliver CPD opportunities  |  |
| EXTRA barriers   | Dates changed by workers - Transport - Lack of Networks - communication is slow - LA fear of online communication; concern about risk, rigidity - young people have been moved - lack positive group experiences  |  |   |   |  |   | Engaging LA<br>Engaging staff or carers  | Lack of experience in LAC                      |
| The Problems   | 1 Lack of opportunities to develop social/ employment skills – 2. Lack of positive group learning experiences - 3. Low confidence and self-esteem - 4. Lack of opportunities for self-direction and responsibility<br>5. Lack of career focus - 6. Lack of recognition of own skills and how to develop these             |  |   |   |  |   | Staff/carers lack skills in job searching<br>Lack of work  | 8. Two people - working globally               |
| Low employment levels and low educational attainment for young people leaving care |   |  |   |   |  |   |  |  |

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