University Centre Leeds

# Realist Evaluation of a Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Community Outreach Programme

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**Executive Summary**

The Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO), an independent hub for higher education professionals to access research, toolkits and evaluation guidance to help improve equality, commissioned this research as part of a pilot project implementing "small n" evaluation methodologies. In contributing to this, this practitioner-led research investigated how outreach practitioners can use a realist evaluation methodology to explore the impact of a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) community outreach programme.

*Key findings*

The key finding from the project was that the development of positive relationships between the GRT young people, the community organisation, and us as education provider, underpins the theory of change and the likelihood of successful intervention outcomes. Based on previous experience and existing literature, we had theorised that relationship building takes investment of time, and is subject to change, resulting in a longitudinal approach to the overall rolling intervention and theory of change developed. This was reaffirmed in the findings. In supporting this, and maximising impact, the relationship with the community organisation staff members was fundamental. The participants have inherent trust in the community organisation, particularly the Senior Youth Worker who facilitated the Girl's Group and was supporting the intervention. We believe this trust, and our pre-existing relationship with the organisation, created a good basis from which to build relationships with the young people themselves.

Interestingly, some of the continuing participants were influential in supporting gains and outcomes for the newer participants, by shaping the conversation, providing peer support, and working as a team. The Senior Youth Worker reflected that the continuing participants were influential in encouraging their friends to attend, being able to promote the co-design of the programme, topic of familiarity and interest, and trust in the facilitator. This was a cause in the resulting increase in numbers. In this sense, those who had attended more sessions become role model figures for those who were newer. This reflects the existing literature that GRT young people do not have community role models in relation to education, but find they are important and impactful (Greenfields et al., 2021). It supports the finding of ACERT (2017) that the

employment of GRT community members, as role models for young people from their communities, significantly impacts outcomes.

Understanding the needs, barriers, and experiences of GRT young people in the development of the intervention and theory of change was pertinent. The GRT young people very clearly presented negative experiences and perceptions of education, from primary through to HE. Education and schooling proved difficult topics to engage the participants in discussion. In general, GRT young people did not consider FE or HE, regardless of the type of education provider, due to their very unpleasant school experiences. The participants expressed that they did not like the idea of going back to school or college as a result. The participants spoke of not seeing themselves gaining qualifications because they do not want to go back to school/education and perceive that they "do not fit in". However they were also limited in the knowledge and resources they could draw on regarding the options available or known/lived experiences in FE and HE.

The key difference the intervention made was to start making positive change to these perceptions and experiences through an intervention that maximised on the traditions of their own cultures, was less formal, and allowed them to feel safe to develop trust. For example, the participants held goals that were very traditional and familiar to their communities, relating to vocations, early motherhood, big families, and 'gender-typical' expectations. However, recognising this as part of the context-mechanism-outcome configurations (CMOs) allowed for an intervention that has resulted in increased knowledge of wider careers and professions linked to these familiar vocations, and gains in capital and agency. The participants demonstrated greater awareness of the options available to them, including non-traditional routes, pathways and courses such as apprenticeships. This was made possible through the CMOs outlined in the theory of change which, without the approach taken, may not have been possible.

The circumstances under which these differences were made link to the programme delivery approach and relationship building underpinning the theory of change. The intervention was co-designed with participants and was informal, practical, with 'casual' delivery approaches, and in a setting considered familiar and safe. In doing so, the GRT young people were able to engage in an outreach programme they had not been able to previously and had been able to increase their knowledge and learn new skills.

*Recommendations for outreach*

Outreach programmes with GRT young people should involve sustained activity of long-term periods of intervention. This should be built on the objective of developing strong relationships between education providers, community organisations / representatives, and GRT young people, particularly among key points of contact such as the Outreach Officer (education provider) and Youth Worker (community organisation) or community representative.

Programme sessions and activities should reflect vocations and interests familiar to the community and their cultures. These activities should include practical, hands-on elements, with an end product or showcase and be flexible in delivery. Sessions should consider the negative education and school experiences inherent among GRT communities and should work towards rebuilding trust by looking to understand their experiences and what it means for their learning, perceptions and aspirations. Practitioners should be prepared for fluctuations in attendance and create session structures and delivery formats that can adapt to this and ensure positive outcomes for all participants.

Practitioners should consider localised collaborative partnerships between multiple education providers and the communities to best support GRT young people, develop a wider culture model of practice, and ongoing knowledge-exchange. This will minimise any potential risk of participants feeling overwhelmed by multiple providers attempting to engage with them, particularly where they feel less trust and safety.

*Recommendations for small n impact evaluation*

Evaluation can be very difficult with this cohort because of inconsistent participation and attendance, some lack of language skills and aversion of literacy-based tasks, and so the preference is for less formal approaches to evaluation. We found that embedding the evaluation into the delivery was successful, with data collection being approached as informal discussions and observations. This reduced barriers to data collection and evaluation which may have been incurred using surveys, questionnaires, and other psychometric tools, for example. With an established relationship, creative methods of data collection could also be employed such as graffiti walls, visual journals, or jamboards.

Realist evaluation has been very motivating and aspirational for our practices and we believe it is a highly effective methodology for small n impact evaluation. Key insight sharing in relation to this would be to prepare time for the background reading and investment in developing the theory of change as this has great benefits when designing and evaluating the intervention. The empirical research carried out in the early stages of theory of change development can be key to success, meaningful evaluation, and the adoption of appropriate research protocol.

## Introduction

The Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO), an independent hub for higher education professionals to access research, toolkits and evaluation guidance to help improve equality, commissioned this research as part of a pilot project implementing “small n” evaluation methodologies. In contributing to this, this practitioner-led research investigated how outreach practitioners can use a realist evaluation methodology to explore the impact of a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) community outreach.

This report provides a technical overview of the evaluation methodology, the analysis conducted, and the findings of the evaluation. It will also provide a reflective overview of our experience conducting a small n impact evaluation and in implementing realist evaluation methodology in our context.

*Background context*

There remain HE ‘cold spots’, including marginalised groups who continue to have participation percentage rates in the single figures, and GRT communities are one such group (Department of Education (DfE), 2018; Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2018). Young people from GRT communities are the least likely ethnic groupings to enter higher education by the age of 19 – just 6.9% of Gypsy / Roma and 10.7% of Irish Travellers access higher education by the age of 19 compared to around 40% of all young people (Brassington, 2022). As such, they remain underrepresented at in further education (FE), higher education (HE), and at University Centre Leeds (UCLeeds), and there is a need to further develop approaches to addressing their needs (Office for Students (OfS), 2020, p. 19).

Evidence indicates that GRT children do not usually start school until the age of 7 (Leeds City Council, 2020), followed by continued negative school experiences 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).

Some GRT children are taken out of school as early as the end of primary school, some persistently do not attend and some never register at school at all (ACERT, 2017). Where these children end up is unclear, although we have heard of successful and unsuccessful home education, children starting work at as young as 10 years old, and children who simply stay at home without any formal education (Women and Equalities Committee, 2019). Only 25% go into education/employment after KS4 (Cabinet Office, 2021) and only a handful are recorded as attending university, possibly relating to low attainment or hiding of ethnicity due to bullying/prejudice (Centre for Higher Education and Equity Research, 2017).

Research by Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY) (Greenfields et al., 2021) found that GRT young people:

- feel school staff lack understanding about their experiences and effects on education,
- do not trust schools, as with their parents, especially where families have generations of negative experiences,
- 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. OfS (2022) state that there are currently only a very small number of higher education providers who refer to GRT groups in their access and participation plans (APP) and some of the approaches to meeting the needs of these groups are in the early stages of development or are yet to be scoped. UCLeeds are one such provider however GRT are now included in our Widening Participation Strategy, we have committed to the GTRSB Into HE Pledge, and GRT communities will be included in our revised APP.

Some recommendations from case studies of good practice from within schools do exist (DfE, 2014), and may be applicable to this programme given the age of the participants. These suggest that effective intervention should include:

- promote good relations between pupils from different communities, including a refusal to tolerate discrimination of any kind,
- work with GRT pupils and parents to identify any concerns including interviews with GRT children about their attitudes to school and homework to inform understanding of any issues they experience.

Friends, Families and Travellers, the founder of Gypsies and Travellers Essex and Co-founder of Drive to Survive & Report racism GRT, and several university representatives / staff from GRT communities, have identified common barriers at recent sharing good practice and CPD events. They propose the following considerations for effective and impactful interventions:

- support for low attainment and especially in literacy and maths,

- importance of not relying on literacy,
- prevalence of bullying and prejudice – need welcoming activities / environments that celebrate GRT history and culture and positive promotion of the traveller culture, considering Showing Racism the Red Card education pack,
- increasing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller representation,
- having a spokesperson for the community working closely as part of the project,
- promotion of vocational pathways.

More recent research (Greenfields et al., 2021) directly with GRT young people in Leeds, also advise that outreach practitioners should:

- build a specific, bespoke strategy in partnership with NGOs, and specialist in-reach teams based in local authorities, to support HE progression for GRT communities,
- devise a specific progression curriculum for GRT communities which builds upon the work that specialist organisations and HE providers are doing and the strengths of these communities and skills in art, music and entrepreneurialism,
- include parents and siblings too, given the cultural and practical importance of the whole family experience.

The existing literature, effective practice in schools, and recent research with local GRT communities, has informed the intervention and theory of change. What follows is an explanation of the aims of the intervention and the mechanisms of change theorised to achieve the desired outcomes.

*The intervention*

The WP and Outreach team at University Centre Leeds (UCLeeds), a college based HE (CBHE) provider, delivered an intervention as part of a pre-existing GRT Girl's Group. The intervention was part of a longitudinal rolling outreach programme based in a GRT community organisation, comprising blocks of 6, 2 hour long, sessions, delivered one afternoon per week over a period of between 6 and 12 weeks (eg weekly or fortnightly – with flexibility to meet the needs of the community organisation).

There was no formal enrolment to the outreach intervention, however the intervention was 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, was essential in the design of each 6-session programme of activities. This intervention involved a stakeholder engagement session, followed by the co-design of each programme of activities. At the time of the small n evaluation pilot (Autumn 2022) the co-designed block of activities focussed on 'Costume design, textiles, and hair and make-up' and included:

- 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.

The Outreach Officer within the University Centre Leeds (UCLeeds) WP and Outreach Team delivered the programme. The Outreach Officer was 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 was the single

point of contact for the community organisation. Delivery of subject specialist activities was supported by Student Ambassadors.

*Aims*

The aim of the intervention was to work towards challenging the education inequality faced by GRT young people and set out to develop positive relationships between education providers and GRT young people. To do so, the programme objectives were to:

- build relationships with GRT communities,
- provide 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,
- develop practitioner knowledge.

*Outcome measures*

The evaluation aim was to understand the effectiveness in approach of the UCLeeds 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.

The outcomes identified in relation to the intervention were clearly defined as the theory of change developed in the early stages of the small n evaluation pilot, resulting in a series of outcomes appropriate for the participants (the GRT young people) and a series of outcomes appropriate for outreach practitioners. However, these outcomes were considered immediate, shorter-term, and long-term, potentially covering a number of years. Full details of these outcomes can be found in Appendix 1. The small n evaluation project was a six-month project evaluating only 6 sessions, taking place over two months and so the main body of this report will only refer to the outcomes applicable to that phase of the overall intervention.

- For the GRT young people (the participants)

The immediate outcomes of the intervention were associated with increased opportunities for engagement in accessible and inclusive practical careers-based outreach sessions, and the development of positive relationships between the education provider and GRT young people.

There was the potential for some observation of shorter-term outcomes, associated with positive changes in the attitudes and views of GRT young people relating to, and aspirations towards FE and HE, achieved within the 6-session block, at different rates for different individuals participating.

- For the practitioner (Outreach Officer)

It was perceived that outcomes associated to practitioners would be achieved at a different pace to the GRT young people.

The immediate outcomes were to increase practitioner awareness of the enablers, barriers and challenges of outreach with GRT young people, and develop partnership working and collaborative opportunities with GRT community stakeholders. This was considered essential from the outset for the intervention to be effective and for the outcomes for both GRT young people and practitioners to be achieved.

The shorter-term outcomes were to deepen practitioner insights regarding GRT young people's attitudes, views and aspirations towards FE and HE, and increase practitioner insights to wider societal/community factors specific to GRT communities (including the impact for policy and

practice). This was to help strive towards achieving the long-term outcomes described in Appendix 1. This was only possible through continual development of the relationships with the young people and the community organisation/representatives, and with knowledge exchange that benefits all stakeholders equally.

**Theory of Change**

As part of the project, the WP and Outreach team and evaluators set about developing an initial core theory of change; a logic model created for simplicity to assist planning of the intervention and evaluation activities).

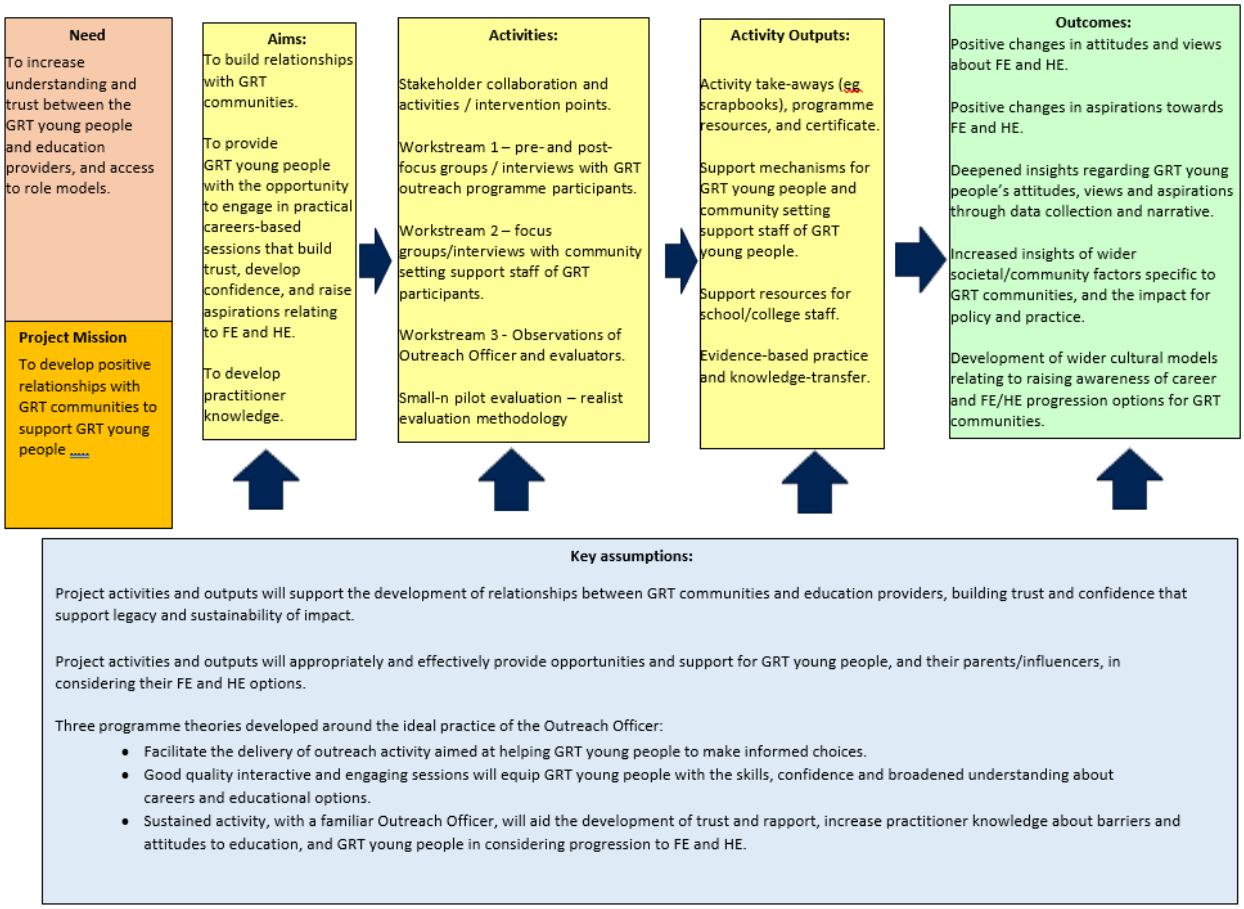


Figure 1: Initial core theory of change - University Centre Leeds GRT Community Outreach Programme

Through further consideration, and guidance offered through a TASO and the Policy Evaluation and Research Unit at Manchester Metropolitan University (PERU) theory of change workshop, this was then further developed into an enhanced theory of change (to be used for evaluability and to assist us with robustly evaluating the intervention and activities).

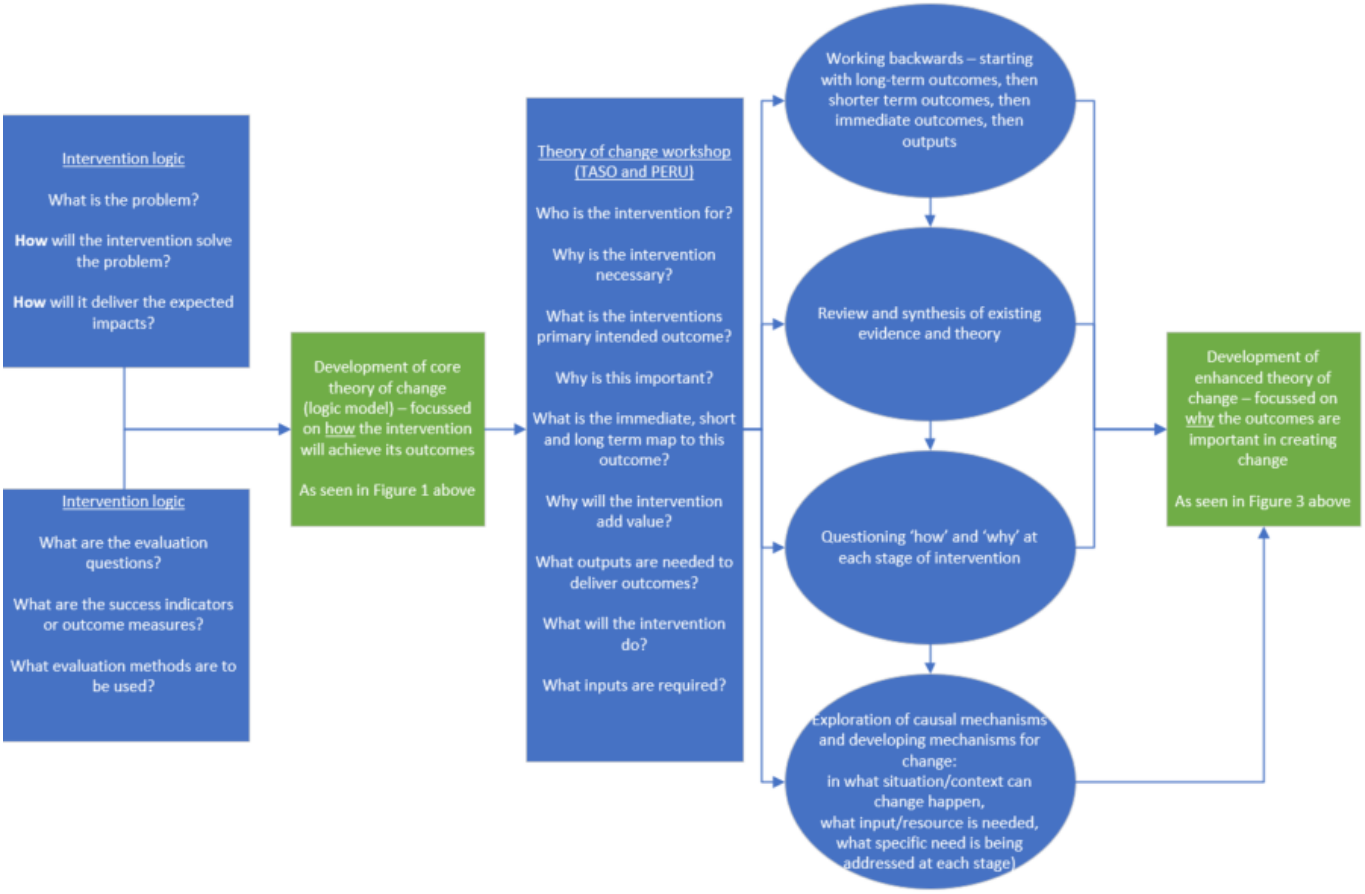


Figure 2: Process in developing an enhanced theory of change

Key here was the questioning of 'how' and 'why' at each stage of the intervention to really consider the mechanisms for change in detail and the formation of context-mechanism-outcome (CMO) configurations as part of the theory of change. For example, the first draft of the enhanced theory of change referred to a vague concept of 'confidence' which was quickly reworked to focus on knowledge, openness, and empowerment. This was a result of further consideration of the context-mechanism-outcome and detailed conversation to unpick what would *actually* be happening as a result of the intervention session and the context within which change was intended and/or possible.

In developing the enhanced theory of change, further robust literature review, and an appreciation of the evidence-base, enabled us to better identify what were well evidenced change mechanisms and those influencing factors that required further investigation. Figure 3 below shows the enhanced theory of change developed as part of this TASO small n evaluation pilot project:

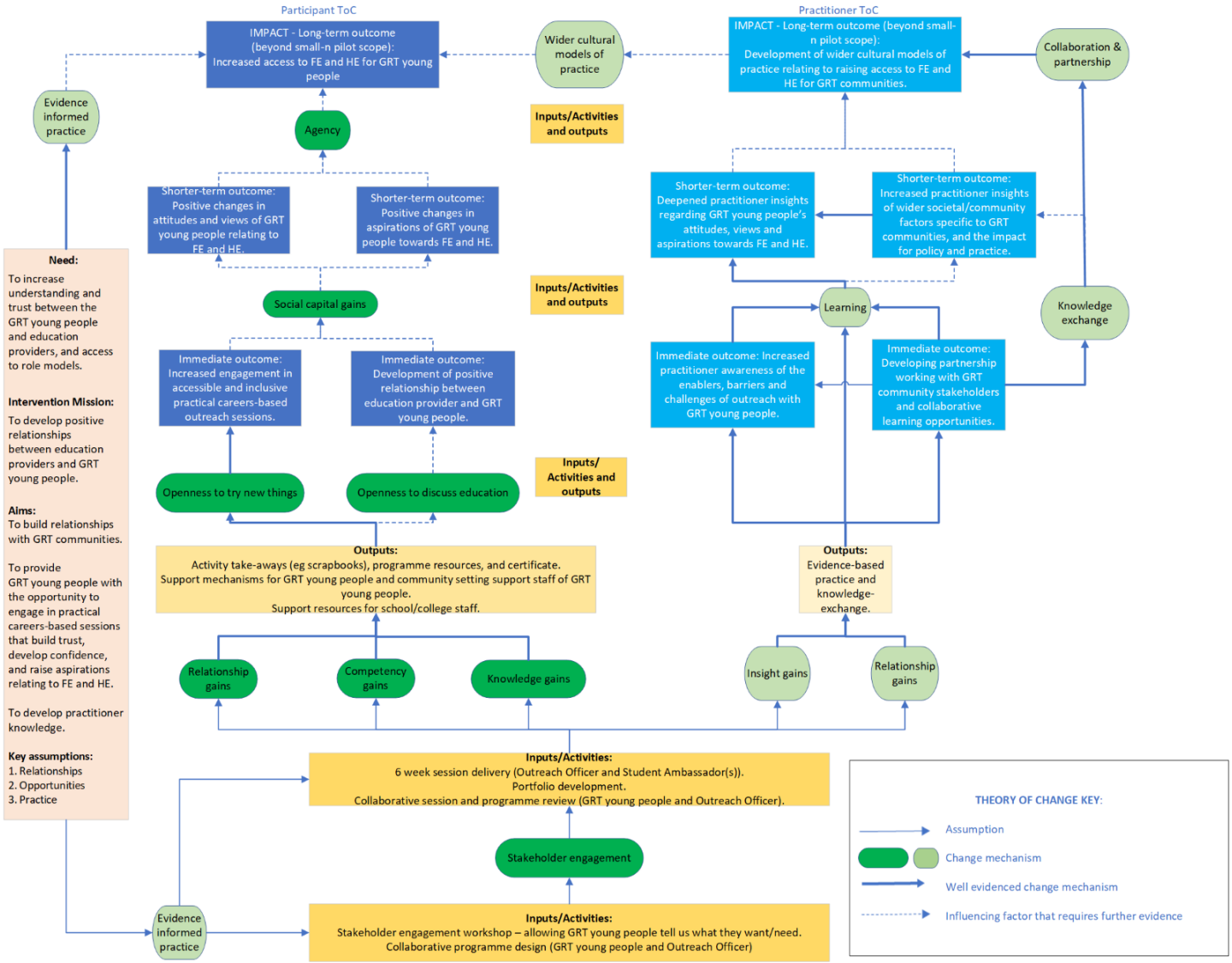


Figure 3: Full enhanced theory of change - University Centre Leeds GRT Community Outreach Programme

The enhanced theory of change identifies a series of contexts and mechanisms for change by which outcomes can be achieved. Full and detailed explanations of the whole theory of change in Figure 3 can be found in Appendix 2. Below is a summarised discussion of the context-mechanism-outcome configurations relevant in the theory of change during the small n pilot, as identified in *Outcome measures* within the Introduction on page 8. During the small n evaluation pilot (Autumn Term 2022), the section of the theory of change being observed is illustrated in Figure 4 below, and will be the focus for the remainder of the report.

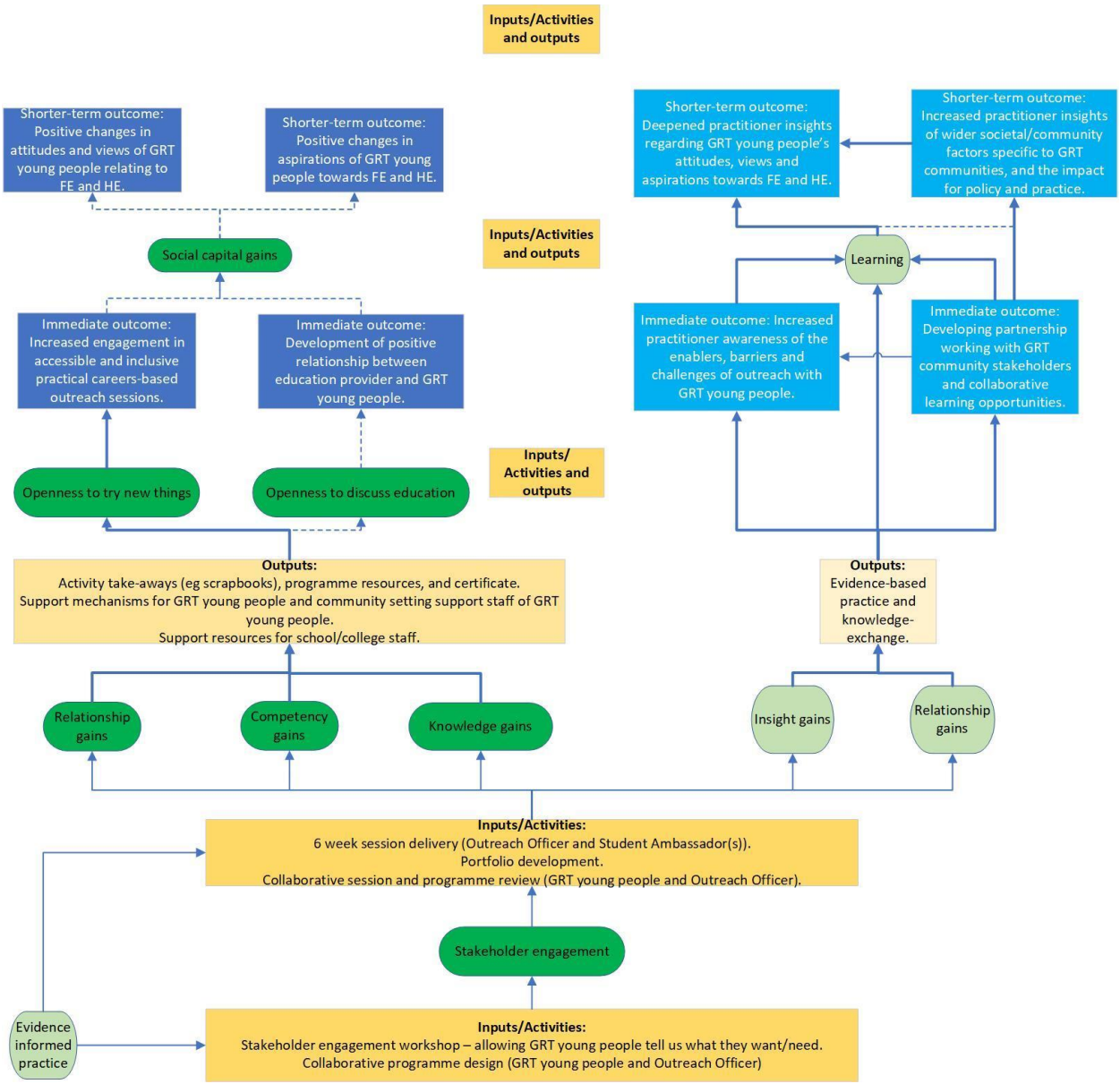


Figure 4: Partial enhanced theory of change relevant to Autumn 2022 University Centre Leeds GRT Community Outreach Programme

*Context-Mechanism-Outcome configurations (CMOs)*

Fundamental to developing the intervention, theory of change and CMOs was the basis upon which context and mechanisms were established configuring realist CMOs. Our previous experience, engagement with community representatives, and involvement in multi-sector forums working in this space was fundamental, with literature and existing evidence supporting theory of change development. This had taken a number of years and the Outreach Officer and evaluators were invested in the intervention and outreach activity involving GRT communities. They really *knew* the intervention, it's context and the previous experiences providing a basis upon which to build the theory of change here.

The journeys of each participant, as well as the Outreach Officer, are influenced by several factors and interactions, and each small n cohort may uncover different 'causes of effect'. As such, the concept of 'case' is key and Byrne (2009, p.2) emphasises that:

> *"trajectories and transformations depend on the all of the whole, the parts, the interactions among parts and whole, and the interactions of any system with other complex systems among which it is nested and with which it intersects".*

Within this intervention, 'causes of effect' approaches are based on multiple causalities which depend on combinations of causes that lead to an effect (Stern et al., 2012). Multiple causes are recognised within the theory of change of the GRT Outreach Programme, and change will be achieved by several causes at the same time. For example, the relationships made with the Outreach Officer, family support, previous experiences, and community/life events are all factors that are relevant to impact and so it is the role of the intervention within this causal package that is to be evaluated. Configurations (the sequencing and relationships between causes) are considered, including Pawson's (2008) notion of the intervention as part of a complex system and reflecting that:

> *"Configurationists begin with a number of 'cases' of a particular family of social phenomenon, which have some similarities and some differences. They locate causal powers in the 'combination' of attributes of these cases, with a particular grouping of attributes leading to one outcome and a further grouping linked to another. The goal of research is to unravel the key configuration clusters of properties underpinning the cases and which thus are able to explain variations in outcomes across the family".*
>
> (Pawson, 2008, p.1)

The mechanisms for change, and outcomes, are influential in particular contexts (Pawson and Tilley, 1997), each individual part acting, or interacting, to collectively bring about the outcome and dependent on the context in which they operate (White and Phillips, 2022). Pawson and Tilley (1997, p. 69) describe a mechanism as a theory which spells out the potential of human resources and reasoning, whilst Astbury and Leeuw (2010, p.368) consider mechanisms as underlying entities, process, or [social] structures which operate in particular contexts to generate outcomes of interest, and each mechanism if a function of the participants and the context rather than inherent of the intervention (Wong et al., 2013). Features in the theory of change are what are considered the main mechanisms that are common and significant enough to contribute to a pattern of outcome of the intervention (Wong et al., 2012, p.6).

Similar to the intervention outcomes, as the theory of change developed it became apparent that there were two intertwined theories of change relevant to the intervention; one in relation to the participants (GRT young people) and one in relation to the practitioner. During the intervention period of the small n evaluation project, several mechanisms of change were assumed and observed, relating to both the participants and the practitioner.

Stakeholder engagement

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.

By underpinning the intervention with an evidence-informed approach to practice that is specific to GRT outreach and not that of outreach facilitated previously for other underrepresented groups, change can happen and the immediate, shorter-term and long-term outcomes achieved. While the WP and Outreach team has established experience in providing comprehensive programmes of access and participation activity, previous experience working with GRT young people has made visible the nuances of working with different underrepresented groups and communities, presenting specific considerations and challenges not typical of other outreach activity.

This reflects the findings of Danvers et al., (2019) that 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). More personalised and sustained supportive relationships to support young people's progression, events in GRT communities, and more 'informal' by design outreach, was suggested as highly effective (Danvers et al., 2019).


Figure 5: CMO relating to stakeholder engagement

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, along with 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.

Stakeholder engagement is key to intervention success, to build trust between the Outreach Officer and the GRT young people, and to help develop knowledge and capital. This engagement is largely about the co-creation of the activity programme to enhance motivation and agency towards the activity, develop the relationship(s), learn from each other, and evaluate the impact of the intervention with the young people directly. 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 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.

Implementing the programme in their community setting is a key context in the CMO configuration and to the outcomes (Wong et al., 2013). The conditions in which the GRT young people are enacting their choices is also important (Wong et al., 2013) resulting in, for example GRT young people finding it easier to participate, and to speak freely, in a context that reflects their culture and that they are familiar with. They would find it harder to so this in the context of a university setting that they perceive negative experiences and feelings of distrust. It is this understanding that modifies the effectiveness of an intervention (Wong et al., 2013, p. 9).

The theory of change carefully considers the importance of 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). Good practice from schools shows that developing a culturally relevant curriculum that affirms and recognises the importance of cultural identity for GRT young people, with a flexible and culturally sensitive approach and in partnership with other agencies, to ensure access to a personalised and appropriate educational package leading from school to the world of work, will be effective in building relationships (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009).

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). Actors (GRT young people) will need to be present in the design sessions to enable this mechanism for change to be most effective.

Relationship, competency and knowledge gains


Figure 6: CMO relating to relationship, competency and knowledge gains.

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.

- Relationship gains

In working towards addressing underrepresentation (linked to long-term outcomes) and to tackle the inequalities and challenges outlined above, UCLeeds have committed to working with GRT communities to develop trust with education providers, to raise awareness of cultural models of practice, raise awareness of educational routes and options, and increase access to both FE and HE.

Taking a realist evaluation approach to understand what works for GRT young people, in what circumstances, and why, we recognise the importance of contexts that refer to individuals (the Outreach Officer and Student Ambassadors who are delivering the programme) and the interrelationships between the Outreach Officer/Student Ambassadors and the GRT young people, as well as those between the Outreach Officer and community organisation representatives (Pawson, 2018, p.212).

The theory of change, and achievement of outcomes, is ultimately underpinned by the development of the relationship between the actors involved in the programme, including GRT young people, the Outreach Officer, the Student Ambassador(s), and the community organisation/representatives. However, as a mechanism for change, relationships are intangible in nature and the interactions between different individuals can operate at multiple levels, be visible and non-visible, and are multifaceted and complex. This mechanism cannot be seen or directly measured, because it happens at different levels of reality than the one observed and within individual's heads (Wong et al., 2013).

The initiation of the relationship draws on the existing literature that highlights negative experiences with education providers, both historically and contemporary, including bullying, harassment, discrimination, and racism. Understanding the meaning of behaviours presented by the GRT young people will help establish a more positive relationship, viewed as equal and with cultural sensitivity (immediate outcomes). 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).

Drawing on educational research relating to access and participation in HE, the relationship with a significant institutional representative (for example tutor or, in this case Outreach Officer) has been shown to be particularly influential in enabling learners. Having a personalised and specific approach to GRT outreach, including individualised support, will be a key mechanism to developing better relationships and leading to better outcomes.

Finnegan et al., (2014) say that students seek an environment that will respect and recognise them as people and that will treat them in all relations as such (p. 162). Real interpersonal forms of engagement that encourage a relationship that respects student voices and concerns (Finnegan et al., 2014, p. 162) allow for cooperative behaviour and creative exploration of self and world (West, 1996).

ACERT (2017) state that the employment of GRT community members has had a significant impact in many schools, acting as role models for young people from their communities, feeding more realistic and nuanced information into the school and local communities. Young people confide in them and where issues are identified, they can mediate between the school and the family. Other key suggestions for effective GRT outreach include greater use of ambassador/young person-led outreach (Danvers et al., 2019).

The GRT young people involved in this intervention find they do not fit and that education settings are not welcoming or safe spaces. The outreach programme puts this at the heart of its theory of change and to allow GRT young people to experience education in an alternative way, providing opportunities to develop a positive relationship and build capital to give them the resources to see what might be possible and that they can, and do, fit in FE and HE settings.

We assume there will be further development of positive relationships between the education provider and GRT young people throughout the longitudinal intervention. 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. This CMO identifies an influencing factor that requires further evidence.

- Competency gains

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.

Based on previous school experiences, and reported lower attainment, GRT young people can often feel inferior. Burke (2002) found that feelings of educational inferiority were rooted in a history and cultural structure where by working class groups were seen as not good enough (p. 82). Habitus and capital are useful in helping to understand the intersectionality between class and ethnicity as well as the impact of cultural values and attitudes reinforcing predispositions of habitus and embodied cultural capital. Throughout his work, Bourdieu presented a need for classes to reproduce themselves (Thomas, 2002, p. 430) with his later work (for example, Bourdieu, 1999) suggesting a more complex view of social class, that recognises diversity, individual differences and habitus transformation (Reay 2004, p. 434).

Reay (2004) states that there is a tendency for students to behave in ways that are expected of people like themselves and so the impact of social disadvantage, and habitus, on attitudes of cultural inferiority can be ingrained in habitus and in daily interactions. Feelings of inferiority and not being capable may lead to students feeling like outsiders (Finnegan et al., 2014, p. 157). Such feelings of not belonging or being out of place can lead to a lack of confidence in a student's learning, as well as feeling unsure about themselves in academic spaces (Finnegan and Merrill, 2017, p. 318).

Although it is not clear that this is the case with GRT communities, there are some instances reported from previous intervention, with lower prior attainment (often as a result of educational disruption) reinforcing these messages. The GRT young people involved in the intervention are not in formal education due to concerns with how schools understand the barriers for GRT communities, and/or as a result of exclusion. We do recognise that many GRT young people believe FE and HE will not welcome them or be safe, rather than having a lack of ability, which can impact progression. Linking to more general widening participation theorisations, Quinn's study (2004) where there was a strong feeling that non-continuation amongst working class students had very little to do with academic ability (p. 68).

However, to counter feelings of inferiority and lack of competence that do exist, the intervention will be based on co-creation of culturally-relevant activities that generate feelings of superiority and competence. This will enable GRT young people to feel sure about themselves in relation to certain subjects, and the possibility the possibility of experiencing these feelings again on educational pathways in these areas and in further, new, activities.

- Knowledge gains

The concepts of habitus and capital are useful to consider here. As described above, family upbringing and life, and argues that it is a person's habitus that organises the practices and dispositions of individuals within it. This offers a potential explanation for why GRT young people will gravitate towards invention that includes vocation subjects and builds on the strengths of their communities. However, the intervention in itself works towards developing this further through increased knowledge and openness relating to education options.

Bourdieu (for instance, Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970) has been influential in highlighting how class systems reproduce and maintain privilege, identifying how social, economic and cultural capital are provided by families. This is to ensure children arrive within the education system already equipped to benefit from its knowledge and attitudes, while for other children school can be an alien environment (Eden, 2019). Where there are historic negative school experiences among GRT families, GRT young people may not have the knowledge and attitudes required, and when they do these often negatively effected through discrimination, bullying, and racism, for example. The reproduction of educational inequalities are therefore founded on the attitudes and values deriving from a family's class position (Eden, 2017).

Local research with the community (Greenfields et al., 2021) found GRT families are supportive of young people progressing in education but lack the knowledge to do so effectively. Promisingly, legitimising cultural capital of GRT communities is also reflected by The Traveller Movement (2019a) who have found that there is an increasing emphasis on the importance of participation and achievement in formal education within the communities and that there are now more GRT women entering education, training and employment than ever before.

At the same time as positive outcomes for the participants as a result of relation, competency, and knowledge gains, the practitioners are subject to positive outcomes in relation to increased practitioner awareness, resulting from insight and relationship gains.

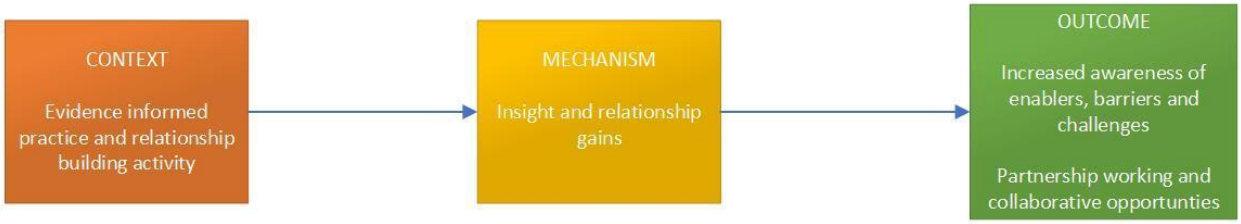


Figure 7: CMO relating to practitioner insight gains

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 in 'Background context' above) recommends that not relying on literacy, promoting vocational subjects, promoting 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.

Further, 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.

This theorisation supports the needs identified by ACERT (2017), among others, that all school staff for cultural and antiracist awareness training as, in some cases, decisions and actions of professionals and officials may also be informed by ignorance or stereotypical thinking. Darnell and Fleming (2021) also 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).

This links closely with the mechanism of knowledge-exchange and considers the two-way benefits. For example, 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. This forms the basis for collaborative and partnership working between the education provider and the community organisation.

Openness to try new things


Figure 8: CMO relating to an openness to try new things

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 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. It is this mechanism that will support change and achieve immediate outcomes, as well as work towards shorter-term and long-term outcomes.

Social capital gains


Figure 9: CMO relating to social capital gains

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 intended 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. This will be a catalyst for change and the success of long-term outcomes.

As an education provider based in an FE setting, our Outreach Officers have expertise in advising about alternative provision, various education routes, and developing tangible progression opportunities. The Traveller Movement (2022) found that alternative provision in the later years of secondary education proved appropriate for some young people although there were significant variations in the options available and the quality of the offer from locality to locality. Having a named contact (the Outreach Officer) who can provide personalised support and knowledge-based intervention, as a member of a wider network of education providers and multi-sector support forums, will benefit participants and effect change by helping GRT young people to work through these variations and make informed decisions.

**Realist evaluation methodology**

A realist evaluation approach (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) was regarded as the most appropriate small n impact methodology to understand the nature of an outreach programme in GRT community settings, based on Befani's (2020) 'choosing appropriate evaluation methods tool'. We have identified programme theory that underpins 'how programme activities are understood to cause (or contribute to) outcomes and impacts' (Westhorp, 2014, p. 4).

The realist evaluation 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/Student Ambassadors and the GRT young people, the setting where the programme is being delivered, and other social and cultural factors. This approach will allow evaluation of the programme, and the role of the relationship of the Outreach Officer with GRT young people and how the work of the Outreach Officer fits with GRT communities in which they are operating more specifically.

*Programme theories*

Three programme theories have been developed around the ideal practice of the Outreach Officer, based on empirical research (reviewed throughout the theory of change), local research with GRT communities (Greenfields et al., 2021), and previous experience working with the community. The proposed theories are:

- Project activities and outputs will support the development of relationships between GRT communities and education providers, building trust and knowledge that support legacy and sustainability of impact.
- Project activities and outputs will appropriately and effectively provide opportunities and support for GRT young people, and their parents/influencers, in considering their FE and HE options.
- Project activities and outputs will support education provider practice and policy through learning, knowledge exchange and wider cultural models of practice.

The programme theories relate to several hypothetical CMOs through analysis of literature reviews relating to the challenges and barriers faced by GRT young people and enablers for effective widening participation (WP) outreach programmes, programme documentation and evaluation to date, and stakeholder consultation. Such assessment to inform the intervention included that of relevant previous research literature, multi-sector forum group minutes, national guidance, relevant working group, network, and professional development discourse, and previous engagement with GRT young people and the community organisation. Much of this is detailed in the sections above. We have identified what we consider the main mechanisms, which can be defined as common and significant. These highlight a need for increased understanding and trust between the GRT young people and education providers (though better relationships), and access to role models. There is evidence that individual responses from the GRT young people involved, the community organisation staff working with them, and the Outreach Officer is needed to explore wider cultural models relating to determining effective outreach with GRT communities, effective cultural models of practice within FE and HE institutions, and the wider societal/community factors that may impact outreach. How and why the programme theories achieve the outcomes is tested through realist evaluation (Marchal et al., 2018, p.83).

Based on Befani's (2020) tool, realist evaluation is an appropriate small n methodology to address these 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).

*Evaluation design*

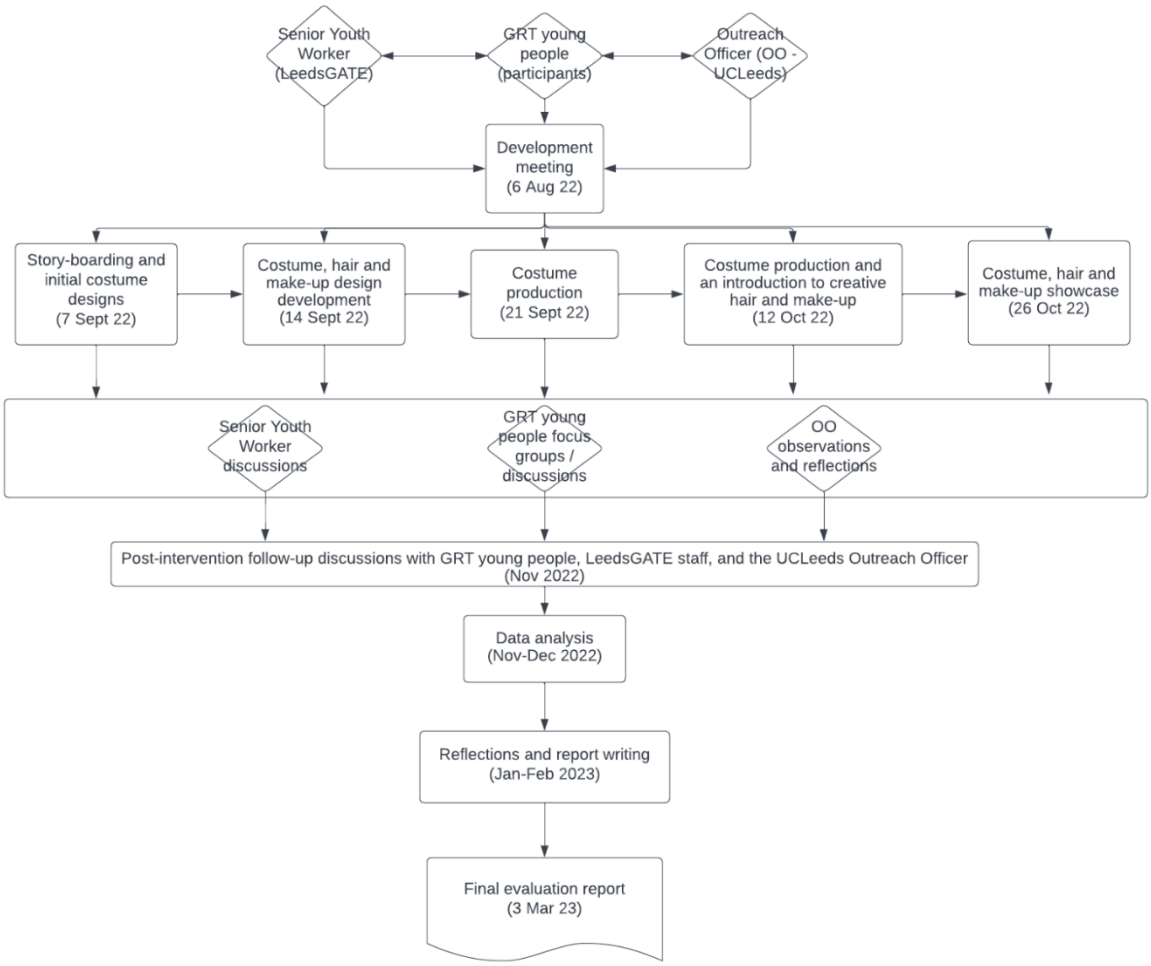


Figure 10: Flow of evaluation design (key = OO: Outreach Officer)

*Participants*

The participants were Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) young girls attending a pre-established Girl's Group within an GRT community setting. The girls were aged 8-16 year olds (n=3-12), and all are home schooled. Only one participant had participated in the community outreach programme previously, although facilitated by a different Outreach Officer. No pre-existing relationships with the facilitating Outreach Officer.

*Data collection*

The research tools and data collection methods were adopted based on the context of the cohort, and the appropriateness to the CMOs and programme theories. Data collection methods, which are effective at identifying contexts and mechanisms to produce outcomes (Dalkin, et al, 20221; Manzano, 2016), to determine and improve effective CMO configurations included:

| Data collection method | Mechanism for change | Programme theory |
|---|---|---|
| Pre- and post- realist focus groups / interviews with GRT outreach programme participants | All | Project activities and outputs will support the development of relationships between GRT communities and education providers, building trust and knowledge that support legacy and sustainability of impact.<br><br>Project activities and outputs will appropriately and effectively provide opportunities and support for GRT young people, and their parents/influencers, in considering their FE and HE options.<br><br>Project activities and outputs will support education provider practice and policy through learning, knowledge exchange and wider cultural models of practice. |
| Realist focus groups/interviews with community setting support staff of GRT participants (notably the Senior Youth Worker) | (C) Evidence informed practice<br>(M) Stakeholder engagement and collaborative programme design<br>(O) Greater participation and engagement<br><br>(C) Evidence informed practice and relationship building activity<br>(M) Insight and relationship gains<br>(O) Increased awareness of enablers, barriers and challenges / partnership working and collaborative opportunities | Project activities and outputs will support the development of relationships between GRT communities and education providers, building trust and knowledge that support legacy and sustainability of impact.<br><br>Project activities and outputs will appropriately and effectively provide opportunities and support for GRT young people, and their parents/influencers, in considering their FE and HE options.<br><br>Project activities and outputs will support education provider practice and policy through learning, knowledge exchange and wider cultural models of practice. |
| Observations and reflections of the Outreach Officer | (C) Evidence informed practice<br>(M) Relationship, competency and knowledge gains<br>(O) Greater access to support mechanisms available through intervention<br><br>(C) Longitudinal co-designed programmes of activity and support | Project activities and outputs will support the development of relationships between GRT communities and education providers, building trust and knowledge that support legacy and sustainability of impact.<br><br>Project activities and outputs will support education provider |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | (M) Openness to try new things<br>(O) Increased engagement<br><br>(C) Evidence informed practice<br>(M) stakeholder engagement and collaborative programme design<br>(O) greater participation and engagement<br><br>(C) evidence informed practice and relationship building activity<br>(M) insight and relationship gains<br>(O) increased awareness of enablers, barriers and challenges / partnership working and collaborative opportunities | practice and policy through learning, knowledge exchange and wider cultural models of practice. |

Table 1: Data collection methods in relation to CMO and programme theory

Pre-intervention, during each session, and post-intervention, the Outreach Officer held informal, yet detailed, discussions with the GRT young people to gather insights into their experiences, perceptions, attitudes and aspirations, including the reasoning as to why and why not. These discussions were embedded into the sessions with prompts for depth of discussion and unpicking of the narratives.

After each session, and at the end of the 6-week block (Sept-Oct 2022), the Outreach Officer provided a reflective account of their observations. Reflections had also been collected from the previous academic year (2021-22) to help provide context and a baseline upon which to base those collected as part of this pilot project.

The Outreach Officer held discussions with the Senior Youth Worker to collate their observations and any further 'data' that resulted from their working with the GRT young people to assist with triangulation. The Project Lead collated all data for analysis, project evaluation, and reporting.

No personal data was collected or processed, even in regard logistics of setting up focus groups or interviews. The research activity was carried out during the outreach intervention activity, as part of a group that is established and organised by the community organisation. These evaluation conversations would have happened even if not part of the TASO small n pilot. No identifiable data was collected.

Compliance with the team's duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act was maintained. All discussion and observation notes were accessible only by the named team - Project Lead, research support, and Outreach Officer - and stored on a password-protected computer and password-protected institutional SharePoint file. Any files containing data were made anonymous. There was no paper based data collected.

**Analysis**

Analysis was inductive and interpretative, utilising the method of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The adoption of Bourdieu's thinking tools of habitus and capital was a useful lens through which to view the data.

Analysis aimed to explain CMOs. The data from the focus groups/interviews was transcribed and analysed by the evaluators and sought to identify and improve CMO patterns across the data sets (individual participants/cohorts). Each individual participant respondent in the focus group had individualised consideration of the CMO. Thematic analysis was conducted to determine any general themes relating to the different contexts of GRT young people, the relationships with the Outreach Officer, the approach of the outreach programme, and the overall outcomes of the programme.

The analysis of the discussion and observation notes for the sessions, in September and October 2022, began during the intervention period, with the project team having identified the concepts that were likely to help in understanding the CMOs. The notes were collected, documented, and referenced directly following each intervention session for reading by the team and in identifying any emerging themes. This formed the basis for the analytical process, whilst enabling ongoing and continuous conceptualising of the notes and avoiding risk of being overwhelmed by data. Weekly discussions were held between the research team members to ensure understanding of the discussion and observation notes, resolve points of confusion, and confirm identified emerging themes.

This approach is welcomed in qualitative data analysis, implementing the thoughts of Stake (1995) who states:

> *"More often, analytic insights are tested against new observations, the initial statement of problems and concepts is refined, the researcher then collects more data, interacts with the data again, and the process continues"*
>
> (p. 75).

Thematic analysis of the discussion and observation data collected was underpinned be the key assumptions and CMOs within the theory of change. Identified themes within inductive analysis, were driven by the data. For example, themes were drawn from what the GRT young people chose to share in their discussions rather than using exact questions/prompts being asked by the Outreach Officer. This was triangulated with the observations of the Outreach Officer and Senior Youth Worker of what happened, not shaped by what they theorised/hypothesised would happen, and so they are not reflective of the researcher's own interests or beliefs on the subject (Braun and Clarke 2006). To do so, the method of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), and most widely adopted in qualitative literature, was followed. This lends itself well to the ongoing evaluation of the GRT Outreach Programme planned for beyond the scope of the TASO small n pilot, allowing revisiting of earlier points in the analysis process as a result of new discussions and observations and/or newly emerging themes that warrant further exploration (Kiger and Varpio, 2020).

Thorough analysis of the data was conducted following the 6-session programme, in November and December 2022, with the research team spending considerable time familiarising themselves with all the data collected from the discussions and observations during the intervention and data collection period. This was important in truly 'knowing' the data and for forming the basis of the sessions and data collection the build on each session. Once familiar with the data, annotations and marginal notes were added to the data to help to unpick it, identify important statements and points of interest, and begin the thematic analysis where potential connections can be made, as well as to support the questions, ideas and concepts to be explored in the intervention sessions that followed. The process was manual and did not use a computer assisting programme. Here, codes were generated, that reflected important issues being drawn out of each discussion and

observation, including the context(s), and the pertinence and trustworthiness of each considered for application to the full data set. This formed the basis of identification of connections, or patterns, between different discussions and observations across the intervention period, thus informing the development of emerging themes.

The coded discussion and observation notes were thoroughly examined to identify more significant themes, by mapping how codes might relate to one another and through analysing and comparing the identified codes. Visual maps were developed here to demonstrate relationships and connections that together helped understand the full picture and worked towards answering the evaluation questions. The themes were revisited to ensure there was adequate supporting evidence, identify new themes or subthemes, modify or remove themes, and modify, add or remove connections and relationships between themes. Throughout the process the research team ensured that the themes and relationships between themes reflected the aims and objectives of the project and were representative of the data collected, including re-reading, re-familiarising, and re-examining the full data set.

Relating closely to the realist evaluation approach being adopted, the analytical strategy examined relationships to move beyond basic descriptions and explain the 'whys', and in what contexts. This allowed for a much more interpretive exploration. As the analysis got underway, a matrix capturing how themes and concepts were connected, and the reasons (causes) for changes in attitudes, perceptions and aspirations of young people (effects) were developed.

**Findings**

This section will highlight the findings identified as a result of the thematic analysis, and in answering the evaluation questions and confirming the theory of change.

*Participant numbers and relationship building*

When developing the theory of change we identified that the assumptions and change mechanisms may be impacted by fluctuations in attendance of the participants, due to the nature and structure of the pre-existing Girl's Group this intervention was embedded into, their educational experiences, engagement with the community organisation, and assessed vulnerability/need. This was partially informed by observations of the previous Outreach Officer who delivered our 2021-22 intervention (used as a baseline and not the Outreach Officer in this intervention), that the biggest challenge in delivering the 6-session blocks of activity was a lack of consistency in terms of participants and attendance.

As such, each block of activity was delivered in a way that recognised such fluctuations and that could be adapted/tailored to ensure positive outcomes were still achievable, although perhaps at different levels. Records of participation illustrate the predicted fluctuations in attendance.

| Session | **Baseline** Previous intervention (2021-22) | Session 1 | Session 2 | Session 3 | Session 4 | Session 5 | Session 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Number of participants attending** | 11 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 11 | 12 |
| **Previous engagement** | | 1 from 2021-22 | 2 missing from S1, 2 new | 1 new | 1 new | 2 returned from S1, 3 new | 1 new |

Table 2: Participation numbers

The increase in numbers attending was welcomed in terms of engaging more GRT young people in accessible and inclusive practical careers-based sessions. This then provided the opportunity to develop positive relationships with more GRT young people and work towards positive changes in their attitudes, views and aspirations. However, the Outreach Officer facilitating this evaluated programme observed the same challenges posed by fluctuating attendance as the previous facilitator had found:

> *"The main challenge was consistency of attendees. The new girls were less familiar with the set-up and found it difficult to stay focused, so sessions with new members became disjointed and we had to adapt to the needs of the wider group."*

The development of positive relationships between the GRT young people, the community organisation, and us as education provider, underpins the theory of change and the likelihood of successful intervention outcomes. Based on previous experience and existing literature, we theorised that relationship building takes investment of time, and is subject to change, resulting in a longitudinal approach to the overall rolling intervention and theory of change developed.

The Outreach Officer now facilitating the intervention was new to the team and not previously known to the GRT young people nor the community organisation. However, the previous links with UCLeeds proved helpful in maintaining an initial relationship developed in the previous academic year (2020-21). This was particularly pertinent in relation to the community organisation staff members where there was much more consistency in individual members interacting. The participants have inherent trust in the community organisation, particularly the Senior Youth Worker who facilitated the Girl's Group and was supporting the intervention. We believe this trust, and our pre-existing relationship with the organisation, created a good basis from which to build relationships with the young people themselves.

Only one participant had any engagement with UCLeeds or the intervention previously and so there were little relationship gains coming from the previous intervention. Previous experience taught us it takes time to build a relationship, but the Outreach Officer observed positive relationships building within only a couple of weeks of intervention. Within only a few weeks, the Outreach Officer was observing the participants engaging in new conversations about education and career choices that they had been disengaged in previously. However, when new participants joined the group, the Outreach Officer observed tensions in these discussions as a result of the different relationship gains that had been achieved and not yet established. Some of the participants had made gains to have the more open discussions mentioned but the new

participants were not as open to these discussions yet and so there were quickly individualised journeys and outcome success being observed.

The Outreach Officer also reflected some new members had a small negative impact in the relationship and discussions with some of those who had been there longer, although not enough to undo all positive change that had been achieved. Interestingly, some of the continuing participants were influential in supporting gains and outcomes for the newer participants, by shaping the conversation, providing peer support, and working as a team. The Senior Youth Worker reflected that the continuing participants were influential in encouraging their friends to attend, being able to promote the co-design, topic of familiarity and interest, and trust in the facilitator. This was a cause in the resulting increase in numbers. In this sense, those who had attended more sessions became role model figures for those who were newer. This reflects the existing literature that GRT young people do not have community role models in relation to education, but find they are important and impactful (Greenfields et al., 2021). It supports the finding of ACERT (2017) that the employment of GRT community members, as role models for young people from their communities, significantly impacts outcomes.

*Thematic analysis*

The analysis conducted was inductive, with the identified themes being driven by the data. The themes were drawn from what the GRT young people choose to share in their discussions, the observations and reflections of the Outreach Officer, and those of the Senior Youth Worker at the community organisation. The initial overarching key themes defined through the analysis are highlighted in the snap shot in Figure 3 below:

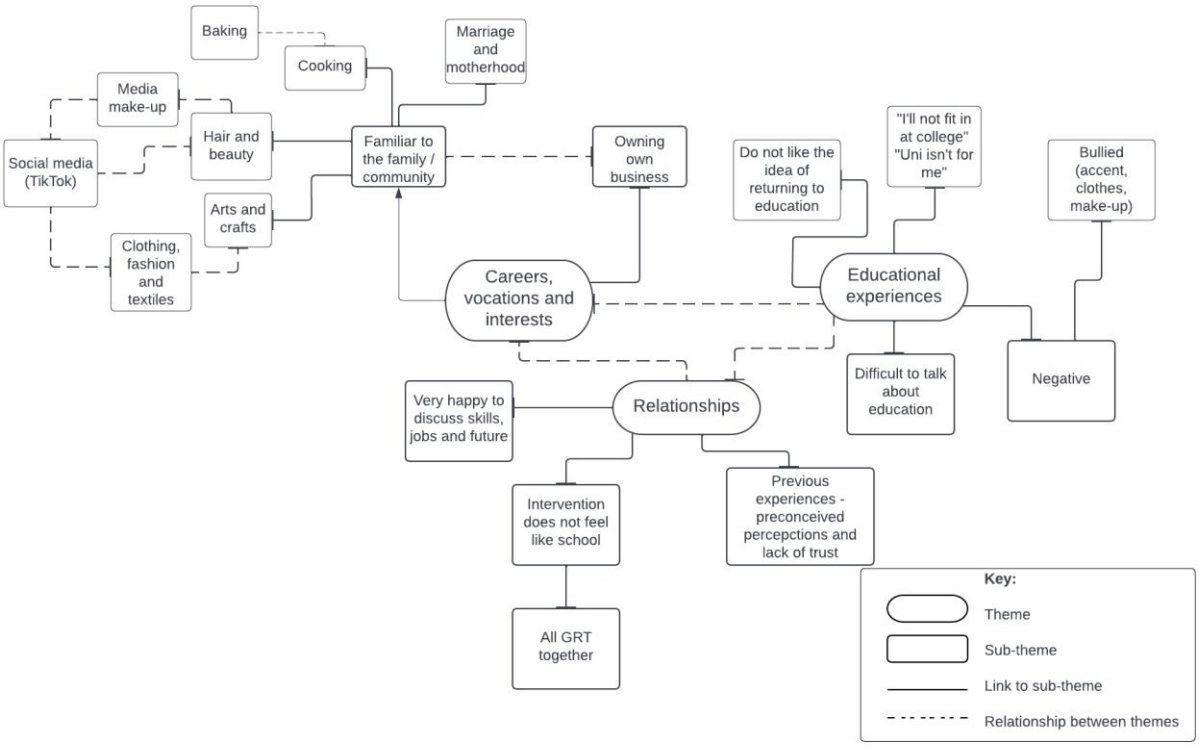


Figure 11: Thematic map, illustrating identified themes, relationships, and connections

In triangulating the data, it became clear that the barriers and challenges reflected in the existing literature and observed in previous experience had informed the theory of change well. This had enabled us to develop an appropriate intervention and create a theory of change that had made suitable assumptions and CMOs.

Evaluation questions

On revisiting and re-examining the data and themes, new themes or subthemes were identified and/or modified to ensure they were truly representative of the data. This included examining the thematic relationships beyond basic descriptions in Figure 3 and to explain the 'why's, and in what contexts. This allowed for a much more interpretive exploration. The matrix in Table 2 below provides an overview of how the themes and subthemes were connected, and the reasons (causes) for the difference made to, and changes in, the GRT young people (effects), thus going some way to answering the evaluation questions.

| Emergent theme | Sub-theme | Mechanism for change observed through analysis | Programme theory | Evaluation question | Evaluation outcome measure |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Careers, vocations and interests | Family / community<br><br>Appropriate intervention<br><br>Competency / learning new skills | Stakeholder engagement<br><br>Relationship, competency and knowledge gains<br><br>Openness to try new things | Project activities and outputs will appropriately and effectively provide opportunities and support for GRT young people, and their parents/influencers, in considering their FE and HE options. | 1 What difference did the GRT outreach programme make to the group(s) and under what circumstances?<br><br>2 How and why did the GRT outreach programme make a difference to the participants attitudes and aspirations, if any? | Increased engagement in accessible and inclusive practical careers-based outreach sessions. |
| Educational experience | Co-designed<br><br>Familiar setting<br><br>Safe / familiar<br><br>Together/ support each other / leadership<br><br>Informal<br><br>Hands on<br><br>Teamwork<br><br>Competition / showcasing | Stakeholder engagement<br><br>Relationship, competency and knowledge gains<br><br>Social capital gains<br><br>Deepened insights | Project activities and outputs will appropriately and effectively provide opportunities and support for GRT young people, and their parents / influencers, in considering their FE and HE options. | 1 What difference did the GRT outreach programme make to the group(s) and under what circumstances?<br><br>2 How and why did the GRT outreach programme make a difference to the participants attitudes and aspirations, if any? | Positive changes in the attitudes and views of GRT young people relating to FE and HE.<br><br>Positive changes in aspirations of GRT young people towards FE and HE. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Understand needs and barriers | | | | |
| Relationship | Safe space<br><br>Listened to / co-design<br><br>Consistency (in OO)<br><br>Appreciation of cultural traditions / values<br><br>Understand needs and barriers<br><br>Approach / flexibility<br><br>Peer - trust<br><br>Organisation - trust | Stakeholder engagement<br><br>Relationship, competency and knowledge gains<br><br>Collaborative programme design<br><br>Increased practitioner awareness<br><br>Deepened insights | Project activities and outputs will support the development of relationships between GRT communities and education providers, building trust and knowledge that support legacy and sustainability of impact.<br><br>Project activities and outputs will support education provider practice and policy through learning, knowledge exchange and wider cultural models of practice. | 1 What difference did the GRT outreach programme make to the group(s) and under what circumstances?<br><br>2 How and why did the GRT outreach programme make a difference to the participants attitudes and aspirations, if any?<br><br>3 What other factors/circumstances needs to be present alongside the GRT outreach programme to produce the observed outcomes and increase chances of effectiveness? | Development of positive relationships between education provider and GRT young people.<br><br>Increased practitioner awareness of the enablers, barriers and challenges of outreach for GRT young people.<br><br>Developing partnership working with GRT community stakeholders and collaborative learning opportunities<br><br>Deepened practitioner insights regarding GRT young people's attitudes, views and aspirations towards FE and HE |

Table 3: Thematic analysis matrix

1. What difference did the GRT outreach programme make to the group(s) and under what circumstances?

The GRT young people very clearly presented negative experiences and perceptions of education, from primary through to HE. Education and schooling proved difficult topics to engage the participants in discussion.

In general, GRT young people did not consider studying at FE or HE, regardless of the type of education provider, due to their very unpleasant school experiences. This included being bullied because of their accent, clothing and/or make up, and perceptions of being judged. In the earlier sessions, the participants identified very negative previous experience in education (from both staff and other students) and had developed negative pre-conceived perceptions about FE and HE. The participants expressed that they did not like the idea of going back to school or college as a result. The participants spoke of not seeing themselves gaining qualifications because they do not want to go back to school/education because they perceive that they "do not fit in" but were also limited in the knowledge and resources they could draw on regarding the options available or known/lived experiences in FE and HE. This theme is what the Outreach Officer and Senior Youth Worker considered the biggest barrier in terms of access to FE and HE.

The discussions that follow will provide greater detail of how the evaluation questions have been answered, but it is pertinent to introduce this here as part of the narrative behind what difference the programme has made to participants. The key difference the intervention made was to start making positive change to these perceptions and experiences through an intervention that maximised on the traditions of their own cultures, was less formal, and allowed them to feel safe to develop trust. For example, the participants held goals that were very traditional and familiar to their communities, relating to vocations, early motherhood, big families, and 'gender-typical' expectations. However, recognising this as part of the CMOs allowed for an intervention that has resulted in increased knowledge of wider careers and professions linked to these familiar vocations, and gains in capital and agency. The participants demonstrated greater awareness of the options available to them, including non-traditional routes, pathways and courses such as apprenticeships. This was made possible through the CMOs outlined in the theory of change and without the approach taken may not have been possible.

The circumstances under which these differences were made link to the programme delivery approach and relationship building underpinning the theory of change. The intervention was co-designed with participants, informal, practical, with 'casual' delivery approaches, and in a setting considered familiar and safe. In doing so, the GRT young people were able to engage in an outreach programme they had not been able to previously and had been able to increase their knowledge and learn new skills.

Whilst the difference made in relation to educational options was much less, there was still some progress made in relation to considering FE. This is not unsurprising and was assumed as part of the programme and theory of change development to take a longer period of intervention.

2. How and why did the GRT outreach programme make a difference to the participants attitudes and aspirations, if any?

The findings indicate that the intervention did make a difference to the participants attitudes and aspirations of the GRT young people, through a series of CMOs. The participants described that the sessions did not feel like school and so this made them more enjoyable and engaging. A common theme as to the reason why was because they were all together and not in different

groups/classes, emphasising the importance of a sense of togetherness and supporting one another.

In the latter sessions of the intervention, there was more openness to the idea of FE, with some participants disclosing they would like to go to college but that they did not think they would fit in and might get bullied. There was no real desire portrayed to study at university. This was not unexpected given the theorisation that long term outcomes will only be achieved through long term intervention beyond the scope of this pilot project. Practitioner learning throughout the intervention led to the belief that one reason for this is that GRT young people are making educational and careers decisions at a much younger age, largely based on community preferences, educational experiences and family history, traditional values around family and 'gender-typical' expectations (for example, "*I don't need to think about the future as I'll be a full-time mum and marry someone who makes the money*") and a lack of knowledge and understand among young people, families and communities about what university can and could be like for them. Both the Outreach Officer and the Senior Youth Worker reflected that the participants perceptions of HE are very different to reality but that they are too young to understand and appreciate some of the benefits and values of alternative options, such as CBHE. This is, in part, a result of a lack of visible role models with positive educational experiences as well as a lack of GRT community members employed in educational settings. Staff in the community organisation were seen as positive role models, including in relation to education but the young people focussed on the job rather than the educational journey to get there.

Throughout the sessions, the participants were very happy and comfortable to discuss skills, careers and future jobs. In the initial discussions, this was dominantly framed around existing knowledge of those vocations familiar to community. Common sub-themes are illustrated in Figure 3 above and in the quote in the previous paragraph. Less common, but mentioned individually, was the identification of social work (based on aspiring to be like the Senior Youth Worker) and being a vet or working with animals (linked with the job of a significant other), but neither were open to exploring the qualifications and educational routes appropriate to achieve those end aims.

What was promising was that in the short timeframe of this project, GRT young people had already made positive changes in their attitudes and openness to trying new activities and discussing careers and vocations less familiar among their communities. The Outreach Officer observed the participants try and/or consider more as the sessions developed, with greater engagement in discussions around a wider range of careers and professions linked to some of the vocational areas they had previously identified.

3. What other factors/circumstances needs to be present alongside the GRT outreach programme to produce the observed outcomes and increase chances of effectiveness?

As we theorised, the better the relationship(s) between the GRT young people and the Outreach Officer, the better the outcomes. The relationship is considered the most important aspect in the outcomes of the intervention and underpins the whole theory of change. It was apparent at every stage of the intervention, and the evaluation, that the relationship(s) GRT young people have with each other, their support workers in the community organisation, and the education provider (specifically the Outreach Officer delivering the intervention) was the most dominant influential factor in producing the observed outcomes and in having any chance of intervention success.

For example, simply involving the participants in the design and implementation of the programme had observable impact. The participants had received outreach intervention from HE providers in

the past and both GRT young people and the organisation had not perceived any positive impact or further interest in engagement. By taking the approach we did, the participants felt listened to, and that we were open to understanding their barriers and challenges to engagement. This included things such as not having literacy-based intervention or resources, avoiding STEM-related sessions (or that appeared to be), and focussing on subjects and activities that they perceived as for females and not '*masculine activities'*, thought to be linked to narrowed perceptions and interests due to their age and cultural values.

This helped engagement in the programme, and quick building of trust and rapport, as participants could engage on their own terms, drawing on forms of capital already embedded within the GRT community, and encouraged and supported the GRT specific mode of engagement. It emphasised free choice and agency, and mobilised existing experience and thinking to enhance their sense of agency. The participants were enabled to promote their own traveller history and culture, something they felt they had been blocked from doing in previous education and outreach experiences.

Further circumstances increasing success was the location of the activity delivery, which was in their local community GRT organisation with which they were very familiar. The findings indicate that due to this, and that they were in *their* safe space, they felt more comfortable and confident to speak openly.

Sustained engagement with the same Outreach Officer, not just the education provider as a collective, was key to relationship development. Engaging with the same individual on a regular basis helped the young people develop trust and understanding of the context of her role when in their centre. When they see too many different visitors or new people, this can be damaging to the relationship. However, whilst this relationship was developing quicker than perhaps theorised, and with successful outcomes, it was clear that being in their safe space was pertinent to such and that it would take much longer to develop this in an FE or HE environment. The Outreach Officer reflected that some of the participants will simply never trust education enough to re-enter that space due to their, and historic family, negative experiences of education and schooling.

This positive relationship enabled the GRT young people to speak freely and openly about their experience, perceptions, and aspirations. They were happy to talk at length about skills, jobs and their futures, however they found talking about school and education difficult. This is not surprising given their previous experience. However, by the end of the programme the Outreach Officer did observe some positive move forwards in this area of discussion, with the participants more comfortable and open to have honest and insightful conversations about their experiences and perceptions, and it is theorised that this would continue with more programmes as part of the rolling long-term intervention:

> *"The group are developing more trust with me and are happy to discuss their family and home life. [Senior Youth Worker] said that they were worried to have someone from a university as they might be judgemental".*
>
> (Outreach Officer reflection)

Unforeseen when the intervention and the theory of change were developed, was new engagement with another provider. Towards the end of the programme, another HE provider attempted to engage with the group but participants discussed that:

> *"[we] really don't like them, they spoke to us like children, confiscated our phones, and we didn't like the activities".*

However, there has since been opportunity for collaborative outreach activity, between us and the other provider, maximising on the relationship we have been able to establish, and there appears some opportunity for successful outcomes for all.

For newer participants, it appeared they took reassurance from their peers and the organisation that this new relationship with the Outreach Officer was safe, providing further evidence that relationships and trust built with community members is key for further, sustained, and long-term impact. As mentioned in the earlier part of this section, this reflects the finding of ACERT (2017) that the employment of GRT community members, as role models for young people from their communities, significantly impacts outcomes. Given the importance of this trust in their community support networks, and of the physical location the intervention was delivered, the relationship between the education provider and community or community organisation is absolutely fundamental, particularly designated contacts such as a single Outreach Officer (education provider) and Youth Worker (within the community organisation) or community representative.

The relationship development, participant engagement, and intervention effectiveness was also as a result of the programme delivery itself. As mentioned in evaluation question 1 above, the participants particularly liked that the intervention was delivered less formally than they had experienced in school and previous outreach attempts, and that it was practical and hands-on, confirming the recommendation that more 'informal' by design outreach can be highly effective (Danvers et al., 2019). Importantly for the participants, it did not feel like it had at school, and it was important to them that they were all together, could support one another, work as a team, and provide leadership. Whilst saying that, the Outreach Officer also observed that the element of competition and an end product (including showcasing their own work) seemed to provide positive motivation for engagement.

The final factor to be present to produce the desired outcome(s) is an appreciation of two-way knowledge-exchange. Whilst the Outreach Officer was able to support the GRT young people and the community organisation in their knowledge and competency gains, just as important, if not more so, are those gained by the Outreach Officer to inform future policy and practice. Throughout the programme, the Outreach Officer gained new knowledge and insights about GRT communities, their experiences, perceptions, aspirations, and enablers. For example, the Outreach Officer very quickly reaffirmed that the participants are part of a very closed community and reflected that they wanted to contribute to their community in the future by filling a traditional job role within that community (for example, one nurse, one mechanic, one mechanic, but mostly wives and mothers).

**Limitations**

The main limitation to the effectiveness of the intervention is linked to attendance, as it was not subscribed and fluctuated session by session. However, being prepared to adapt each session for this can minimise the risk and maintain the chances for successful outcomes. Similarly, this group consisted of participants aged 8 to 16 years of age. Group conversation and discussions had to be adapted to allow for the age differences between participants, ensuring these are appropriately phrased and pitched for each age.

**Reflections**

As a CBHE provider, with a particularly small outreach team and no designated evaluation staff, we were excited by the opportunity presented by TASO to be part of the small n evaluation pilot

project. Much of the outreach work we do is small n and this project was timely given our move towards more structured monitoring and evaluation and the implementation of the GRT community outreach programme.

Previously, working with small n cohorts, we have attempted to approach evaluation, and had evaluation expectations, that are typical to more tightly structured evaluation approaches but that do not necessarily appreciate the nuances and contexts that come with working with small n cohorts. This has led to difficulties in discussing and evidencing impact and outcomes of such interventions, especially in shorter term impact reporting. Realist evaluation has afforded us real benefits in understanding the outcomes and success of interventions for very specific underrepresented groups such as GRT, and with small n cohorts. It has assisted us in illustrating why we are doing what we are doing and the immediate and/or shorter-term outcomes measured as part of a long term programme of intervention, whilst highlighting the importance of context for these groups when comparisons are being made inappropriately to evaluation measures used with larger cohorts.

With working with GRT young people in particularly, realist evaluation approaches enabled us to explore, more robustly, how we evaluate with a cohort that are unlikely to respond well to more traditional evaluation methods. Our evidence base tells us that paper/literacy-based evaluation tools are not well received among this cohort and trying to compare the findings and outcomes of GRT interventions with other underrepresented groups is unlikely to produce accurate or relevant overall conclusions. Realist evaluation has enabled us to appreciate the findings and outcomes of the intervention in specific context whilst the realist CMO configuration has allowed us to really consider the mechanisms for change in the context. This has resulted in clearer understanding and theory of change that can increase the likelihood and size of successful outcomes for participants and practitioners.

Implementing realist methodology in our context has been relevant and insightful, providing us a means to understand the 'whys' and contexts within which we work, to better inform our practices and policies, particularly working with specific underrepresented groups. Fundamental to this was the basis upon which context and mechanisms were established in the CMO configuration. Our previous experience, engagement with community representatives, and involvement in multi-sector forums working in this space was key, with literature and existing evidence supporting theory of change development.

Having the space and time to invest in robust development of a theory of change, research protocol, and analytical strategy has been motivational and aspirational, with practitioners across the institution expressing an appetite to know more, get involved, and adopt the approaches themselves in their own interventions and action research. For example, our recent Staff Development Day, involving over 80 HE staff from across the provision and in a wide range of roles from curriculum to support and business services, focussed on evaluation and evidencing impact with all staff creating a TASO core theory of change for an area of their work, and some stretching to enhanced theories of change.

The experience of conducting small n impact evaluation, and implementing realist evaluation in our context, has been an important process to understand the true impact of what we do but also illuminate what *can be* in the work we do and make small n impact evaluation a part of our usual practice. What was key to the process, and in our successful implementation of small n impact evaluation, was the time spent developing the theory of change. We started with a core theory of change, much like a logic model, as this was familiar with all involved and a good basis from which to build. This provided us the foundations to unpick questions around *what* was happening in each

activity to create change and *why* 'A' might be possible as a result of 'B'. This was the starting point for the creation of our enhanced theory of change and CMOs, something that at the start of the process seemed somewhat overwhelming and beyond our thinking.

Our early reflections of small n evaluation included some apprehension, anxiety and imposter syndrome about how realist evaluation could and should be implemented in our context. This was mainly as a result of a lack of existing case studies; a rationale for the TASO pilot project. As such, much more time and resource was required at the start of the project than we had perhaps envisaged. This was needed to fully understand realist evaluation as a methodology, how it could be implemented in small n, how it could be utilised in evaluating impact in relation to GRT community outreach, and the development of thorough and high-level theories as part of the enhanced theory of change. What we found of key benefit in this process was that everyone involved in the project had detailed knowledge of the outreach programme being delivered as well as the nature of the cohort participating and the context from which evaluation was being considered. What was also of benefit was the support offered by TASO by way of workshops, templates and ongoing support, enabling us to create the resources that were lacking (for example case studies) to support others in implementing small n evaluation in the future.

We are now championing small n evaluation, realist methodology, and enhanced theory of change across not only our institution but also the CBHE landscape and HE sector as a whole.

**Conclusions**

Throughout the intervention design, delivery, and evaluation, it was clear that the relationship between the Outreach Officer, community organisation, and participants was key for any chance of successful outcomes. To support this, engagement with community representatives and inclusion of community members and ambassadors as role models is recommended to increase effectiveness of the intervention and subsequent relationship development among individuals. With strong, safe and trusted relationships in place, the impact for change is more likely and the benefits for participants and practitioners alike are endless.

*Insights for practitioners*

In establishing relationships and developing intervention to initiate engagement with GRT young people, we would recommend that activities reflect vocations and interests familiar to the community and their cultures. These activities should include practical, hands-on elements, with an end product or showcase and be flexible in delivery. Sessions should consider the negative education and school experiences inherent among GRT communities and should work towards rebuilding trust by looking to understand their experiences and what it means for their learning, perceptions and aspirations. Practitioners should be prepared for fluctuations in attendance and participation and to invest time in relationship building with participants and stakeholders, such as community partners and representatives.

In some instances, greater gains could be gained through sustained collaborative working between education providers. As the relationship between participants and stakeholders is key to success, efforts should be made to protect that and not minimise impact. The participants responded well to consistency in contact personnel and so having a smaller amount of trusted facilitators may be more impactful than many different providers attempting to engage with the same cohort, particularly as the participants can feel overwhelmed by being approached by too many different people, especially if they are not well known to them. As such, practitioners should consider localised collaborative partnerships between multiple education providers and the

communities to best support GRT young people, develop a wider culture model of practice, and ongoing knowledge-exchange. This will minimise any potential risk of participants feeling overwhelmed by multiple providers attempting to engage with them, particularly where they feel less trust and safety. Similarly, we found that some participants found difficulty in understanding multiple projects taking place at the same time by different facilitators, causing confusion, and both the Outreach Officer and the Senior Youth Worker felt this could potentially limit outcomes, and relationships.

Evaluation can be very difficult with this cohort because of inconsistent participation and attendance, lack of language skills, and aversion of literacy-based tasks, and so the preference is for less formal approaches to evaluation. We found that embedding the evaluation into the delivery was successful, with data collection being approached as informal discussions and observations. This reduced barriers to data collection and evaluation which may have been incurred using surveys, questionnaires, and other psychometric tools, for example. With an established relationship, creative methods of data collection could also be employed such as graffiti walls, visual journals, or jamboards.

Whilst the process of realist evaluation has been very motivating and aspirational for our practices, we are also reflective that implementing realist evaluation in this way for every intervention we deliver is just not possible, largely as a result of being such a small team. From our experiences working in CBHE and on the project, we believe realist evaluation is a highly effective methodology for small n impact evaluation but that smaller institutions, with small teams or no evaluation teams in many cases, may find it more appropriate to consider which interventions would most benefit from this approach as it may not be feasible for every outreach activity being delivered. However, it is important to note that where this approach can be taken, the benefits of such very much outweigh the challenges it may present. Key insight sharing in relation to this would be to prepare time for the background reading and investment in developing the theory of change as this has great benefits when evaluating the intervention. The empirical research carried out in the early stages of theory of change development can be key to success, meaningful evaluation, and the adoption of appropriate research protocol.

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**Appendix 1: Longitudinal intervention outcome measures**

The evaluation aim is to understand the effectiveness in approach of the UCLeeds 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.

- Primary outcome measures:
    - Immediate outcome - Increased engagement in accessible and inclusive practical careers-based outreach sessions.
    - Immediate outcome - Development of positive relationship between education provider and GRT young people.
    - Shorter-term outcome - Positive changes in attitudes and views of GRT young people relating to FE and HE.
    - Shorter-term outcome - Positive changes in aspirations of GRT young people towards FE and HE.
    - Immediate outcome - Increased practitioner awareness of the enablers, barriers and challenges of outreach with GRT young people.
    - Immediate outcome - Developing partnership working with GRT community stakeholders and collaborative learning opportunities.
    - Shorter-term outcome - Deepened practitioner insights regarding GRT young people's attitudes, views and aspirations towards FE and HE.
    - Shorter-term outcome - Increased practitioner insights of wider societal/community factors specific to GRT communities, and the impact for policy and practice.

- Secondary outcome measures:
    - Long-term outcome (beyond small-n pilot scope) - Increased access to FE and HE for GRT young people
    - Long-term outcome (beyond small-n pilot scope) - Development of wider cultural models of practice relating to raising access to FE and HE for GRT communities.

The outcomes identified in relation to the intervention were clearly defined as the theory of change developed in the early stages of the small n evaluation pilot, resulting in a series of outcomes appropriate for the participants the GRT young people) and a series of outcomes appropriate for outreach practitioners.

- For the GRT young people (the participants)

The immediate outcomes of the intervention were associated with increased opportunities for engagement in accessible and inclusive practical careers-based outreach sessions, and the development of positive relationships between the education provider and GRT young people, may be achieved following the first 6-session programme (Autumn term 2022) for some individuals.

The shorter-term outcomes were associated with positive changes in the attitudes and views of GRT young people relating to, and aspirations towards FE and HE, which were thought to be achievable within the 6-session block, at different rates for different individuals participating. The more 6-session programmes each individual participant engages in, the further they progress towards these outcomes. The greater the engagement in the GRT outreach programme (for

example, the more 6-session programmes they participate in), the greater capital gained, the greater likelihood of progress towards the long-term outcome.

The long-term outcome of the GRT outreach programme is to increase access to FE and HE for GRT young people. This outcome is some way off and only possible through a series of mechanisms for change (detailed in 'Theory of Change' below), over a sustained period of time beyond the scope of the TASO small n evaluation project, and dependent on the individual previous experiences of each young person.

- For the practitioner (Outreach Officer)

It was perceived that outcomes associated to practitioners would be achieved at a different pace to the GRT young people.

The immediate outcomes were to increase practitioner awareness of the enablers, barriers and challenges of outreach with GRT young people, and develop partnership working and collaborative opportunities with GRT community stakeholders. This was considered essential from the outset for the intervention to be effective and for the outcomes for both GRT young people and practitioners to be achieved.

The shorter-term outcomes were to deepen practitioner insights regarding GRT young people's attitudes, views and aspirations towards FE and HE, and increase practitioner insights to wider societal/community factors specific to GRT communities (including the impact for policy and practice). This was to help strive towards achieving the long-term outcome. This was only possible through continual development of the relationships with the young people and the community organisation/representatives, and with knowledge exchange that benefits all stakeholders equally.

The long-term outcome was to develop wider cultural models of practice relating to raising access to, and participation in, FE and HE for GRT communities, and was already being worked towards in the development of an evidence-informed intervention and theory of change. Some previous experience working with these communities underpinned some of this achievement. Prior to initial activity starting August 2021, the practitioners involved in the project had limited experience or knowledge of the barriers and challenges facing GRT communities, as well as the impact of these on outreach activity. Having been able to establish a relationship with the community organisation, community representatives, and some of the programme participants was an outcome in itself.

**Appendix 2: Full context-Mechanism-Outcome configurations (CMOs)**

The theory of change identifies a series of contexts and mechanisms for change by which outcomes can be achieved.

The journeys of each participant, as well as the Outreach Officer, will be influenced by several factors and interactions, and each small n cohort may uncover different 'causes of effect'. As such, the concept of 'case' is key and Byrne (2009, p.2) emphasises that:

> *"trajectories and transformations depend on the all of the whole, the parts, the interactions among parts and whole, and the interactions of any system with other complex systems among which it is nested and with which it intersects".*

Within this intervention, 'causes of effect' approaches are based on multiple causalities which depend on combinations of causes that lead to an effect (Stern et al., 2012). Multiple causes are recognised within the theory of change of the GRT Outreach Programme, and change will be achieved by several causes at the same time. For example, the relationships made with the Outreach Officer, family support, previous experiences, and community/life events are all factors that are relevant to impact and so it is the role of the intervention within this causal package that is to be evaluated. Configurations, the sequencing and relationships between causes, are considered, including Pawson's (2008) notion of the intervention as part of a complex system and reflecting that:

> *"Configurationists begin with a number of 'cases' of a particular family of social phenomenon, which have some similarities and some differences. They locate causal powers in the 'combination' of attributes of these cases, with a particular grouping of attributes leading to one outcome and a further grouping linked to another. The goal of research is to unravel the key configuration clusters of properties underpinning the cases and which thus are able to explain variations in outcomes across the family".*
>
> (Pawson, 2008, p.1)

The mechanisms for change, and outcomes, do so in particular contexts (Pawson and Tilley, 1997), each individual part acting, or interacting, to collectively bring about the outcome and dependent on the context in which they operate (White and Phillips, 2022). Pawson and Tilley (1997, p. 69) describe a mechanism as a theory which spells out the potential of human resources and reasoning, whilst Astbury and Leeuw (2010, p.368) consider mechanisms as underlying entities, process, or [social] structures which operate in particular contexts to generate outcomes of interest, and each mechanism if a function of the participants and the context rather than inherent of the intervention (Wong et al., 2013). Features in the theory of change are what are considered the main mechanisms that are common and significant enough to contribute to a pattern of outcome of the intervention (Wong et al., 2012, p.6).

Similar to the intervention outcomes, as the theory of change developed it became apparent that there were two intertwined theories of change relevant to the intervention; one in relation to the participants (GRT young people) and one in relation to the practitioner.

Participant theory of change and CMOs

- Stakeholder engagement

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.

Stakeholder engagement is key to intervention success, to build trust between the Outreach Officer and the GRT young people and to help develop knowledge and capital. This engagement is largely about the co-creation of the activity programme to enhance motivation and agency towards the activity, develop the relationship(s), learn from each other, and evaluate the impact of the intervention with the young people directly. 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 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.

Implementing the programme in their community setting is a key context in the CMO configuration and to the outcomes (Wong et al., 2013). The conditions in which the GRT young people are enacting their choices is also important (Wong et al., 2013) resulting in, for example GRT young people finding it easier to participate, and to speak freely, in a context that reflects their culture and that they are familiar with. They would find it harder to so this in the context of a university setting that they perceive negative experiences and feelings of distrust. It is this understanding that modifies the effectiveness of an intervention (Wong et al., 2013, p. 9).

The theory of change carefully considers the importance of 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). Good practice from schools shows that developing a culturally relevant curriculum that affirms and recognises the importance of cultural identity for GRT young people, with a flexible and culturally sensitive approach and in partnership with other agencies, to ensure access to a personalised and appropriate educational package leading from school to the world of work, will be effective in building relationships (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009).

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). It will also relate the practical-evaluative element of agency which involves the capacity for individuals to make practical and normative judgements amongst alternative possible actions in response to context, a demand or a presently evolving situation (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998).

Actors (GRT young people) will need to be present in the design sessions to enable this mechanism for change to be most effective, and agency of younger children, where there is a common belief that they are not capable of making their own rational decisions (Larkin, 2019), may need more guidance from the Outreach Officer and/or community organisation youth worker than the older young people.

- Relationship, competency and knowledge gains

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.

Relationship gains

In working towards addressing underrepresentation (linked to long-term outcomes) and to tackle the inequalities and challenges outlined above, UCLeeds have committed to working with GRT communities to develop trust with education providers, to raise awareness of cultural models of

practice, raise awareness of educational routes and options, and increase access to both FE and HE.

Taking a realist evaluation approach to understand what works for GRT young people, in what circumstances, and why, we recognise the importance of contexts that refer to individuals (the Outreach Officer and Student Ambassadors who are delivering the programme) and the interrelationships between the Outreach Officer/Student Ambassadors and the GRT young people, as well as those between the Outreach Officer and community organisation representatives (Pawson, 2018, p.212).

The theory of change, and achievement of outcomes, is ultimately underpinned by the development of the relationship between the actors involved in the programme, including GRT young people, the Outreach Officer, the Student Ambassador(s), and the community organisation/representatives. However, as a mechanism for change, relationships are intangible in nature and the interactions between different individuals can operate at multiple levels, be visible and non-visible, and are multifaceted and complex. This mechanism cannot be seen or directly measured, because it happens at different levels of reality than the one observed and within individual's heads (Wong et al., 2013).

The initiation of the relationship draws on the existing literature that highlights negative experiences with education providers, both historically and contemporary, including bullying, harassment, discrimination, and racism. Understanding the meaning of behaviours presented by the GRT young people will help establish a more positive relationship, viewed as equal and with cultural sensitivity (immediate outcomes). 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).

Drawing on educational research relating to access and participation in HE, the relationship with a significant institutional representative (for example tutor or, in this case Outreach Officer) has been shown to be particularly influential in enabling learners. Having a personalised and specific approach to GRT outreach, including individualised support, will be a key mechanism to developing better relationships and leading to better outcomes.

West (1996) describes that personal attention and recognition enables students to believe in themselves and to survive, and as making all the difference (p. 201). Further, Finnegan et al., (2014) say that students seek an environment that will respect and recognise them as people and that will treat them in all relations as such (p. 162). Real interpersonal forms of engagement that encourage a relationship that respects student voices and concerns (Finnegan et al., 2014, p. 162) allow for cooperative behaviour and creative exploration of self and world (West, 1996).

These practices and cultures play an important role in students forming a positive learner identity. Thomas (2002) states that this relationship is fundamental to attitudes towards learning and overcoming academic difficulties (p. 432). She highlighted that if students felt staff believed in them, and cared about their outcomes, they gained self-confidence and motivation resulting in improved work (Thomas, 2002, p. 432). Further, the prioritising of learning and teaching of students from under-represented groups enhanced the position of these students in the relationship with staff (Thomas, 2002, p. 432). Yorke and Thomas (2003) advocate the role of the personal tutor in being one of the stable points of contact between student and institution, especially considering the changes to students' patterns of behaviour (p. 70). Personal tutors allow students to talk more about their academic and personal problems, resulting in students feeling more valued (Thomas, 2002, p. 432). In this case, the Outreach Officer will take on some

of the roles expected of a personal tutor, strengthening the relationship and supporting the building of trust.

Such principles are also relevant when facilitating an outreach intervention among GRT young people, where it is those relationships with staff in schools that has created negative perceptions and mistrust in education providers. Adopting some of the approaches found beneficial in HE will help develop positive relationships that impact change.

Further, it is worth considering the theorisation of institutional habitus. Merrill (2012) found that adult learners returning to education, or those from working-class backgrounds, may feel like a 'fish out of water', whereby they may struggle with education and feel that they do not belong (Merrill, 2012, p. 27). If an individual feels they do not fit in, that their social and cultural practices are inappropriate and that their tacit knowledge is undervalued, they may be more inclined to withdraw early (Thomas, 2002, p. 431). These concepts lend themselves well to GRT communities and young people who are not in formal education.

Although working class are far less likely to attempt to achieve what is seen to be already denied (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 54) some students from WP backgrounds do think the unthinkable and succeed. Stories of success in studies in turn help nurture a sense of confidence, autonomy and enhanced personal agency (Finnegan et al., 2014, p. 159). To help GRT young people feel like they would 'fit in', and to see people like themselves in FE and HE, the theory of change includes Student Ambassadors as role models.

This draws on work of ACERT (2017) who state that the employment of GRT community members has had a significant impact in many schools, acting as role models for young people from their communities, feeding more realistic and nuanced information into the school and local communities. Young people confide in them and where issues are identified, they can mediate between the school and the family. Other key suggestions for effective GRT outreach include greater use of ambassador/young person-led outreach (Danvers et al., 2019) and our initial pilot programme during 2021-22 also reflected the value of this.

We are acutely mindful that there is a need to increase the visibility of relatable role models, something that remains a challenge. However, the inclusion of Student Ambassadors in the delivery of the practical sessions has enabled some capital gains and it is envisaged that in this programme to be evaluated, Student Ambassadors will be pivotal to change. Although not from a GRT community, one ambassador supporting the facilitation of practical media make-up sessions has interrupted schooling and completed their GCSEs in alternative provision. Being able to talk to the GRT young people about taking an alternative route to their education resonated with the previous participants and opened some discussion. This allowed the participants to see education establishments can be supportive and safe places, whilst providing an outlet to discussion in a relatable way. We are also working with community representatives, who have achieved HE qualifications, to support delivery and ongoing relationship building.

The GRT young people involved in this intervention find they do not fit and that education settings are not welcoming or safe spaces. The outreach programme puts this at the heart of its theory of change and to allow GRT young people to experience education in an alternative way, providing opportunities to develop a positive relationship and build capital to give them the resources to see what might be possible and that they can, and do, fit in FE and HE settings.

Competency gains

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.

Based on previous school experiences, and reported lower attainment, GRT young people can often feel inferior. Burke (2002) found that feelings of educational inferiority were rooted in a history and cultural structure where by working class groups were seen as not good enough (p. 82). The impact of social class on an individual's dispositions is important in considering the socially constructed perceptions of FE and HE that might lead to feelings of inadequacy in being able to cope at a college or university. 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 (Finnegan and Merrill, 2017, (p. 318).

Habitus and capital are useful in helping to understand the intersectionality between class and ethnicity as well as the impact of cultural values and attitudes reinforcing predispositions of habitus and embodied cultural capital. Throughout his work, Bourdieu presented a need for classes to reproduce themselves (Thomas, 2002, p. 430) with his later work (for example, Bourdieu, 1999) suggesting a more complex view of social class, that recognises diversity, individual differences and habitus transformation (Reay 2004, p. 434).

Bourdieu (1984) talks about habitus as an embodiment of thoughts and beliefs, a whole system of predispositions taught by the material circumstances of family upbringing and life, and argues that it is a person's habitus that organises the practices and dispositions of individuals within it. There are two ideas forming the basis for Bourdieu's argument around habitus. Firstly, is the need of classes and groups to reproduce themselves (Thomas, 2002, p. 430). Bourdieu emphasises that individual histories, family history, and class are influential to this process (Reay, 2004). Secondly, is the idea that in society certain classes and groups are dominant, and that access to educational opportunities is controlled by these dominant classes and groups (Thomas, 2002, p. 430). Although largely unobservable itself, habitus has been shown to have observable impact (Akram, 2012, p.46).

Reay (2004) states that there is a tendency for students to behave in ways that are expected of people like themselves and so the impact of social disadvantage, and habitus, on attitudes of cultural inferiority can be ingrained in habitus and in daily interactions. Feelings of inferiority and not being capable may lead to students feeling like outsiders (Finnegan et al., 2014, p. 157). Such feelings of not belonging or being out of place can lead to a lack of confidence in a student's learning, as well as feeling unsure about themselves in academic spaces (Finnegan and Merrill, 2017, p. 318).

Although it is not clear that this is the case with GRT communities, there are some instances reported from previous intervention, with lower prior attainment (often as a result of educational disruption) reinforces these messages. The GRT young people involved in the intervention are not in formal education due to concerns with how schools understand the barriers for GRT communities, and/or as a result of exclusion. We do recognise that many GRT young people believe FE and HE will not welcome them or be safe, rather than having a lack of ability, which can impact progression. Linking to more general widening participation theorisations, Quinn's study (2004) where there was a strong feeling that non-continuation amongst working class students had very little to do with academic ability (p. 68).

However, to counter feelings of inferiority and lack of competence that do exist, the intervention will be based on co-creation of culturally-relevant activities that generate feelings of superiority and competence. This will enable GRT young people to feel sure about themselves in relation to certain subjects, and the possibility the possibility of experiencing these feelings again on educational pathways in these areas and in further, new, activities.

Knowledge gains

The concepts of habitus and capital are useful to consider here. As described above, family upbringing and life, and argues that it is a person's habitus that organises the practices and dispositions of individuals within it. This offers a potential explanation for why GRT young people will gravitate towards invention that includes vocation subjects and builds on the strengths of their communities. However, the intervention in itself works towards developing this further through increased knowledge and openness relating to education options.

Bourdieu's theoretical concept of habitus, which refers to socially ingrained behaviours that are shaped by those around us and more specifically 'institutional habitus', referring to the institutional culture of a school, college or university. Each individual comes to education with their own habitus and, for GRT young people, this is often not reflected within the institutional habitus and so they may find they don't 'speak the language' of education providers and their procedures, for example.

Bourdieu (for instance, Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970) has been influential in highlighting how class systems reproduce and maintain privilege, identifying how social, economic and cultural capital are provided by families. This is to ensure children arrive within the education system already equipped to benefit from its knowledge and attitudes, while for other children school can be an alien environment (Eden, 2019). Where there are historic negative school experiences among GRT families, GRT young people may not have the knowledge and attitudes required, and when they do these often negatively effected through discrimination, bullying, and racism, for example. The reproduction of educational inequalities are therefore founded on the attitudes and values deriving from a family's class position (Eden, 2017).

There are frequent reports that boys will work with their fathers (or grandfather) in the family business when they were old enough, which the boys took for granted, and girls would be expected to be raising their own and caring for extended families from a very young age, although the girls themselves were more positive about their own freedom to choose their futures (Women and Equalities Committee, 2019). We are aware that GRT families are often supportive of young people progressing in education but lack the knowledge themselves to support them effectively. Family and significant others not familiar with the field (of education) cannot share capital that will help young people in their journey (Quinn, 2004).

However, personal attributes that may have been developed as capital to help them overcome challenges, for example resilience (Chamberlayne et al*.,* 2000, p. 81). This is supported by Finnegan and colleague (2014) who found that their research pointed very strongly to the importance of students' personal resilience and agency in the formation of a positive learner identity (p. 159). Of note may be the varying degrees of transmissibility of forms of capital that may be used by parents (Chamberlayne, et al., 2000, p. 81), especially those from working class backgrounds. This outreach programme will impact change by building on those strengths and providing young people with that knowledge and openness to consider their education options and subjects not familiar to their habitus.

For change to happen, certain conditions must be present, for cultural capital can constrain agency, if the unfavourable norms, values and dispositions are encouraged. Skeggs (1997, p. 10), for example, found that if one's cultural capital is delegitimated then it cannot be traded as an asset; it cannot be capitalised upon (although it may retain significance and meaning to the individuals) and its power is limited. For example, those from GRT communities, may have norms and values transmitted as above (to work or raise a family at the soonest opportunity) would limit agency and therefore the achievement of the outcomes.

Local research with the community (Greenfields et al., 2021) found GRT families are supportive of young people progressing in education but lack the knowledge to do so effectively. Promisingly, legitimising cultural capital of GRT communities is also reflected by The Traveller Movement (2019a) who have found that there is an increasing emphasis on the importance of participation and achievement in formal education within the communities and that there are now more GRT women entering education, training and employment than ever before.

- Openness to try new things

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.

At this stage, the concept of capital should be considered further. Bourdieu (1986) refers to an embodied state of cultural capital, in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body. 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. The transmission of expected behaviours, attitudes and knowledge needed to achieve in school and for FE and HE provides cultural capital. Cultured habitus (Bourdieu, 1967) can occur as an act of schooling; providing of a general disposition and educational socialisation. Reay et al., (2009) found this process proved particularly effective for working class students, but that this turn towards a cultured habitus was predominantly due to work on and of the self. 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.

Agency, linked strongly to self-esteem, will help students identify what they need to be able to do this, and what it will take, operationally, to make it. Furthermore, a habitus encountering an unfamiliar field, such as GRT communities in FE and HE, can generate change and transformation through disjuncture (Reay, 2004; Reay et al., 2010). Disjuncture, Bourdieu believes, happens when an individual with a well-developed habitus (for example, GRT) find themselves in different fields or different parts of the same social field (for example, FE/HE). However, Reay (2004, p. 438) and Sayer (2005) believe disjuncture can happen when habitus is being formed, resulting from striving, resistance, and/or new awareness.

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. It is this mechanism that will support change and achieve immediate outcomes, as well as work towards shorter-term and long-term outcomes.

- Further relationship building

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. This CMO identifies an influencing factor that requires further evidence.

- Social capital gains

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. This will be a catalyst for change and the success of long-term outcomes.

As an education provider based in an FE setting, our Outreach Officers have expertise in advising about alternative provision, various education routes, and developing tangible progression opportunities. The Traveller Movement (2022) found that alternative provision in the later years of secondary education proved appropriate for some young people although there were significant variations in the options available and the quality of the offer from locality to locality. Having a named contact (the Outreach Officer) who can provide personalised support and knowledge-based intervention, as a member of a wider network of education providers and multi-sector support forums, will benefit participants and effect change by helping GRT young people to work through these variations and make informed decisions.

As aspirations for formal education among GRT communities continues to grow, habitus again helps to explain why the GRT young people in this programme will have positive changes in their attitudes, views and aspirations towards FE and HE. In his later work Bourdieu recognised the differences and diversity between individuals and celebrated singularity of individual habitus (Reay, 2004, p. 434). The argument here is that students may wish to break the cycle of social reproduction theorised for them based on class groupings, and so restructure habitus for themselves. In this case, theorised reproduction would be boys going to work for their fathers and girls starting to raise a family or care for the wider family. However, we are seeing individual habitus restructuring class groupings and so GRT girls particularly aspiring to enter HE.

This means GRT young people taking up legitimate identity and being transformative rather than reproductive. This may provide some understanding of why some students from underrepresented backgrounds, such as GRT communities, are able to succeed. This is supported by Grenfell and James (1998, p.15) who contend that 'habitus goes beyond a simple formulation of biographical determinism, actualised through individuals, and individual instances'.

Social capital is important here and 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 (Bourdieu, 1986). It is about social relationships and connections within a social network, being a member of a group, for example, and the relationships with peers. It is based on group memberships, relationships, and networks of influence and support. Bourdieu (1986) speaks of this as being linked to possession of a durable network of institutional relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition, which provides each member with collectively owned capital. It has been shown to enable students to overcome the internal and external problems that they may face (Thomas 2002 p. 435).

Thomas (2002 p. 436) identified ways that HE providers can play a role in promoting the development of such social networks among HE students from disadvantaged groups, such as through the provision of appropriate social facilities, and via collaborative teaching and learning practices. Social capital is also endlessly reproduced in and through the exchange, of words for example, which it encourages and which presuppose and produce mutual knowledge and recognition (Bourdieu, 1986).

Drawing on these principles, the intervention will create change by providing such social networks, both among other GRT young people but also HE students (Student Ambassadors) and institutional members (Outreach Officer). Doing so in the sequenced and context we have outlined will result in this capital gain being effective as a mechanism for change.

- Access to FE and HE

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.

By developing the relationship between GRT young people and education providers and by increasing knowledge and empowerment, GRT young people will have the capacity to make their own free choices (agency) regarding FE and HE, increasing access and participation.

Considering the long-term outcome, Barnett (2007) found that HE students from underrepresented groups had experienced anxieties and uncertainties about what being an HE student entails. By working with GRT young people over a sustained period of time, building the relationship and developing knowledge in a safe and familiar way, will help them to develop the capital and resources for FE and HE that would benefit their success in those fields.

Danvers and colleague's (2019) review of stakeholder perspectives in GRT outreach recommendations identify the important role of schools, FE colleges, universities, policy makers and voluntary organisations, as well as wider responsibilities lying within societies as a whole, in supporting GRT young people in education transitions. 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 intervention will address the recommendations of Danver et al., (2019) by helping GRT young people to be more aware of the breadth of education opportunities that are available, believe that HE is a realistic option for them, and have the belief to make it through their education journeys. The relationship built across the intervention, and 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, or with support, to approach FE and HE providers, to explore their options and make informed decisions.

In discussions about habitus in earlier sections of this theory of change, this can be seen as a generalisation of social reproduction theories rather than a fixed rule of social structure. Bourdieu (1990b) identified that habitus is vague and uncertain, that there are no specific rules or principles that dictate behaviour (p. 77). Although working class are far less likely to attempt to achieve what is seen to be already denied (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 54) students from underrepresented backgrounds do think the unthinkable and succeed. Stories of success, perceived through the activities of the programme and also the Student Ambassadors and community representatives, in turn help nurture a sense of confidence, autonomy and enhanced personal agency (Finnegan et al., 2014, p. 159). Through reflexivity, GRT young people are seen to redefine their position within education, whilst reshaping and (trans)forming their identity as a ‘student’ or as ‘successful’ through agency.

There is an identified need for the Outreach Officer and WP Team to uncover wider societal/community factors, specific to the GRT community, that may impact policy, practice and the programme. Learning through working with GRT young people and community organisations, as well as individual responses from the participating young people and their support staff, are will 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 among practitioners and education providers. The theory of change works towards this throughout, and to achieve change to all outcomes.

As part of this, the creation of an institutional culture and outreach approach that exhibits context and mechanisms for change for GRT young people is key, ensuring environments are created where young people can be open about who they are and how they live (ACERT, 2019); and where engaging in education is made accessible and safe.

Thomas (2002) proclaims that if an institutional habitus is inclusive and accepting of difference, and celebrates diversity and difference, those from diverse backgrounds will find greater acceptance of and respect for their own practices and knowledge, resulting in higher levels of continuation (p. 431). Individuals are more likely to persist within an educational institution that does not require them to radically deviate from their habitus (Thomas, 2002, p 439). This feeling of security, plays a part in developing a sense of belonging (Thomas, 2002, p. 437). More specifically, local, post-1992 universities have been perceived to be places offering a chance to 'belong' and 'fit in' (Reay, 1998).

The approaches taken, explained throughout the theory of change, embody these considerations and look to celebrate the heritage and cultures of GRT communities, imposing an environment of learning that is familiar, safe, welcoming, and develops a sense of belonging, empowerment, and social capital gains. These mechanisms will provide GRT young people with the resources and

agency they need to develop aspirations and intentions towards FE and HE, believing in what is possible and seeing themselves fill positions within the field of FE and HE.

Practitioner theory of change and CMOs

- Collaborative programme design

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.

By underpinning the intervention with an evidence-informed approach to practice that is specific to GRT outreach and not that of outreach facilitated previously for other underrepresented groups, change can happen and the immediate, shorter-term and long-term outcomes achieved. While the WP and Outreach team has established experience in providing comprehensive programmes of access and participation activity, previous experience working with GRT young people has made visible the nuances of working with different underrepresented groups and communities, presenting specific considerations and challenges not typical of other outreach activity.

This reflects the findings of Danvers et al., (2019) that 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). Such evidence is fundamental in the approach to this intervention in order to achieve change, the mechanisms for which will be discussed in more detail in the discussion that follows.

- Increased practitioner awareness

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 in 'Context' above) recommends that not relying on literacy, promoting vocational subjects, promoting 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.

- Deepened insights

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.

Even in the initial stages of developing evidence informed practices to underpin the intervention, along with previous outreach work with GRT communities, practitioner learning has been observed and impactful on change in approach. Reflexivity, of both the Outreach Officer and the evaluator(s), will be important.

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. Already noted, whilst the WP and Outreach team have a wealth of experience delivering effective programmes of outreach activity, previous experience working with GRT young people has made visible the nuances of working with this particular community and has presented specific considerations and challenges not typical of other outreach activity.

Although West (1996) refers to researcher reflexivity more specifically, the principles of such have implications on the practitioner learning within this intervention and as a mechanism for change:

> *"Researcher autobiography is a powerful and natural resource to be used to understand others' life histories; and empathy and relatedness are essential in storytelling. We constantly employ our experience to make sense of what others say and our social relationships in everyday encounters."*
>
> (p. 19).

The Outreach Officer and evaluators will ensure that their positioning as a practitioner does not impose interpretations on the context for change, the mechanisms for change that have affected outcomes, or the qualitative data provided by the GRT young people as part of the impact evaluation.

This theorisation supports the needs identified by ACERT (2017), among others, that all school staff for cultural and antiracist awareness training as, in some cases, decisions and actions of professionals and officials may also be informed by ignorance or stereotypical thinking. Darnell and Fleming (2021) also 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).

At UCLeeds such training has been undertaken and ongoing professional development is being engaged with, already indicating lessons to be learnt for outreach activity with GRT communities

that is different to other underrepresented groups. Dissemination of learning is being facilitated across the whole institution but also other widening participation teams across the region. Local learning, direct with GRT young people and community organisations/representatives will also provide a mechanism for change to build trust and collaborative learning opportunities for all stakeholders.

This links closely with the mechanism of knowledge-exchange and considers the two-way benefits. For example, 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.

This forms the basis for collaborative and partnership working between the education provider and the community organisation.

- Wider cultural models of practice

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.

Drawing on evidence of good practice from schools, the most successful local authorities and schools, in overcoming barriers to ensure Roma children engage and achieve in education, worked in effective partnerships with other agencies and developed specific strategies, to meet the needs of this group of pupils (Ofsted, 2014). Local research commissioned by GHWY (Greenfield et al., 2021) also concluded that effective outreach in HE access and participation, must include working collaboratively (drawing on the expertise of local NGOs, school and college staff and local authority specialists) to scope out particular communities/demographics for whom outcomes are designed, and that are predicated by the circumstances in which they are residing and their individual contexts.

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).

As a college-based HE provider, delivering outreach to various widening participation groups that focusses on education progression at all stages, the intervention is well placed to support GRT young people into both FE and HE.

FE and specifically GRT young people's access to 14-16 provision, vocational qualifications, apprenticeships and A Levels is an undeveloped area of study (The Traveller Movement, 2021). FE is considered to have great potential in offering GRT people who have fallen out of education the opportunity to reengage and reduce the likelihood of ending up NEET (The Traveller Movement, 2021). The Traveller Movement (2021) recommend FE providers need to ensure that

they are reaching out to their local GRT communities and developing relationships with young people and families to ease the transition into these settings and to increase subsequent retention and course completion, and so raising awareness of FE options and supporting access to FE through the intervention is fundamental to this outcome. With improved access to culturally sensitive and relevant support and intervention, comes greater progression to FE and HE (The Traveller Movement, 2021), and subsequently improved outcomes.

The Traveller Movement (2019b) stress that there is a special need to engage in ways of widening access and participation through co-production of appropriate and effective methodologies with community members who have experience of academia, specialist NGOs, and HE providers. This has been pre-established through existing relationships with the community organisation, multi-sector forum membership, and GTRSB Into HE Pledge, for example. However, mechanisms for change in this specific intervention will be maximizing on the opportunities provided through enhanced partnership with specific organisation and community representatives who have themselves experience of HE, as well as the GRT young people themselves being involved in the co-design of the activities making up the programme.

The Traveller Movement (2019b) go on to say that, if applied systematically, this approach can be effective in removing barriers, and providing ongoing support mechanisms within and across the institution. Through utilising best practice and working closely with specialists supporting GRT young people, it is possible to increase access to HE and successful outcomes.

By working together in the ways outlined above, we can collaboratively drive forward the agenda on progression to HE (Greenfield et al., 2021). The intervention, and realist impact evaluation of it, will create change by informing practice further, deepening nuanced understanding of contexts and circumstances, and address education inequality. This will be achieved by the relationship development discussed earlier in the theory of change, as well as the two-way knowledge-exchange made possible through the intervention. This, combined with the ongoing development of capital, will create positive change in the attitudes, views and aspirations of GRT young people and increase access to FE and HE.

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.