

Theory of Change for University Centre Leeds access intervention: Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Community Outreach Programme

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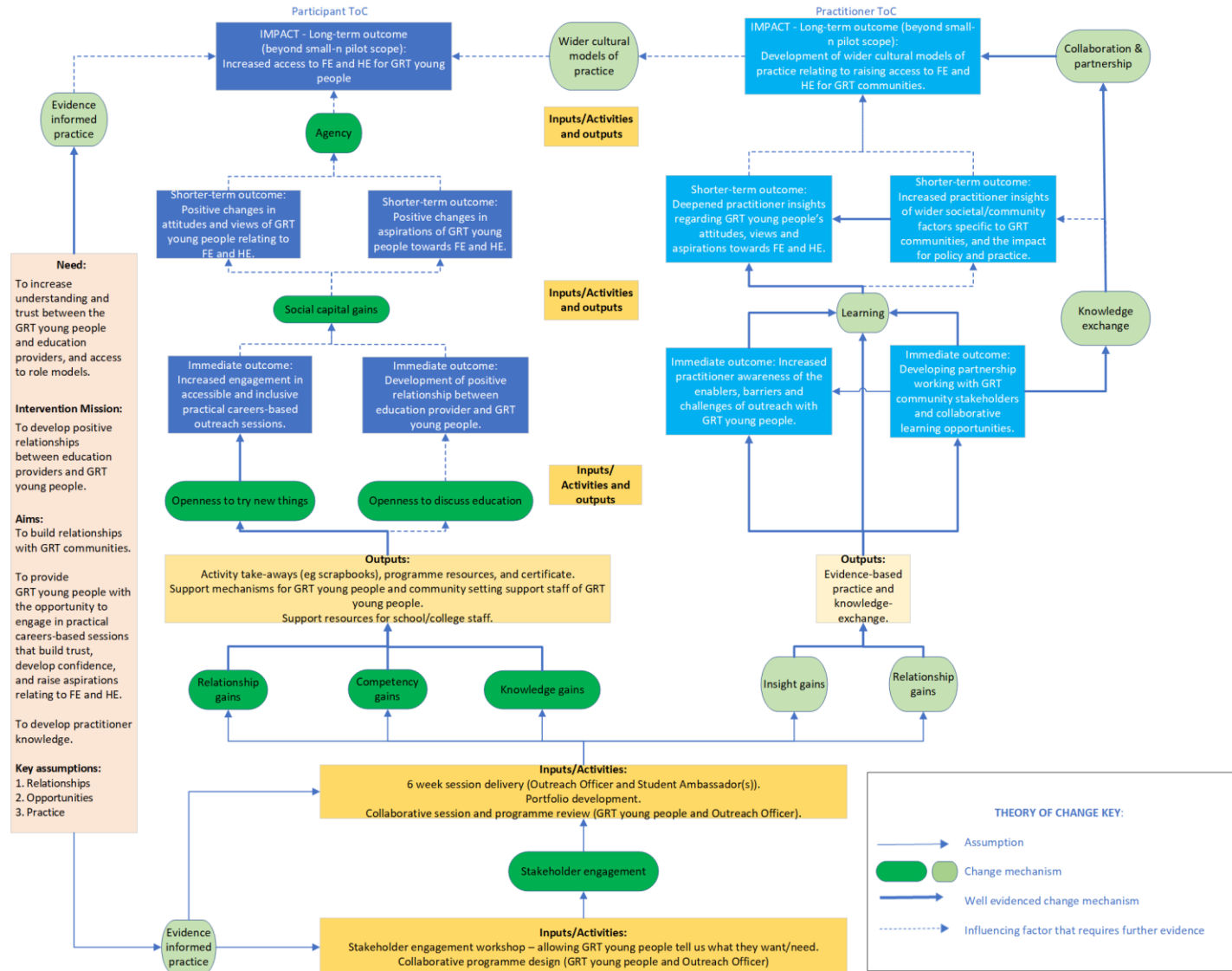
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University Centre Leeds' Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community Outreach Programme



EXPANDED THEORY OF CHANGE UNDERPINNING DOCUMENT

VERSION = 1 – 09/02/23

NAME = University Centre Leeds GRT Community Outreach Programme

WHY IS THE INTERVENTION BEING RUN?

There remain HE ‘cold spots’, including marginalised groups who continue to have participation percentage rates in the single figures, and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities are one such group (Department of Education (DfE), 2018; Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2018). Evidence indicates that GRT children experience do not trust schools due to continued negative school experiences (Greenfields et al., 2021), including discrimination, racism, bullying and prejudice (The Traveller Movement, 2022; Angus, 2021; DfE, 2018) and a lack of inclusion (Angus, 2021). Low engagement with formal education (DfE, 2018) and high levels of persistent non-attendance often result (Cabinet Office, 2020), including exclusionary behaviour (The Traveller Movement, 2022; Angus, 2021; DfE, 2018), leading to leaving school at a much earlier age than other children (Cabinet Office, 2019) and without achieving the qualifications necessary to progress to FE (The Traveller Movement, 2022). Research by Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY) (Greenfields et al., 2021) also found that GRT young people:

- feel school staff lack understanding about their experiences and effects on education,
- do not see FE/HE as safe environments, assuming they will be the same as school,
- are supported by their families, as education is important, but there is a lack of knowledge about HE, leading to a lack of confidence and a need to be assured of their physical and moral safety,
- do not have community role models in relation to education, but find they are important and impactful.

Whilst the literature is growing around regarding education inequalities and barriers to education for GRT young people, including recommendations to tackle inequalities, there is much less available regarding implemented interventions and an evaluation of their impact and effectiveness.

WHO IS THE INTERVENTION FOR?

The participants are Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) young girls attending a pre-established Girls Group within an GRT community setting.

The girls are aged 8-16 year olds (n=3-12), and all are home schooled.

Only one participant has participated in the community outreach programme previously, although facilitated by a different Outreach Officer. No pre-existing relationships with the facilitating Outreach Officer.

WHAT IS THE INTERVENTION?

Aims: To work towards challenging the education inequality faced by GRT young people the intervention sets out to develop positive relationships between education providers and GRT young people by building relationships with GRT communities, providing GRT young people with the opportunity to engage in practical careers-based sessions that build trust, develop knowledge and openness, and raise aspirations relating to FE and HE, and developing practitioner knowledge.

Procedures:

The intervention is part of a rolling outreach programme based in a GRT community organisation, comprising 6 session blocks of activities. There is no formal enrolment to the outreach intervention, however the intervention has been embedded into a structured group at a GRT community centre. Discussions with stakeholders, including the community organisation staff and the GRT young people participating in the programme, is essential in the design of each 6-session programme of activities. This intervention involves a stakeholder engagement session, followed by the co-design of each programme of activities – in this case ‘Costume design, textiles, and hair and make-up’ programme.

Materials:

Physical materials needed include scrap books, magazines, fabric (cotton and netting), sewing materials, craft materials (such as foam, pipe cleaners, sequins, glitter, felt), paint, and make-up.

WHO IS DELIVERING THE INTERVENTION?

The University Centre Leeds (UCLeeds) WP and Outreach Team will deliver the programme, notably the Outreach Officer. The Outreach Officer is responsible for stakeholder engagement, programme design and delivery, resourcing, facilitating focus group/interview discussions with participants, providing observations and reflections, reporting data to project lead, and contributing to overall evaluation and final evaluation report. The Outreach Officer is the single point of contact for the community organisation. Delivery of subject specialist activities is supported by Student Ambassadors. The WP and Outreach Team has experience working with GRT communities previously, as well as undertaking CPD, scholarly activity and research relating to supporting GRT communities and to inform their policy and practice. Examples include:

- Inclusion of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma histories in the school curriculum – facilitated by Friends, Families and Travellers
- Gypsy and Traveller Cultural Awareness – facilitated by Friends, Families and Travellers
- Supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Towards or Into Higher Education – facilitated by University of Sussex
- Supporting Gypsy, Roma & Traveller Young People In West Yorkshire – facilitated by LeedsGATE and Go Higher West Yorkshire
- Taking the GTRSB Into HE Pledge: A Practical Workshop – facilitated by Buckinghamshire New University

UCLeeds have committed to the GTRSB Into HE Pledge and are members of the ‘Supporting GRT young people in West Yorkshire: regional multi-agency forum’.

HOW IS THE INTERVENTION DELIVERED?

The intervention is delivered face-to-face to small groups attending a pre-established Girl’s Group at a GRT community organisation setting.

WHERE IS THE INTERVENTION DELIVERED?

The intervention is delivered within the GRT community, at an GRT community organisation which the participants attend regularly and are familiar with. The intervention is embedded into a pre-existing Girls Group based in the organisation's activity room. Implementing the programme in their community setting is a key context in the CMO configuration and to the outcomes (Wong et al., 2013). The venue has all the required facilities such as water, sinks and toilets, and craft equipment (eg paper, scissors, glue, etc).

HOW MANY TIMES WILL THE INTERVENTION BE DELIVERED? OVER HOW LONG?

The intervention comprises blocks of 6, 2 hour long, sessions, delivered one afternoon per week over a period of anywhere between 6 and 12 weeks (eg weekly or fortnightly – with flexibility to meet the needs of the community organisation). The intervention pilot includes:

- Session 1 – stakeholder engagement workshop to co-design the programme.
- Session 2 – story-boarding and initial costume designs,
- Session 3 – costume, hair and make-up design development,
- Session 4 – costume production,
- Session 5 – costume production and an introduction to creative hair and make-up,
- Session 6– costume, hair and make-up showcase.

WILL THE INTERVENTION BE TAILORED?

Attendance is not subscribed and can fluctuate which requires adaptation to latter sessions where new participants may be joining. This will involve pairing with a participant who has been attending since the start of the block.

Group conversation and discussions will be adapted to allow for large age gaps between participants, ensuring these are appropriately phrased and pitched for each age.

HOW WILL IMPLEMENTATION BE OPTIMISED?

Discussions with stakeholders, including the community organisation staff and the GRT young people participating in the programme, is essential in the design of each 6-session programme of activities, and in maximising engagement. Co-creating the programme allows participants to engage on their own terms, drawing on forms of capital already embedded within the GRT community, and encourages and supports the GRT specific mode of engagement. It emphasises free choice and agency, and mobilises existing experience and thinking to enhance their sense of agency. By initiating the intervention with vocational-related activities, and those that build on the strengths of their communities such as arts and entrepreneurialism, and that promote traveller history and culture (that they themselves have co-created), GRT young people will see success and develop competence in their skills.

ASSUMPTIONS / CHANGE MECHANISMS

Participant ToC

Assumption / change mechanism 1

- We assume GRT young people will engage in the stakeholder workshop and 6 session programme of outreach activity.
- This assumption is based on the current literature and evidence around the barriers and enablers for GRT young people and previous experience delivering outreach to GRT groups.
- The change mechanism is stakeholder engagement and we theorise that the better the stakeholder engagement in programme design, the better the outcomes for individual GRT young people. The conditions in which the GRT young people are enacting their choices is important (Wong et al., 2013) and by co-creating the programme, GRT young people will have a safe space to highlight what is important to them and feel empowered to engage in the programme, creating an environment where GRT young people can be open about who they are and how they live, to reduce feelings of stress and barriers to learning (ACERT, 2017). Their individual and collective capacity to act independently and to make their own free choices (agency) will support enhanced cognitive belief structures formed through their experiences, and support possible future trajectories of the GRT young people through connections to their hopes and desires; the projective element of agency (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998).

Assumption / change mechanism 2

- We assume GRT young people and community setting support staff of GRT young people will access the support mechanisms made available as a result of the programme.
- This assumption is based on the current literature and evidence around the barriers and enablers for GRT young people and previous experience delivering outreach to GRT groups.
- The change mechanisms are relationship gains, competency gains and knowledge gains. We theorise that the better the relationship(s) between the GRT young people and the Outreach Officer, the more competency GRT young people develop, and the greater the knowledge gained, the better the outcomes. Finnegan and Merrill (2017) suggest that class shapes an individual's dispositions and habitus and that this led to some students experiencing feelings of not fitting in, a feeling that was embodied and was deeply emotional. The theory of change is underpinned by the development of the relationship between the actors involved in the programme, including GRT young people, the Outreach Officer, and the community organisation/representatives. We are aware that GRT families are often supportive of young people progressing in education but lack the knowledge themselves to support them effectively (Greenfields et al., 2021). Family and significant others not familiar with the field (of education) cannot share capital that will help young people in their journey (Quinn, 2004). This mechanism will help build a sense of safety and trust in the Outreach Officer, and subsequently support the development of cultural and social capital to effect more change (shorter-term and long-term outcomes).

Assumption / change mechanism 3

- We assume there will be increased engagement, by GRT young people, in accessible and inclusive practical careers-based outreach sessions.
- This assumption is based on experience working with GRT young people in the community setting for a year prior to the intervention being implemented, and a co-designed programme of activity. With each session comes the opportunity to develop knowledge and competency which in turn drives further engagement and motivation to complete the programme.
- The change mechanism is an openness to try new things. We theorise that GRT young people will continue to develop knowledge and openness within each session which will provide them the agency to try activities and subjects less familiar to them and their cultures. The more competence and knowledge GRT young people develop, the better the outcomes. In early development, parents and teachers can provide cultural capital by transmitting the expected behaviours, attitudes and knowledge needed to achieve in school and progress into FE, HE and/or desired careers (see for example Bourdieu, 1996). Messages early in a student's educational journey can be important in developing cultural capital. Chamberlayne et al., (2000, p. 81) indicate that 'personal' and subjective resources, which build self-confidence and other personality features in children, may also act as influential capital where other forms of capital are lacking. The intervention will help GRT young people gain new awareness and work on and of their self and create change in cultured habitus through providing a 'personal' and subjective resource that build self-awareness, knowledge and openness to try new things and discuss education options.

Assumption / change mechanism 4

- We assume there will be development of positive relationships between the education provider and GRT young people.
- This assumption is based on careful consideration of the existing literature, stakeholder engagement (particularly the GRT young people and their support workers), and previous experience working with GRT cohorts.
- The change mechanism is an openness to discuss education. We theorise that GRT young people will continue to develop a positive relationship with the Outreach Officer, and perceive success through activity outputs leading increased openness to talking about education options and goals, the better the outcomes.

Assumption / change mechanism 5

- We assume there will be positive changes in attitudes, views, and aspirations, of GRT young people relating to FE and HE
- This assumption is based on a review of existing literature and research, although it is expected that these changes will take a substantial period of time to achieve and beyond the initial 6-session intervention.
- The change mechanism is social capital gains and we theorise that sustained engagement in the intervention will result in social capital gains, the better the social capital the better the outcomes. Pilot projects suggest there is real enthusiasm for training and GRT young people to welcome the opportunity to develop skills and achieve qualifications (The Traveller Movement, 2022). The intervention intends to maximise on such enthusiasm by providing sustained opportunities to develop skills and open conversations to the options for gaining qualifications in FE and HE. Social capital entails the collective resources that are linked to being a member of a group and an individual's social relations and

how they connect with the network, and is linked to possession of a durable network of institutional relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition, which provides each member with collectively owned capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The intervention will create change by providing such networks, both among other GRT young people but also HE students (Student Ambassadors) and institutional members (Outreach Officer).

Assumption / change mechanism 6

- We assume there will be increased access to FE and HE for GRT young people
- This assumption is based on careful consideration of the existing literature. This assumption requires further investigation and with an appreciation that long term intervention with the GRT young people and communities will be needed for change to be likely.
- The change mechanisms are agency and wider cultural models of practice. We theorise that the greater the agency of GRT young people, the better the outcomes. Fundamental to effectiveness is generating a belief among young people about what is possible and that barriers are not insurmountable (Danvers, et al., 2019). The relationship built through sustained activity will develop the openness among GRT young people to have discussions with the Outreach Officer, and give them the resources and agency to act autonomously, to explore their options, and make informed decisions. There is an identified need to uncover wider societal/community factors, specific to the GRT community, that may impact policy, practice and the programme and the intervention will be an opportunity to uncover wider cultural models relating to raising awareness of career and progression options to FE and HE, and instil better support for access and participation and ensuring environments are created where young people can be open about who they are and how they live (ACERT, 2017).

Practitioner ToC

Assumption / change mechanism 7

- We assume the Outreach Officer will develop a collaborative programme of outreach that engages GRT young people.
- This assumption is based on taking an evidence-informed approach that includes programme theories devised from existing literature, previous experience, and stakeholder engagement.
- The change mechanism is evidence informed practice. The intervention has been informed by evidence including existing literature, multi-sector forums, national guidance, working groups, professional development discourse, and stakeholder engagement. We have identified what we consider the main mechanisms, which can be defined as common and significant. These suggest a need for increased understanding and trust between the GRT young people and education providers, and access to role models. The findings of Danvers et al., (2019) inform a recommendation for support that is personalised and targeted explicitly by both design and communication, in order to break the cycle of low educational progression (p. 11). Although visits to FE and HE providers is seen as valuable, recommendations to build more personalised and sustained supportive relationships to support young people's progression, and for events in GRT communities, including more 'informal' by design outreach, was suggested as highly effective (Danvers et al., 2019).

Assumption / change mechanism 8

- We assume the Outreach Officer will benefit from further evidence-based practice and knowledge exchange, increasing practitioner awareness of the enablers, barriers and challenges of outreach with GRT young people and developing partnership working with GRT community stakeholders and collaborative learning opportunities.
- This assumption is based on extensive awareness gained to date through previous experiences working with GRT communities and young people.
- The change mechanisms are insight gains and relationship gains. We theorise that the better the stakeholder engagement in programme design, the better the outcomes for individual GRT young people. Existing literature (reviewed above) recommends that promoting vocational subjects, traveller history and culture, building on the strengths of these communities and skills in art, music and entrepreneurialism, and developing specific, bespoke progression curriculum are key to intervention success. There is a strong tradition of self-employment and entrepreneurship within the communities (The Traveller Movement, 2019a) and so working with GRT young people to build on capital already accrued through familiar vocations, with an introduction to concepts and principles of entrepreneurship, for example, have been seen as a good starting point. By co-creating the programme with the GRT young people themselves, they will have a safe space to highlight what is important to them and feel empowered to engage in the programme. We also theorise that the better the relationship(s) between the GRT young people, the Outreach Officer, and the Student Ambassadors, the better the outcomes (as discussed in Assumption/change mechanism 2).

Assumption / change mechanism 9

- We assume the Outreach Officer will have deepened insights regarding GRT young people's attitudes, views and aspirations towards FE and HE and of wider societal/community factors specific to GRT communities and the impact for policy and practice.
- This assumption is based on ongoing learning across the HE sector in relation to GRT communities, commitment to the GTRSB Into HE Pledge, and previous experience working with GRT young people.
- The change mechanisms are learning and knowledge exchange. We theorise that practitioner learning will be substantial throughout the programme and that the greater the practitioner learning and the better the knowledge exchange between the education provider and specialist experts in the community setting, the better the outcomes for all. Whilst the Outreach Officer and education provider gain insights and learning about barriers and enablers to better support GRT young people, the specialist experts gain insights and learning about education options to better support GRT young people, aiding capital gains beyond the intervention sessions themselves. The process of reflexivity will help the Outreach Officer and evaluators recognise their own biases, beliefs and assumptions around widening participation and GRT outreach activity. Darnell and Fleming (2021) recommend that colleges and universities should raise awareness of GRT groups amongst widening participation teams and increase understanding of these groups' perceptions of FE and HE, to increase access for GRT students (the long-term outcome).

Assumption / change mechanism 10

- We assume the Outreach Officer will develop wider cultural models of practice relating to raising access to FE and HE for GRT communities.
- This assumption is based on ongoing learning working with GRT communities and as part of a multi-sector GRT forum.
- The change mechanism is collaboration and partnership. We theorise that the better the collaboration and partnership working between the education provider and the community organisation, the better the outcomes. Research shows that successful interventions, in overcoming barriers and providing ongoing support to ensure GRT children engage and achieve in education, must have effective partnerships with other agencies, specialist NGOs, and community members, co-production of appropriate methodologies, and specific strategies, to meet the needs of this group of pupils (Greenfield et al., 2021; Ofsted, 2014; The Traveller Movement, 2019b). Organisations working directly with GRT young people have a vital role to play in leading good practice by other bodies, including in acting as an effective channel of communication between GRT communities and including the education system, and where there may be mutual lack of understanding (Danvers et al., 2019). These organisations also have a vital role to play in mediating knowledge and perceptions of education within GRT communities and nurturing the confidence of GRT young people to believe in their own educational potential and feel pride in their own identity (Danvers et al., 2019). Through utilising best practice and working closely with specialists supporting GRT young people, it is possible to increase access to HE and successful outcomes.

Counterfactual

Without the intervention, GRT young people will not have the opportunity to build positive relationships with education providers, nor develop the knowledge, empowerment and capital benefitting them in considering FE and HE as a viable option for themselves.

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WHAT IS THE EVALUATION AIM?

The evaluation aim is to understand the effectiveness in approach of the ULeeds Outreach Officer delivering the GRT outreach programme in a community setting) to raise awareness of career and progression options to FE and HE based on the needs of GRT young people.

WHAT ARE THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS?

1. What difference did the GRT outreach programme make to the group(s) and under what circumstances?
2. How and why did the GRT outreach programme make a difference to the participants attitudes and aspirations, if any?
3. What other factors/circumstances needs to be present alongside the GRT outreach programme to produce the observed outcomes and increase chances of effectiveness?

WHAT METHODOLOGY ARE YOU USING?

A realist evaluation approach (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) is regarded as the most appropriate small-n impact methodology to understand the nature of an outreach programme in GRT community settings. This approach, asks, ‘what works for whom, in what circumstances and why’ (Emmel et al., 2018, 7). This is relevant to developing understanding around what specific outreach programmes work for GRT young people, appreciating the nuances around the circumstances (contexts) in which outcomes may, or may not, be achieved. Such contexts can refer to a wide set of characteristics (Pawson, 2018, p.212), including the Outreach Officer delivering the programme, relationships between the Outreach Officer and the GRT young people, the setting where the programme is being delivered, and other social and cultural factors. Based on Befani’s (2020) ‘choosing appropriate evaluation methods tool’, realist evaluation is an appropriate small n methodology to address the evaluation questions. Equally, to obtain insights into behaviour, attitudes and thinking of GRT young people and identify the various conditions that enable change in different contexts, realist evaluation lends itself well to addressing these areas of interest (TASO, 2022, p.19).

RISKS AND LIMITATIONS

The theory of change illustrated on page 1 depicts a longitudinal intervention over many years, comprising block of 6 session programmes of activity. As such, the theory of change is at risk of impact as a result of changing conditions over an extended period of time. For example, community of family circumstances, relocation, influence of other education providers and/or significant others across the intervention lifespan, or changes in resource availability. The assumptions and change mechanisms may be impacted by fluctuations in attendance of the participants, due to the nature of their educational experiences, engagement with the community organisation, and assessed vulnerability/need. Each block of activity is delivered in a way that recognises such fluctuations and that can be adapted/tailored to ensure positive outcomes are still achievable, although perhaps at different levels.