



Bardsley Youth Project

Annual Review 2020-21

Delivery with young people

We have worked with young people this year to support them to stay where they are living (especially during the Covid crisis), find a new place to live if needed, equip that new place and begin to turn it into a home. We have helped young people tackle whatever barriers they face to move into a more secure future.

The young people we work with all live in Coventry and they have lived experience of homelessness, forming them into a community, one that is especially fragile and difficult to move on from. The young people we work alongside are aged 16-25, are homeless and facing a huge number of significant barriers and trauma to recover from, including living in unstable accommodation and the experience of being homeless.



Young people told us that our work has enabled them to recover more quickly, equipping them and avoiding them going into a continued cycle of homelessness. More widely, this feedback was endorsed by Homeless Link's Research Paper Young and Homeless (<https://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/our-research/young-and-homeless-research>)

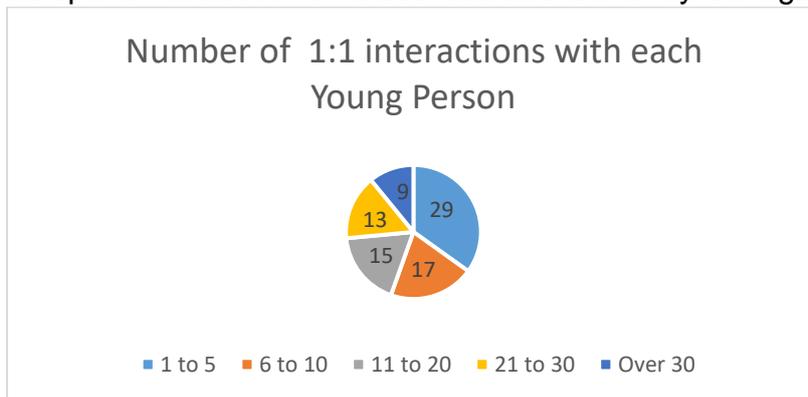
In this research young people across the country communicated similar views and feelings. The national report highlighted once again what our young people are constantly telling us about the value of our work and the independent approach we offer.

The report showed that young people valued organisations that encouraged participation, where their experiences of adversity were recognised, they were provided with responsive and tailored support, and were supported to build upon their aspirations and strengths, this very much describes how we work with young people in our community.

Our year in numbers

This has been a strange year as it has for most people. Covid restrictions have meant a disruption to our normal activities but we have adapted our offering as the restrictions allow. Moving young people into their new homes started again in April 2021 after a hiatus of almost a year, but during that time we continued to respond to emergency needs for young people who had to move despite Covid restrictions.

- 83 young people were helped by us
- 65 were new referrals
- 1227 interactions directly helping young people on a 1:1 basis
- 35 spoken to about homelessness at 3 Coventry College Open Days Sept 21



- 48 Food parcels were given out
- We helped 9 young people move into their first independent home (from April 2021)
- Supplied 5 Kitchen Essential packs to equip their new home (from June 2021)
- Supplied essential furniture and household goods to 3 young people (from April 2021)
- 12 essential Hygiene Packs given to help young people keep clean
- The laundry was used 34 times by and for young people
- 3 young people in fuel poverty were helped
- 13 young people were referred to other agencies

This year we supported young people who have experienced the following barriers:

- 70% suffer from poor mental health;
- 53% have experienced a history of abuse;
- 47% have a learning difficulty;
- 97% have poor financial literacy;
- 93% are not able to live with family.

We recently carried out a survey with young people we have worked with and hosted over 20 meaningful conversations with the community of homeless young people that we want to work collaboratively with and this has shaped the development of our work.

Young people told us as a result of working with us that:

- 63% said they feel better equipped to deal with personal crises
- All rated our support as 'excellent'
- 75% were unsure where else they could get support if we weren't there
- All said their personal confidence had increased
- 87% said they felt less isolated

Young people also said of what we do:

'All around help and support with life skills, work prep, finances, everything'

'I know if I call out of the blue 9/10 you'll pick up and call me back if not. Working with you feels more like a friendship, you take the time to build a relationship unlike the council and so on. You can relate to the issues we face as you have been through it yourself' (talking about the Project Manager)

'Been there for me when I had nobody'

'Got me straightened out before I screwed things up again'

'Got me off the streets, fed me and pretty much kept me alive'

Real Life stories

These stories are typical of the young people we work with and show the complexity of the barriers they face.

Abas, 19, is an unaccompanied minor living in a local hostel. At age 11 he fled Afghanistan with his little brother but sadly lost him on the way to Britain. He has lived in the hostel for three years and feels very isolated. Abas was referred to us for support with his benefits having secured employment but this contributed to his benefits being revoked leaving him unable to pay his rent and feed himself. Rent in the hostel is over £290 per week so entitlement to housing benefit is essential.

Our worker supported him through our one to one work to think about ways he could reduce his sense of isolation, contributing to improving his overall wellbeing. In addition, we supported him at Job Centre appointments to resolve his benefits and employment situation. We have supplied him with food parcels when he has been in desperate need.

Rachel, 22, attended our centre after she had presented to the Council's housing and homeless service and was turned away with only a leaflet about private rental options – most not open to the young people we work with. Our worker knew that Rachel had pre-existing mental health problems and that she had been an inpatient for three weeks, being discharged the week before and that Rachel had learning disabilities. None of these issues were picked up in the initial Council interview.

It was clear that Rachel could not navigate the system and lacked an understanding of the priority needs based system. We negotiated with the Council's housing and homeless service and Rachel was placed into a B&B for one night, following that she was offered a space in a hostel. Our worker has continued to support Rachel regularly around developing her life skills and how to utilise them to avoid eviction from the hostel.

Catherine, 24, initially presented at Bardsley House for a food parcel. She has a fear of men due to past abuse she has experienced. She has had four children, one of whom has died. Conversations with her are difficult as she jumps from one subject to another and has difficulty maintaining her train of thought. She is trying to get back custody of her youngest child and access visits to the others. Our worker has been supporting her with producing a CV to enable her to get back into employment, which is a goal that Catherine has set with our worker to help her progress forward. Catherine is a very challenging young person to work with and our team have invested time to build rapport and fully understand her situation.

Merly, 20, was referred to us by a partner agency for support with a food parcel. Our worker conducted a home visit to Merly's flat. It was in a terrible condition with electric wires hanging out of sockets, filthy unwashed clothing and a dirty chaotic kitchen.

She had been exploited by her friends who had damaged the flat. She had the confidence to ask for help after we met her. We supported her to rebuild and carry out basic tasks to get her sorted, including washing her clothes and securing a grant for a washing machine. Her boyfriend moved in and on further investigation it appears they had had no gas for some time as they had never topped up the meter – they did not realise they needed to. Our worker continues to support Merly to rebuild and maintain her tenancy.

Ellis, 17, identifies as a male, he has neuro-diverse autistic tendencies and is transgender. He self-referred to our service, attending with his partner and fled his family home with no ID, no NI number so was unable to register for Universal Credit, open a bank account nor register with a GP surgery.

Our worker supported him to get over these barriers so that he can move forward. He is currently lodging with his partner's friend. Historically Ellis has a Social Worker with whom our worker is in contact with to see what support can be offered.

Context and need for our services

The homeless charity Crisis have used the image of a dam to describe how poverty and complex social issues cause constant pressure like water behind a dam, until an increase in pressure from a life event causes the dam to break and people are pushed into homelessness (Quote from Coventry Council Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2019-24)

Young people's Hostel survey

We recently conducted a survey of young people who are living in temporary supported accommodation and do not currently use our services. From those who completed the survey we have identified that:

- 75% have mental health issues;
- 56% have struggled with problems of substance misuse;
- 50% have spent one or more nights sleeping rough;
- 67% have sofa surfed;
- 77% said they were not confident about their next steps after leaving the supported accommodation;
- 89% would be willing to attend training courses that lead to employment;
- 83% thought that the benefits process acted as a barrier to employment and training (pushed towards this but no recognition of the impact of the loss of housing benefit with such high rents in supported accommodation);
- 67% expected to move on to social housing (where they would receive no support services).

Increasing Demand

We compared our numbers for September 2021 with those of September 2019 respectively, comparing 2021 with 2019 (2020 not reliable due to Covid-19) we have seen a 38% increase in referrals. We sadly expect this rise to continue when considering the detrimental impact of Covid-19 on young people aged 16-25. The increased demand based on our knowledge is being caused by:

- Overly expensive and unaffordable private rented accommodation, most of which is inaccessible to young people in Coventry who are on Universal Credit or housing benefit;
- Significant over demand for limited social housing stock;
- Inadequate council commissioned beds for young people in need, as a result of budget saving drives in local the council;
- A loss of beds due to the change in status of Coventry Foyer as they are protecting themselves from instability of commissioned services for our age group;
- The end of 'Everyone In' and the return of court evictions, that restarted in June 2021 after these were made illegal during Covid-19;
- Loss of jobs in the pandemic has hit young people the hardest, especially as they are generally employed in the most impacted sectors;
- The financial position of young people benefit claimants and a build-up of rent arrears;
- Young people fleeing home due to being unsafe or living under increased pressure especially during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Local context

Coventry Council Housing & Homeless Strategy 2019-24 states that priorities include targeted prevention, recovery & move-on support with help to sustain housing. There is a focus on older people in the report as the population is ageing but no specific mention of young people.

Young people have little access to the 25% of properties in Coventry that are private rented accommodation. 17% of all houses in Coventry are social housing. At any one time there are over 14,000 people waiting for social housing and 2000 are in priority bandings, with each property receiving an average of 166 bids on the online portal. Single young people with no dependents that are not in hostels are very low priority despite their needs.

During the pandemic Coventry Council focussed on the Everyone in Scheme to get rough sleepers off the street. £700m of government funding was provided nationwide. However, nationwide it should be noted that this still falls short of the level of homelessness spending in 2010. (Centrepont report) The Council also overspent by £2.8m on accommodation for homeless people last year.

We have the support of the local Housing and Homelessness Commissioner and we hope our continued delivery will embed our role in supporting local young people to overcome homelessness. The Commissioner has told us that high numbers of rough sleepers are aged 20-30 and that's the ones they are aware of, recognising that most young people age 16-25 tend to 'sofa surf' with a series of friends or relatives for long periods prior to presenting at the Council as homeless.

The council have commissioned 80 beds for homeless young people, but they have stated that this is insufficient for demand. Coventry Foyer has 63 beds outside of this provision and has always been a key part of hostel accommodation for young people in Coventry. However, the owners have taken a corporate decision to only accommodate low needs people over all their hostels and all support workers at the Foyer have gone, effectively removing these 63 beds for most of our young people.

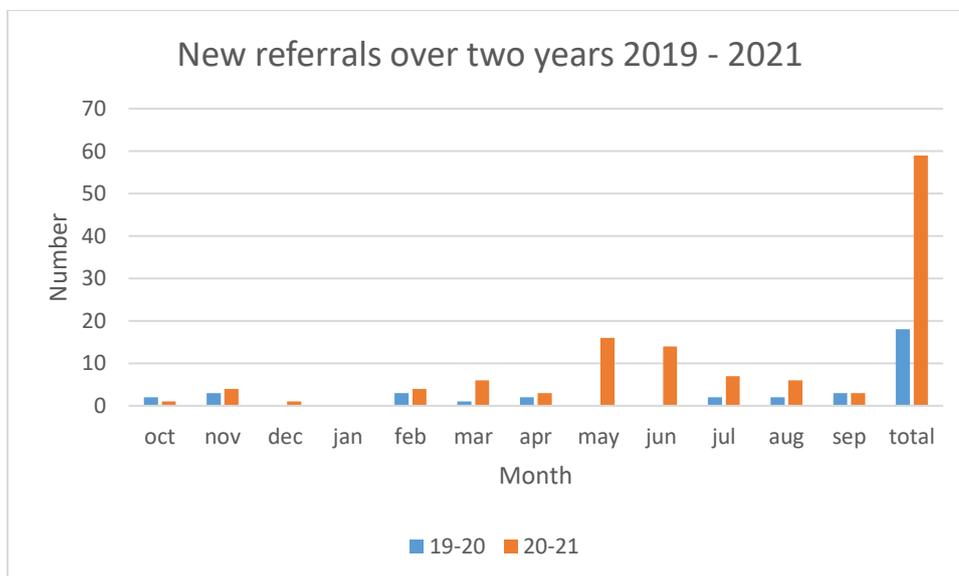
With the end of The Everyone In agenda and the return of evictions the Council are expecting an avalanche of people who have not paid any/little rent since the pandemic began to be facing eviction proceedings over the next 6-12 months. We anticipate that the age group we are working with will be impacted by the return of evictions.

Universal Credit (UC) increased rates by £20 per week until April 4th 2021. This has now come to end. Young people get lower levels of UC by £68 per month leading to struggle with budgeting for those who have to live independently.

Added to this most young people only get the shared house rate of the housing element - £77.50 max per week, when most rents in Coventry are higher than this. 85% of those who have so far lost their jobs in the pandemic are under 30 and the number of young people claiming benefits in the West Midlands went up by 96% between February 2020 and February 2021 (Centrepoint). As furlough arrangements taper off, it is predicted that many more young people will lose employment.

Organisations we worked with on behalf of young people

We have worked in partnership with over 20 local partner agencies and organisations over the year. A high number are new partners and others we have worked with for a number of years, we have good partnership relationships, which is reflected in the increasing number of referrals we are receiving.



- Coventry College
- Coventry Foyer
- Coventry & Warwickshire YMCA
- St Basil's
- Valley House
- Coventry Cyrrenians
- Coventry Housing
- Private landlords
- Housing Associations – Accord, Citizen, Stonewater, Orbit, Midland Heart, Aspire
- Coventry MASH Team
- Adult Social Care
- Children's Services
- Referral and Diversion Team
- Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust
- Coventry Independent Advice Service
- Coventry Law Centre
- Coventry Food Bank
- Social Supermarkets
- Meridian Health & Social Care

- P3 Housing Support
- GP Practices
- Health Watch Coventry
- Schools
- PET-Xi Training
- West Midlands Police
- Homeless Link
- Crisis
- Shelter

Organisation Achievements

Organisationally speaking we have had a very busy and productive year working on development and significantly increasing our capacity. Highlights include:

- Producing and implementation of our 3-year Business Plan;
- Recruitment of 2 new trustees;
- Recruited a full time Senior Engagement Worker (63% increase in staff capacity);
- Flexibly responded to the Covid 19 crisis, altering our working practices to continue to support young people throughout the pandemic;
- Secured £245,000 three year funding from Reaching Communities;
- Secured £50,000 from Lloyds Bank Foundation and with their help we are developing a Buildings Specification and Communication Strategy;
- Reviewed all policies;
- Developed a Theory of Change and Impact Framework with the help of a Development Consultant from Homeless Link;
- Implemented *Views* platform for data capture;
- Started to explore Social Enterprise and look at ways we can become less grant funding dependant.

Impact monitoring

As part of the work we completed with our Lottery Community Fund Development grant we secured in early 2020, we spent a considerable amount of time looking at impact monitoring and frameworks and we know from what young people tell us that the support we provide makes a difference to their lives. However, we have always traditionally struggled to capture and communicate the impact we make.

We have developed a Theory of Change Model with our entire organisation involved in the process. This will really be powerful in the process of monitoring and evaluating the success and failures of our services. We have further developed the Theory of Change Model into an impact framework that we are going to be implementing over the next year to better communicate our overall social impact.

In addition, we used some of the development grant to invest in an impact monitoring system called *Views* to collect more robust data on attendance and progression made across all of our projects. As standard we conduct surveys with young people to monitor progression and achievement.

We are confident that the new impact framework and system will support us to track our progress against the outcomes we have detailed below. We will spend time developing monitoring and evaluation tools, in particular the 1:1 coaching aspect.

Our Theory of Change Model



Our Theory

Bardsley Youth Project seeks to walk alongside young people as they move into independent healthy adult lives, equipped with tools and confidence for the future, reducing the cycle of homelessness.

..... Accountability Line

Intermediate outcomes

1. Reducing homelessness
2. Improved mental wellbeing (Increased self confidence and self-esteem)
3. Improved physical health and reduced substance misuse
4. Increased motivation, positive attitude and hope
5. Increased engagement in training and employment
6. Increased life and transferable employability skills
7. Increased level of resilience and ability to manage personal crisis
8. Increase in positive relationships and networks
9. Improved financial management, reduced debt and reduced reliance on benefits
10. Reduced involvement in anti-social behaviour and criminal activity

Enablers - Internal & External

Approach	Physical	Organisational
Consistent Strong communication with young people Coaching and mentoring Trust between staff and young people Person centred approach Quality provision Wellbeing for young people & staff Strong communication with young people Values each person Invest in staff development & training	Engaging programme of activities Access to specialist services Warm and inviting spaces to operate from with kitchen facilities Safe and structured environment Free Access (financial) in an accessible location Security & stability Equipment + resources	Strong safeguarding processes Partner organisations support Strong trustees board & governance Experience and competent staff Fundraising (income) Motivated & empathetic staff and volunteers Resources for young people's development work Good reputation Strong monitoring and evaluation Shared values and ethos Seek to be diverse and representational

Activity

Moving forward	Meaningful activity	Support provided
Signposting to other organisations Information giving Inspiring Motivation Furniture provision for young people Moving in support (life skills) Keeping in touch with young people Advice & guidance	Informal education & training Teaching life skills Car project (practical led) Enjoyable time with workers Enriching experiences Drop in groups	Crisis help (Welfare – food, clothing, funds) One to one support Prevention work in school & colleges Advocating and liaising with other organisations Proactive, not reactive Person centred
How we deliver		
Well planned Quality Encouraging Consistency	Relatedness Value on each person Responsive Respect	Open-minded Optimism Responsibility Mentoring approach

Inputs

Well trained & passionate staff team Main space to deliver work Funding and income	Resources/equipment Referrers Partners board	Office/workspace for team. Leadership Strong governance & strong trustee
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