



# BUILDING RESILIENCE TOGETHER



# THE IMPACT OF THE YOUNG BRUM PROGRAMME

2018-2021



# FOREWORD

As InUnity celebrates its 10th Birthday, this report signifies some important milestones for us as an organisation. Young Brum has been a catalyst of change. It has been 3 years of hard work, dedication to the cause and provides a lasting legacy for the hundreds of young Brummies that have participated. But for InUnity as an organisation, it has provided us with so much more.

Young Brum is the result of a collaboration between Active Communities Network (ACN) and InUnity. The aim of the partnership was to develop InUnity: to become stronger, more independent and recognised by the community of Birmingham as a valued, trusted and reliable youth organisation. With ACN's support, InUnity has definitely achieved this. We would like to personally thank ACN for their continued support and belief and look forward to the ongoing relationship.

There is no denying that Young Brum started as one project but looked very different three years in the future. We can't ignore the impact that Covid has had, but for us Covid has presented many other, positive opportunities and these are demonstrated throughout the report. In essence, Covid has cemented that InUnity is an organisation that

is flexible, adaptable and works tirelessly for our beneficiaries. To see the difference we have supported young people to achieve (as highlighted by the numerous case studies included) - is why we do what we do.

Our core values of listening, supporting, inspiring, engaging and empowering young people are bursting through the narrative which is testament to our amazing team. From trustees to the core team and our volunteers – every one of them is what makes InUnity special. Ironically, as I reflect on Young Brum and what we have achieved as a collective, it's the power of positive relationships. Those as told by the young people with their families, their teachers, their communities and their friends – to those of InUnity with our partners, our funders and our work family. The power of building, rebuilding, developing and facilitating relationships. That is InUnity.

Enjoy the read. It's real. It's authentic. It's very honest – but it's also just the start.

**Hannah Brooman**  
Founder and CEO  
InUnity



**“Enjoy the read. It's real. It's authentic. It's very honest – but it's also just the start.”**

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**During 2018-2021, Active Communities Network collaborated with InUnity to deliver Young Brum. Our role as a national charity supporting a network of likeminded organisations is to enable organisations such as InUnity to develop their practice, networks, capacities and evidence impact.**

We welcome this report which clearly demonstrates how InUnity have and continue to overcome the challenges of operating during the Covid-19 pandemic. Their creative response to the challenge of exacerbated systemic inequality is truly inspirational. As a network of likeminded practitioners and organisations, we are especially pleased to read that InUnity have innovated, stayed true to their principles, and have a strong set of learnings to apply in the future.

As we visualise a post pandemic society and learn from its impact, we are acutely reminded that communities such as those supported in Young Brum risk being further isolated and experiencing deeper inequality. InUnity are uniquely placed to support young people in communities to connect, provide leadership and create the opportunities they deserve. We trust that this report will support InUnity further refine practice and demonstrate to commissioners, funders, and policy makers the value of their tireless work which benefits not only the young people they serve, but the wider community.

Thank you, Hannah and the team, we look forward to supporting the next stage of InUnity's development and programming.

**Oliur Rahman**  
**Joint CEO**  
**Active Communities Network**





# OUR JOURNEY IN DATA

Helping young people find direction,  
not just diversion.

ONBOARDED

COMMUNITY INTERVENTION 70%

TARGETED INTERVENTION 30%

## SHORT-TERM IMPACT

1,737 YP & FAMILIES  
ACCESSED POSITIVE  
OPPORTUNITIES

58% - IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS\*\*

90.6% - IMPROVED SOCIAL &  
EMOTIONAL SKILLS (TARGETED)

127 YP UNDERTOOK  
SOCIAL ACTION

## ACTIVITIES\*

LEARNING

SPORTS

SOCIAL ACTION

YOUTH CLUBS &  
CREATIVITY

## LONG-TERM IMPACT

87% IMPROVED RESILIENCE OR WELLBEING

70% IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT (TARGETED)

203 EDUCATED ON RISK REDUCTION

POWERED BY:  
**COMMUNITY  
FUND**

\* Total number in sample = 172. \*\* From parent feedback (n=34).

# ABOUT THIS REPORT

I was engaged by Active Communities Network and InUnity to evaluate the Young Brum programme in January 2020 - six weeks before the Covid-19 pandemic started. This has shaped the evaluation process in two key ways:



1

The original intention was to use validated measures to measure changes in young people's resilience and wellbeing across all aspects of the programme. This has been impossible in the context of fluctuating attendances, lockdowns and mass isolations.

2

There was also a need to be gentle and mindful of the impact of the pandemic on everyone - participants, partners and staff. Being responsive to this has necessitated being flexible and light-touch about methods of data collection.

## DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data was collected using multiple methods:

1

**Participant data:** questionnaires, interviews, and written case studies prepared by session leaders and mentors.

2

**Parent data:** short parent questionnaires and feedback via WhatsApp and other social media platforms.

3

**Programme data:** interviews with InUnity staff, session leaders/mentors and delivery partners.

4

**Partner data:** written feedback and interviews with strategic partners.

Due to the variety of data sources, a unified coding framework was created and applied to both qualitative and quantitative data, and used to calculate the statistics presented in this report.

## SAMPLE

An evaluation sample comprising 172 participants was selected, spanning 10 Young Brum activities. Whilst this offered a good cross section of InUnity activities, it was not reflective of the wider Young Brum in two key respects:

- Firstly, the sample was 82.5 % female (compared to 65.5% in the wider programme).
- Secondly, the sample comprised 47% 8-12 year olds, (compared to 20.5% in the wider programme).

## CONFIDENTIALITY

All young people's stories shared in this report use pseudonyms.

## THANK YOU

A huge thank you to InUnity staff, partners and - most importantly - Young Brum participants and their families for taking the time to share their ideas, thoughts and experiences as part of the evaluation.



**Anousheh Haghdam, Independent evaluator**

# INTRODUCING..... YOUNG BRUM

WHAT WE DO





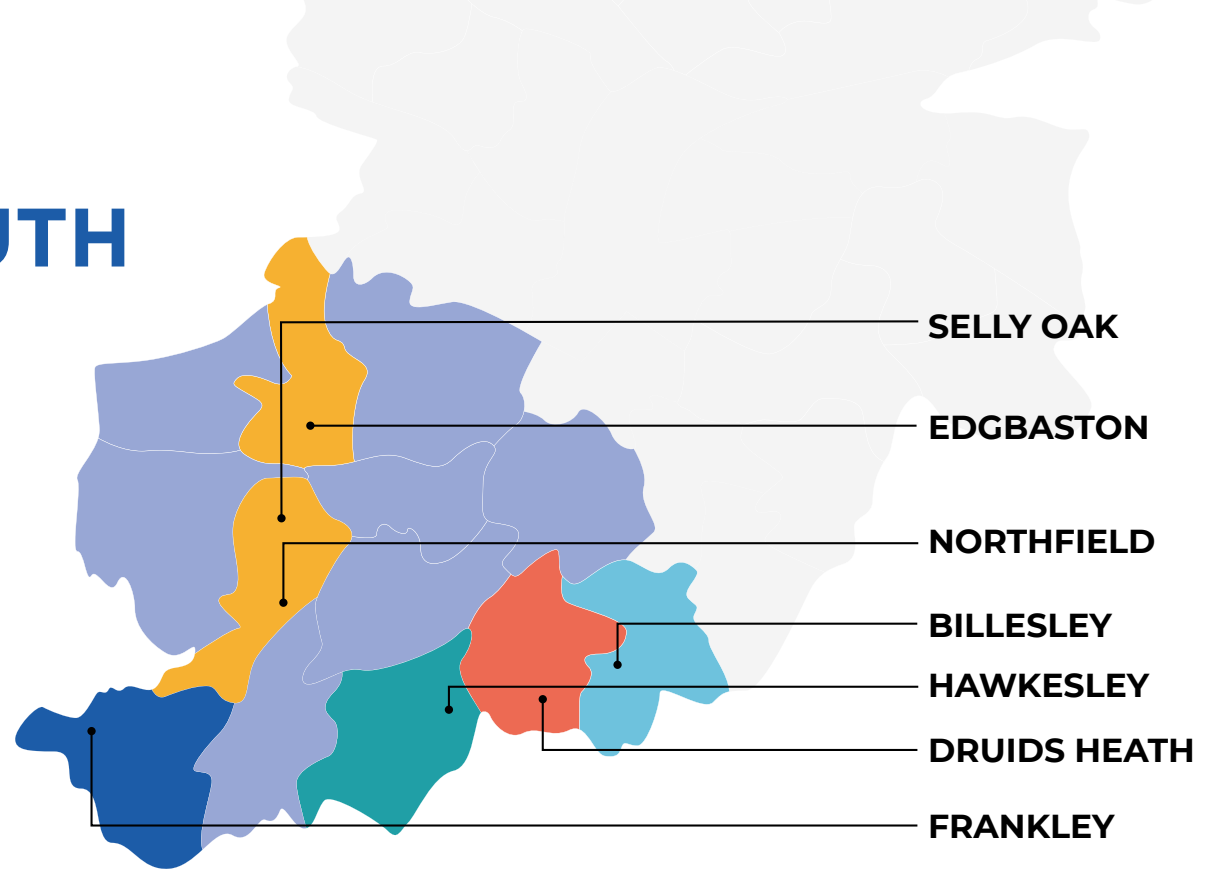
# WELCOME TO SOUTH BIRMINGHAM - HOME OF YOUNG BRUM

Birmingham is the second biggest city in the UK and the youngest major city in Europe, with 40% of its population being under 25. Birmingham has been particularly hard hit by austerity measures, with cuts of up to 70% of youth sector funding in the last 10 years.<sup>1</sup>

In response to these issues, the Young Brum project focused on areas of South Birmingham with high rates of deprivation and relatively few youth services.<sup>2</sup> Many of these areas have also been identified as areas of particular risk for serious youth violence.<sup>3</sup>

The Covid-19 pandemic had a huge impact on the areas Young Brum worked in, with increased rates of reported violence in the home, increased rates of mental health problems and bullying and declining educational engagement. Youth services were placed under enormous strain with many statutory services unable to meet young people face to face, seriously undermining existing safeguarding procedures and raising concerns about young people's vulnerability to violence and criminal exploitation. National research predicts that the pandemic will widen structural inequalities in the long-term.

This map shows where Young Brum has been working and gives some headline statistics.



<p><b>EDGBASTON, NORTHFIELD AND SELLY OAK</b> (Covid-19 support)</p> <p>Supporting some of the most vulnerable families in these areas through Covid-19 with family hampers, self-care packs and play sessions.</p>	<p><b>BILLESLEY</b></p> <p>In the top 10% of deprived areas nationally</p>	<p><b>KINGS NORTON SOUTH/HAWKESLEY</b></p> <p>In the top 10% of deprived areas nationally</p> <p>14<sup>th</sup> Highest priority area for Serious Youth Violence</p>	<p><b>DRUIDS HEATH</b></p> <p>In the top 10% of deprived areas nationally</p> <p>14<sup>th</sup> Highest priority area for Serious Youth Violence</p>	<p><b>FRANKLEY</b></p> <p>In the top 10% of deprived areas nationally</p> <p>First Highest priority area for Serious Youth Violence</p>
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# YOUNG BRUM ACTIVITIES

## PUTTING YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LEAD IS CORE TO INUNITY'S APPROACH

The activity programme was designed in response to consultations with circa 80 young people and community members across South Birmingham, revealing a lack of positive opportunities for young Brum and a lack of opportunities to learn about the issues that matter to young people. Throughout the programme, InUnity built in formal and informal opportunities to listen to the needs and desires of young people and the community.

Young Brum: a multi-stranded programme developing young people's strengths

- 1. COMMUNITY ACTIVITY PROGRAMME:** year-round, open-access opportunities for young people to connect, learn, and have fun through in-community sports, creative arts, and youth clubs.
- 2. LEARNING PROGRAMME:** workshops, training (accredited and non-accredited), short courses and 1-2-1 mentoring focusing on developing key social and emotional skills to support mental health and wellbeing, school engagement, and to boost **protective factors** against youth crime and violence.<sup>4</sup>
- 3. SOCIAL ACTION PROGRAMME:** social action and volunteering opportunities embedded throughout the programme to give young people the opportunity to use their skills, develop a sense of agency and make a difference in the communities where they live.

### THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

- **Lockdown 1** in Year 2 of Young Brum put activities (temporarily) on hold.



### CHALLENGES

- Increased costs – PPE.
- Increased staff costs (to keep 1:6 ratio).
- Keeping schools delivery consistent with disrupted attendance.
- Finding ways to respond to the massive impact of Covid-19 on every area of young people's lives.

### KEY FINDING

The need to build resilience at all levels: not just at the level of the individual person or organisation, but across systems supporting young people and their communities too.

- **Practicing organisational resilience**
- **Lockdown 1** – trialled and tested new ways of working e.g. offering youth club "in a bag".
- **Lockdowns 2 & 3** – successfully able to transition activities to a blend of online and in-person.
- **Covid-19 relief** – supporting vulnerable families across wider South Birmingham (see Happy Bags).

# COMMUNITY ACTIVITY PROGRAMME



	BILLESLEY	FRANKLEY	DRUIDS HEATH	KINGS NORTON SOUTH/ 3 ESTATES	WIDER SOUTH BIRMINGHAM
<b>YEAR 1</b> (JUL 18 - JUN 19) 	YBOT* FOOTBALL DANCE BASKETBALL	FOOTBALL BOXING BOXERCISE 			
<b>YEAR 2</b> (JUL 19 - JUN 20) 	YBOT* FOOTBALL <b>GIRLS NIGHT IN**</b> CREATE FEMALE, YOUNG & BRUMMIE	YBOT* <b>BOXERCISE</b>	YBOT* <b>DANCE</b> JUNIOR YOUTH NIGHT	YBOT* 	DANCE BOXING <b>HAPPY BAGS</b> COVID TIME CAPSULE 
<b>YEAR 3</b> (JUL 20 - JUN 21)	YBOT* FOOTBALL <b>JUNIOR YOUTH                      NIGHT**</b>	YBOT* FEMALE-ONLY BOXERCISE 	YBOT* <b>DANCE</b>	YBOT* MULTI-SPORTS <b>CREATE**</b> YOUTH CLUB	YBOT* SPORT IN A BAG CHRISTMAS HAMPERS <b>BAKE IN A BAG**</b> <b>BORN TO MOVE**</b>

\* YBoT means Young Brum on Tour, a summer holiday sports and activity programme | \*\* Activities moved online during lockdowns | EVALUATION SAMPLE



# LEARNING & SOCIAL ACTION PROGRAMME

## AD HOC COURSES AND WORKSHOPS

Bike maintenance, refugee awareness and social learning workshops at regular youth nights.



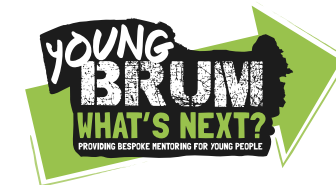
A conversation about mental health and self-care, certificated by Open College Network West Midlands.

## EMPOWERHER

Minimum 12 week female social action and wellbeing programme delivered by InUnity for UK Youth and the British Red Cross. Accredited by UK Youth.\*



A conversation about how social media makes you feel, certificated by Open College Network West Midlands.



Single gender group courses and individual mentoring for young people needing particular support around transitions into secondary school and low educational engagement.\*

## FIRST AID TRAINING

British Red Cross first aid training workshop.



## PLAN, HELP, DO...

Level 1 training in developing an activity for youth at risk, accredited by 1st4Sport.

## JOB CLUB

Workshops in CV writing and support with obtaining relevant qualifications.



A 12 week female empowerment and resilience programme, certificated by Open College Network West Midlands.\*

## SPORTS AND MENTORING

6-12 week male resilience programme, delivered by partners Raising the Level and City of Birmingham Basketball.

\* Included in evaluation sample



# YOUNG BRUM: IMPACT

# CREATING POSITIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG BRUM

High quality, open-access, free youth opportunities are limited in south Birmingham. This is also the case at the national level, with limited access to opportunities for young people living in relatively deprived areas. The importance and value of these opportunities became particularly pronounced during the pandemic, as young people with limited resources struggled with isolation, boredom and wellbeing issues.

## KEY FINDINGS

**Young Brum created high-quality, open-access opportunities for young people and their families.** This is evidenced by engagement levels, with 1,737 young people and families getting on board. Interviews with partners and parents confirmed the quality of the activities on offer.

**Positive opportunities matter to young people.** InUnity's consultations with young people highlighted that many felt that there was nothing to do where they lived. Around 50% of evaluation respondents and 60% of parents told us that one of the best things about Young Brum was having something positive to do. Getting out of the house, having a safe space to hang out, having fun, getting active, and pursuing their passions was important to them.

**Positive opportunities matter to parents and families.** Parents also told us that they really valued the positive opportunities provided by Young Brum. This was especially important during the pandemic, which placed additional pressures on all parents and particularly those in financial hardship.

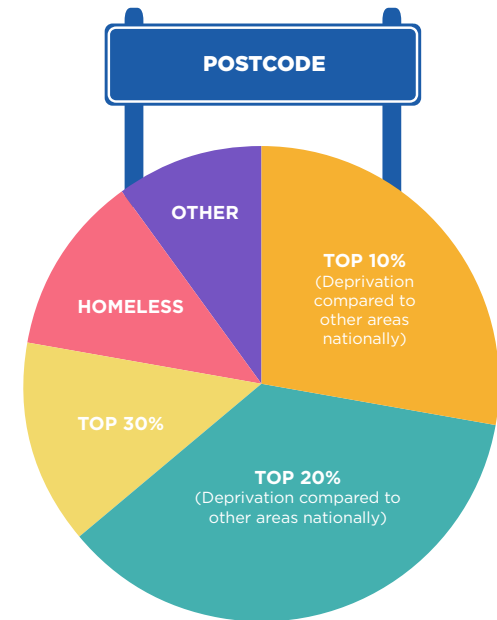
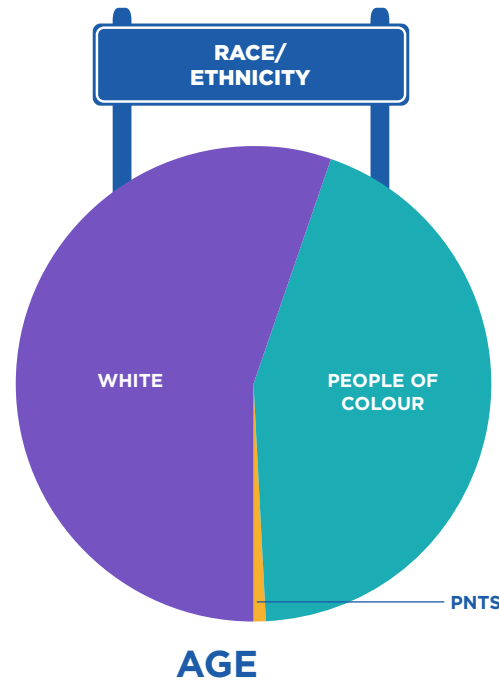
**“InUnity are providing good quality youth-led opportunities, and obviously they have a scale to them as well.”**

**PARTNER, SPORT BIRMINGHAM**





# YOUNG BRUM REACHED A DIVERSE RANGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

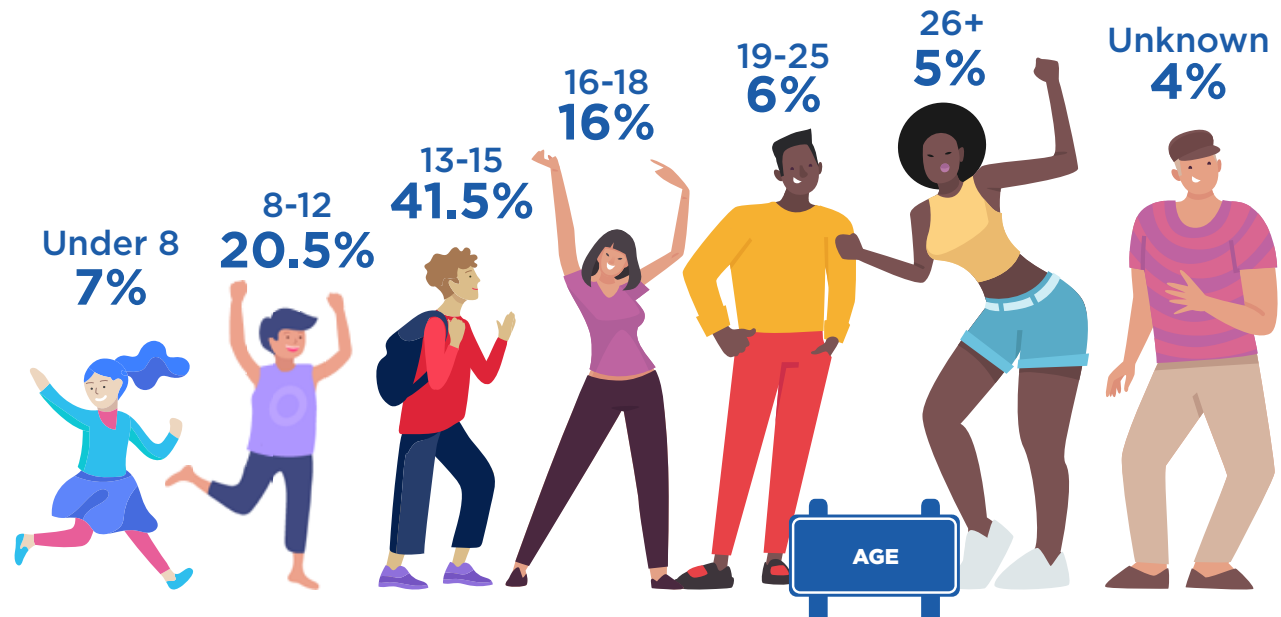


**MALE**  
34.5%

**FEMALE**  
65.5%



**SEX**



# S | T | O | R | Y

## HAPPY BAGS: SUPPORTING VULNERABLE FAMILIES THROUGH COVID-19



When Covid-19 hit in March 2020, it exacerbated existing inequalities in South Birmingham. Vulnerable families were struggling with financial hardship, poor mental health & wellbeing, social isolation, strained relationships, and a lack of access to services and resources including stimulation for children. Enter... happy bags.



### IDEA

Young women participating in the EmpowHER social action project came up with Happy Bags - self-care packages for the most vulnerable. InUnity was able to obtain funding from local Early Help teams to roll this out to families across South Brum.

**“COVID hugely impacted on us as a family as my daughter struggled with the change in routine and her mental health took a turn for the worse. The happy pack was a godsend, it enabled my daughter to focus on some different activities to ground her”.**

HAPPY PACK RECIPIENT

# GIVING YOUNG BRUM A PLACE TO BELONG

## WHY DO RELATIONSHIPS MATTER?

Young people need lots and lots of healthy relationships to thrive. Research has shown that social support is a key protective factor for mental health issues and is [core to resilience](#).<sup>5</sup> The absence of strong, healthy relationships has also been linked to some young people, for example, joining gangs. The Young Brum programme was designed to strengthen young people's peer and community networks, and provide a safe space to work through issues in key relationships - with friends, family, school and community.

## KEY FINDINGS

**Young Brum offered young people a safe space to talk and be heard.** Both survey responses and conversations with young people highlighted the importance of having a safe space to talk with a trusted adult.

**Young Brum helped young people to strengthen their relationships with peers.** One of the most common responses from young people responding to the evaluation was that Young Brum had helped them to make new friends. Participants and parents both felt that building a peer network helped them to cope with challenges and build resilience. Hope's story illustrates how this works in practice.

**Young Brum helped to strengthen family relationships.**

This was not one of the programme's original goals, but emerged as an important theme in the evaluation. This can partly be traced to some activities being offered to both young people and their families (Boxercise and Happy Packs). This made space for families to spend quality time together.

**Young Brum helped to improve young people's relationships with school and their community.**

**58%** of parents (n=34) who gave feedback said that Young Brum had helped to improve their child's relationships.

**Note:** This figure contrasts with observations from InUnity staff and partners, who identified this as one of the key impacts of the programme. This discrepancy is best understood in the context of the pandemic, which meant that we were not able to directly measure changes in young people's relationships.



**PARTICIPANT,  
FRANKLEY**

“[I came to Boxercise] for an active hobby that me and my teenage daughter could do together. I need to lose weight and get fit and I wanted to encourage her to be active and enjoy keeping fit. We love it! It's hard but we have a laugh and we can do it together which has been lovely.”

“I was excited to have a place where I was heard”

Girl, aged 12,  
Kings Norton, Three Estates

## DESTINATION > CONFIDENCE

Hope (age 9) attends Junior Youth Night in Billesley, which created space for 44 x 8-12 year olds in the third year of Young Brum. Young Brum's evaluator spoke to Hope and her Mom about their experiences with Young Brum. Our conversation highlighted how building a wider network of friends is helping Hope to manage the challenges of the transition to secondary school.

### WHAT 3 WORDS WOULD YOU USE TO DESCRIBE YOURSELF?

Hope: Friendly, funny and helpful.

### WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO COME TO YOUTH CLUB?

**Hope:** I thought it would be good to make new friends and have fun and play with my friends that already come here.

### WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

Hope: How many new friends I've made and how many games I've learned. Because on the first day I was

pretty nervous, but I kept going and going and I got more confident. If you're brave about something, you don't give up. So I was a bit nervous, but now I'm fine with talking to new people.

### HOPE'S MOM SAID:

*I wanted Hope to start at youth club because I liked the idea of her socialising with children from outside of school. Even though she has her own friends outside of school, it's nice to meet new ones. There's a few of them that she's found that are going to be going to the same secondary school as her... so there's a few that are starting there this September.*

*And that's obviously helped with her anxiety a little bit because she's just fretting about her friends from her class going to the same secondary school. So it will be nice to know that she will know some existing friends already there, which just made me thrilled.*





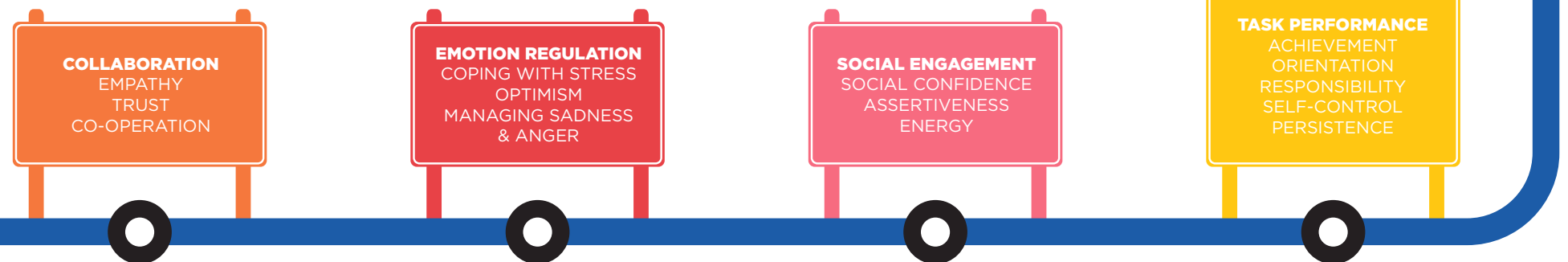
# DEVELOPING YOUNG BRUM'S SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

## KEY FINDINGS

**YOUNG PEOPLE PERCEIVED AN IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS.** More than half of young people across all strands of the programme self-reported improvements across one or more the social and emotional skill clusters above. The most significant amongst these were **emotional regulation and social engagement**.

Teachers also perceive an improvement in young people's social and emotional skills. Feedback from teachers on the Young Brum What's Next mentoring programme highlighted improvement in social and emotional skills, and how this linked to educational engagement.

The learning programme had the biggest impact on social and emotional skills. 755 young people benefitted from the Young Brum learning programme. 90.6% of respondents on the learning programme self-reported an improvement in their social and emotional skills. The more targeted programmes – She Will and Young Brum What's Next – had the biggest effects here.



Source: Office for Economic Co-Operation and Development.<sup>6</sup>

## DESTINATION > HAPPINESS

### CASE STUDY: JADE, AGED 13, FRANKLEY

Jade was referred to the Young Brum: What's Next mentoring programme by West Midlands Police. Jade's story illustrates the value of developing social and emotional skills for building healthy relationships and improving young people's subjective sense of wellbeing.

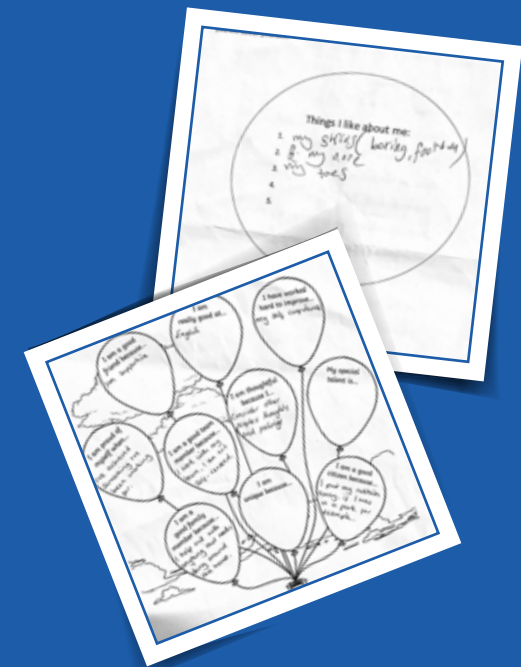
InUnity mentor Melissa worked with Jade for 5 months. Sessions focused around healthy vs unhealthy relationships, family, anger, consequences and choices, mental health and wellbeing, building resilience, building confidence, managing feelings, school, self-harm and alcohol.

Jade reported feeling angry, but not being sure why, and this was contributing to some challenging family dynamics. Melissa and Jade did some work around this, and were able to identify family relationships as a source of anger. InUnity bought Jade a punching bag for her room as a way to manage and divert anger, which by the end of the mentoring was starting to reduce stress on family relationships.

Jade reported that she had learned "how to control my emotions and anger", and that as a result "I have been much happier and I have felt more free". Jade attributed this to her relationship with Melissa: "because she listened and understood me really well".

### MELISSA SAYS:

"After working with Jade for 5 months she changed so much - she became mature, resilient, happy, ready to learn, had the same boyfriend for 4 weeks, she learnt to make better choices and her relationship with mom was getting better."



**“I have been much happier and I have felt more free”**

# HELPING YOUNG BRUM GIVE SOMETHING BACK

## SOCIAL ACTION: WHAT IS IT AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

*“Social action is about people coming together to help improve their lives and solve the problems that are important in their communities. It can include volunteering, giving money, community action or simple neighbourly acts”.*

Participating in youth social action can improve young people’s social and emotional skills, engagement in their local communities (‘active citizenship’) and wellbeing. However, young people, particularly from deprived communities, lack the opportunities and confidence to participate in social action. Young Brum addressed these barriers by embedding opportunities for social action into both its community and targeted programmes.

## KEY FINDINGS

**Young women and girls were more likely to participate in social action.** Of the 127 young people who participated in social action and volunteering, almost all were female. This is due to Young Brum offering two specific female-only social action programmes: EmpowHER (for UK Youth) and She Will.

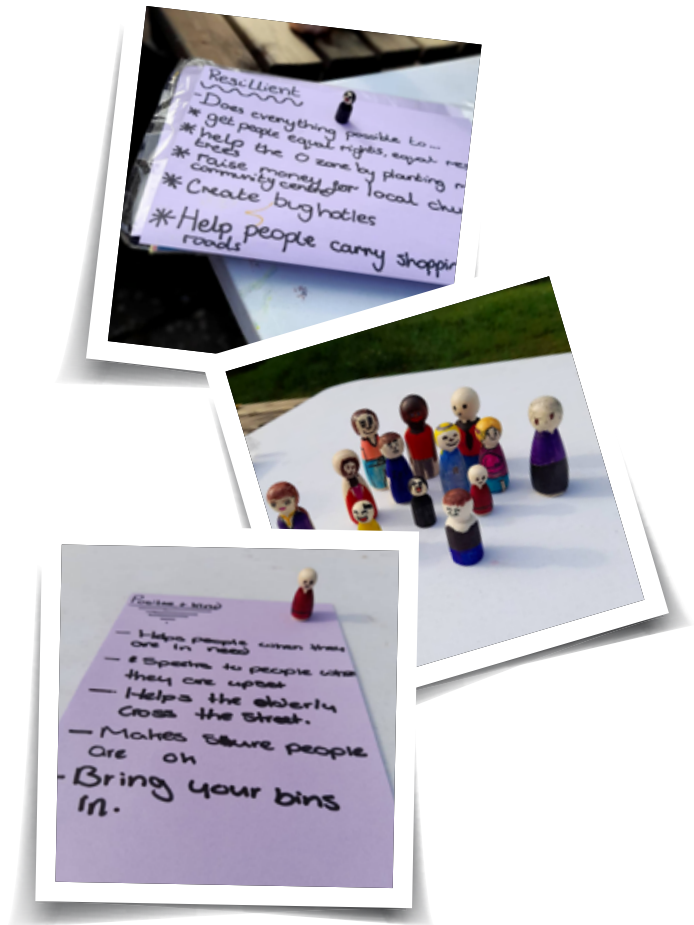
**Social action helped young people feel like that they have something to offer.** Key to the Young Brum

approach is building a sense of confidence and agency, starting with small social actions and building to something larger.

Reverend Debbie Collins, Young Brum’s community partner in Billesley, commented that:

*“Some young people will just have a story attached to them, and they carry it with them and they don’t seem to be able to change it. And I really felt that the work that InUnity do... we are able to change that narrative... working through it and beyond it, and actually achieving things that [young people] were once told that they would never achieve, or could never achieve”.*

**Social action helped young people feel like part of their community.** InUnity’s approach to social action has been to work with young people to think about their communities in an active way – for example, identifying people who are marginalised or vulnerable and in need of further support. Young women participating in social action reported that this had made them think differently about their communities. This was supported by data from the EmpowHER groups which showed improvements in participants’ sense of social trust and community cohesion.



**“I really felt that the work that InUnity do... we are able to change that narrative”**

# S | T | O | R | Y

## DESTINATION > COMMUNITY ACTION

Girls Night In was a Young Brum female youth club that ran throughout the three years. An interview with 4 of these young women revealed that whilst they initially joined for “something to do”, participation in social action, volunteering and more helped them to build confidence, experience and a sense of empowerment.

### WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

InUnity partners with Holy Cross Church.  
Shared vision of:

*“building resilience, creating confident young people who were secure in themselves, connecting with the wider community, with hopes and dreams that were being affirmed, that they could achieve”*

### BUILDING CONFIDENCE & CONNECTION

*“It gave me someone to talk to. Someone older than you, to look up to. Deep conversations, like deep deep. About mental health, family issues.”*

### SOCIAL ACTION

Introducing social action through EmpowHER.

The young people organised a litter pick, participated in a local intergenerational project, and in community fayres at Holy Cross Church.

In the final year of the programme, 9 participants volunteered on Junior Youth Night.

### BUILDING A SENSE OF EMPOWERMENT

*“the group leaves me feeling seen, heard, motivated and empowered to make change.”*

Sam, aged 17

### BUILDING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Questionnaire responses demonstrated that participants felt that:

- I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood (average score 3.3 out of 5)
- I help out in my community (average 3.4 out of 5)

### SUPPORT & TRAINING

4 complete CVs

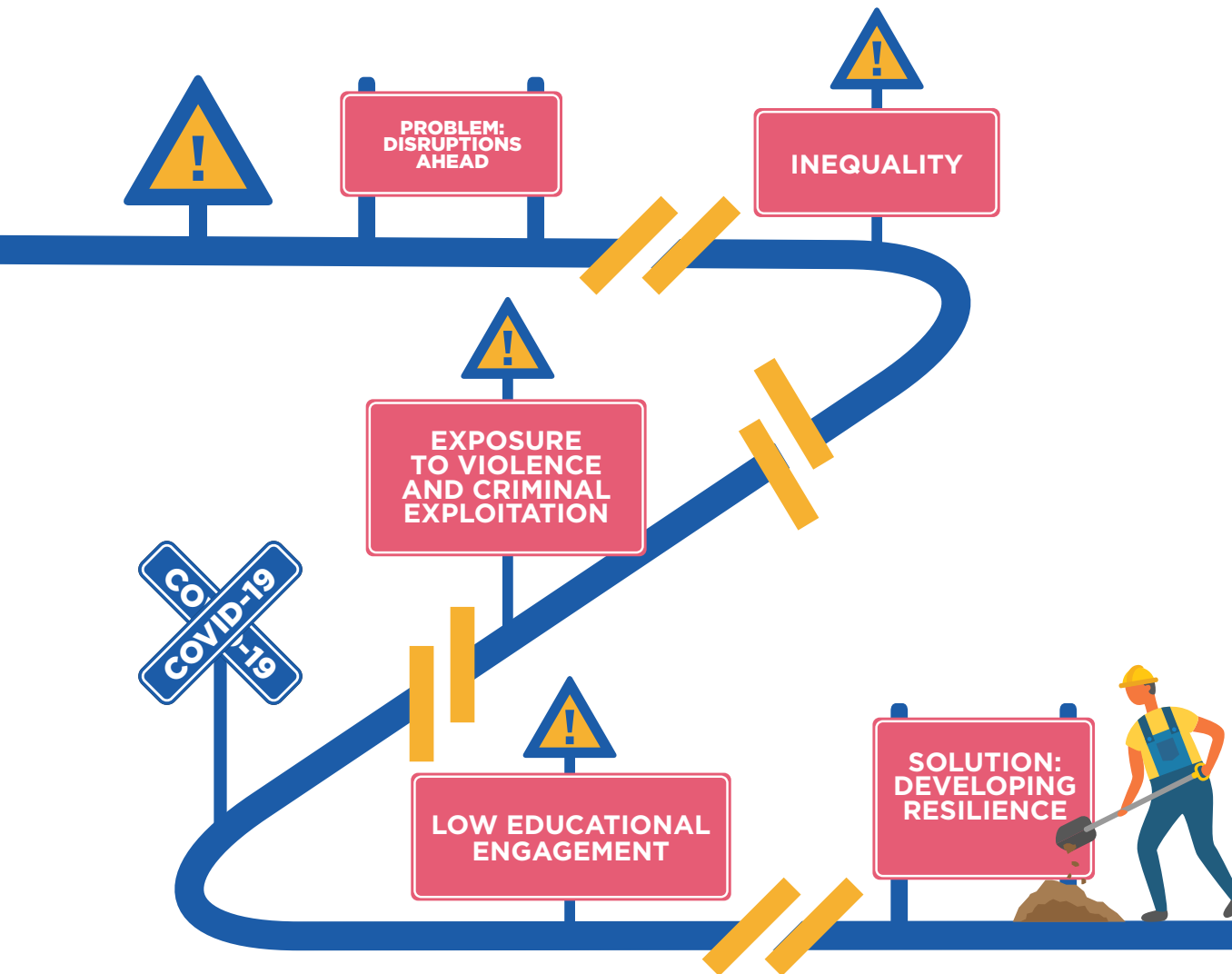
3 undertook a Level 1 qualification (Designing an Activity for Youth at Risk)

1 completed safeguarding training

4 summer holiday employment opportunities created



# IMPROVING YOUNG BRUM RESILIENCE & WELLBEING



## WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

*"In the context of exposure to significant adversity, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being, and their capacity individually and collectively to negotiate for these resources to be provided in culturally meaningful ways"*

Leading resilience expert Michael Ungar of the Resilience Research Centre

## RESILIENCE IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Resilience isn't something an individual does or doesn't have – it's an ecosystem of support. Young people's ecosystems of support collapsed in the disruption of the pandemic. Face to face youth support was drastically limited, which in turn impacted on the ability to spot safeguarding risks and engage with young people in a meaningful way.

## YOUNG BRUM CONNECTS UP YOUNG PEOPLE'S SUPPORT SYSTEMS

The Young Brum programme focuses both on improving wellbeing today and on building the resilience needed to ensure young people's wellbeing into the future. In the context of Covid-19, Young Brum acted as 'scaffolding', connecting up different elements of young people's support systems.

# THE YOUNG BRUM APPROACH

Young Brum included two bespoke learning programmes that address both educational engagement and risks to serious youth violence: She Will and Young Brum: What's Next. These programmes use informal, issue-based education around key vulnerabilities to open up conversation and help young people build alternative coping strategies and resilience. InUnity also taps into young people's long-term aspirations to set meaningful goals and support re-engagement with education.

**87% of young people in the evaluation sample reported an improvement in their resilience and/or wellbeing.**

Creating safe spaces in the community for all young people to find a sense of belonging and engage in positive activities.

## COMMUNITY-BASED

## TRAUMA-INFORMED

Recognising the role of trauma/ ACEs in 'risk' or challenging behaviours.

Working with partners to ensure that vulnerable young people are identified and referred as early as possible.

## EARLY ACTION

## BUILDING ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S STRENGTHS

Recognising that 'risk'/ challenging behaviours are a form of resilience - challenging and supporting young people to build on this capacity.

## WORKING TOGETHER

Recognising that these are complex issues that can only be addressed through partnership.

Young Brum is starting to amplify young people's voices in youth services. A key element of resilience is being able to influence the availability of opportunities and resources. In addition to its own youth-led approach, InUnity has been able to draw on its strategic partnerships to support this - for example, responding to consultations for the West Midlands VRU spending priorities.

## DESTINATION &gt; BACK IN EDUCATION

## ALEX, AGED 13, FRANKLEY

Alex's story illustrates impact of tailored support from a positive role model, as well as the importance of re-connecting a young person's support system: family, schools, statutory and community youth services.

Alex was referred into the Young Brum: What's Next programme by West Midlands Police due to his previous involvement in serious youth violence. There were also concerns about the risks of criminal exploitation due to his non-attendance at school. During the pandemic, no youth services had been able to meet with Alex face to face, and so he was receiving little support.

The approach of InUnity's delivery partner, Raising the Level, was to work face-to-face with this young man. Mentor Steve used walks and talks, football and other activities as a way to manage boredom, build routine and accountability – for example, challenging Alex to be “up and ready” for planned activities. Alex and Steve had open and honest conversations about the local

street politics, and this gave Alex space to voice his fears and concerns.

Mentoring sessions also focused around the best ways to get Alex engaging with education again. Steve undertook a joint school visit with Alex and his mother, resulting in Alex starting to visit school twice a week to build up some routine. Steve also liaised with the school about the possibility of alternative education, and by the end of the mentoring the school were able to arrange a construction placement for Alex. Recognising the need for continued positive activity, Steve has also facilitated Alex to join boxing classes hosted by InUnity as part of their Commonwealth Games project, Back on Track.

Alex's take on the sessions were that his relationship with Steve was “really good”, especially “boxing and talking”. Alex reported that he had learned to “think before I act” and commented that the sessions “really help and that”.

**Mentoring sessions also focused around the best ways to get Alex engaging with education again.**





# SPECIFIC FINDINGS - TARGETED PROGRAMMES

The next findings address a particular element of the Young Brum programme – targeted programmes aimed at young people with low educational engagement and particular vulnerabilities to violence and exploitation – the She Will and Young Brum: What’s Next programmes.

## PARTICIPANTS REPORTED IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT.

70% of respondents reported that the sessions had helped them to improve their educational engagement

- Returning after prolonged absence
- Improved attendance and/or behaviour
- Increased engagement with school or college work
- Improved attitude towards education.

*“School was boring, my attendance was rubbish. And now every Tuesday I come in. School isn’t that boring anymore, because I have more friends.”*

*She Will participant, Billesley*

## SCHOOL PARTNERS REPORTED IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT.

- Improved concentration
- Better behaviour and attendance
- Empowering young people

*“We have seen a significant impact in their confidence and the behaviours demonstrated. I think it is important to also note that some of the young people referred have multiple ACEs and there is no quick fix and the impact will be seen over time and may not be linear. The sessions are helping to support some of our most vulnerable pupils.”*

*Sean McKay, Vice Principal,  
Ark Kings Secondary*

## PARTICIPANTS HAD REDUCED RISK FACTORS IN CONNECTION WITH VIOLENCE AND CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION.

- Improved educational engagement reduces risks of engaging in violence or criminal exploitation.
- 115 young women and 88 young men also participated in issue-based education around key risks/vulnerabilities. Issues of confidence, peer relationships and safety are common between young men and women. Young men were slightly more likely to glamourise involvement in crime than young women.

InUnity’s partners prioritised tackling attitudes and perceptions towards crime whilst developing other interests such as football, basketball or boxing:

*“[The Year 7 boys group] has been a huge success, many of the young people in this boys group have become more mature and attitudes towards conflict and street crime is changing.”*

*Ark Kings Secondary*

# There is some emerging evidence of Young Brum's impact on prevention.

One of the key challenges of this work is establishing a link between reducing vulnerabilities and actually preventing exploitation or engagement in violence. This is an area for further development (see next section).

**AN INTERVIEW WITH A KEY REFERRAL PARTNER, A SCHOOL LINK OFFICER AT WEST MIDLANDS POLICE, ACKNOWLEDGED THIS CHALLENGE BUT ALSO REVEALED SOME SEEDS OF CHANGE:**

"I am sent weekly data sheets where anyone under the age of 18 has been arrested... One young person, I referred into InUnity who was subsequently allocated a mentor - Steve [Raising the Level]... I'm thrilled to say that his name hasn't cropped up again for a good month or so. And that it really positive because actually a month before that, it was every week his name was appearing and they were quite nasty, violent offenses he was getting himself involved in. And I can only put that down again to the fact that he's having this constant mentoring and support from InUnity.

Being able to offer a mentoring service, where the young person can open up and discuss issues that they would feel reticent to talk about with either, parent, teacher or myself, the Police is invaluable.

I have referred roughly ten young people to InUnity, and received anecdotal feedback from the schools that their behaviour has improved. This coupled with the fact that these young people are not re-appearing on my data sheets is testament to InUnity and their staff."

**PC Matt Shakespeare  
Schools & Young Person Link Officer  
West Midlands Police**



# GROWING & DEVELOPING IN UNITY

# DEVELOPING ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE

The 3-year core funding provided to InUnity by The National Lottery reaching Communities Fund (through InUnity's partner ACN) has been transformative for InUnity. This has allowed InUnity to develop significant organisational resilience – in a context where almost 20% of youth organisations face permanent closure due to Covid-19.

## COURAGE AND CREATIVITY:

Early in the pandemic, InUnity took the decision not to close completely, but to keep trying to support young people throughout the pandemic. The first lockdown offered a chance to experiment with new ways of working - particularly the 'in a bag' model and the mentoring programme. This period of learning has helped InUnity to weather the storm of Covid-19 and keep supporting some of the city's most vulnerable young people.

## DIVERSIFYING FUNDRAISING:

Having core funding in place has allowed InUnity to attract significant match funding from a range of partners - this has been particularly important as Covid-19 has significantly increased operational costs. Attracting funding from diverse partners has allowed Young Brum to keep growing both in scope and ambition across South Birmingham.

## GROWING CAPACITY:

The team is InUnity's biggest, proudest asset. Against a sectoral backdrop of redundancies and reduction of hours, InUnity continued to invest in growing its capacity, through investing in its staff team and delivery partnerships. The delivery team - almost all of whom are local to South Birmingham - bring a diverse range of specialisms and lived experience to the work. InUnity has also offered paid work to 6 young people as session leaders throughout the programme.

## STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE:

InUnity has grown and diversified its board of trustees, further expanding collective skills and capacities. InUnity are also working to recruit a new trustee from the local community, ensuring that community voices are heard at all levels of governance.

## BUILDING A REGIONAL AND NATIONAL PROFILE:

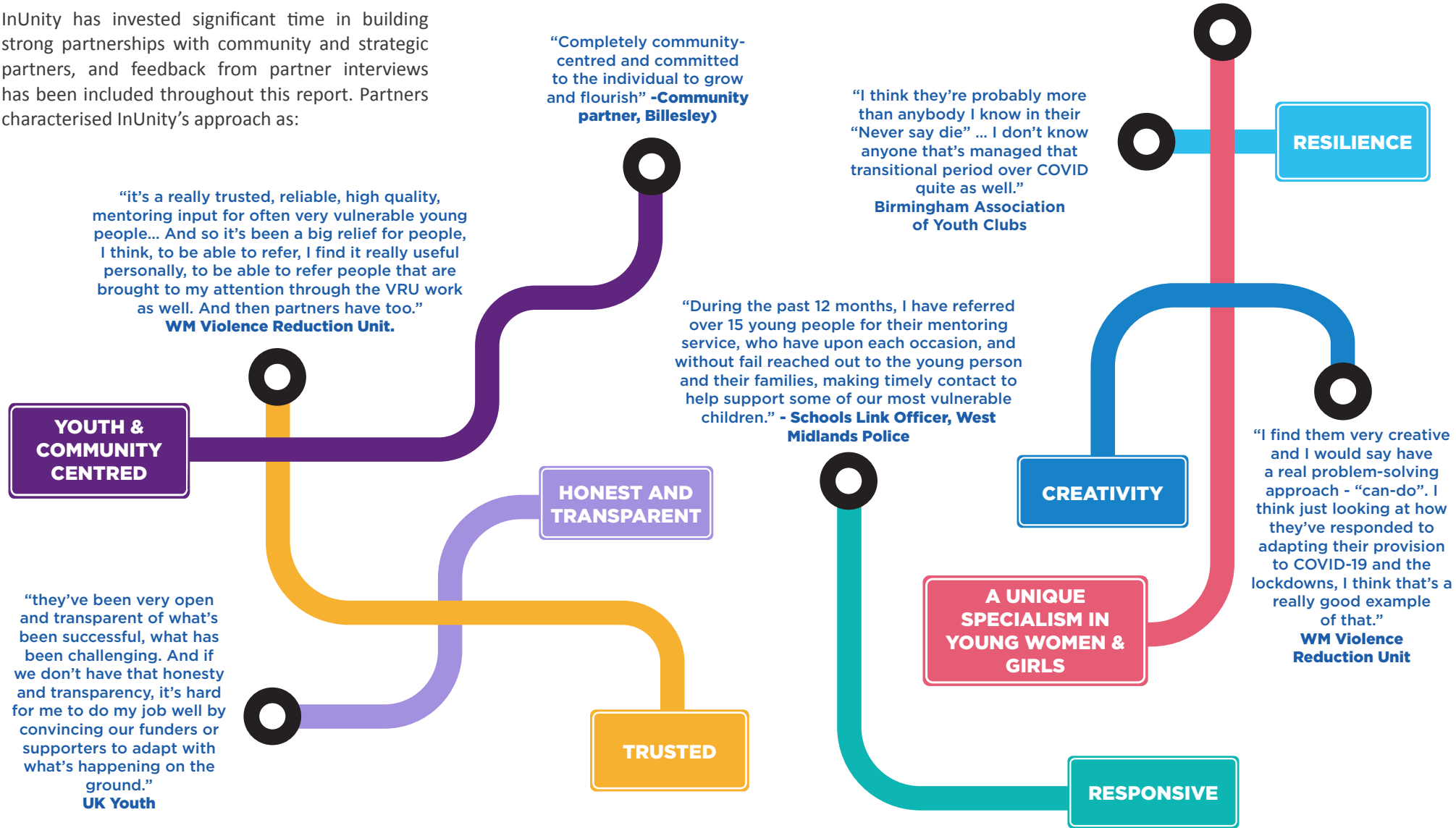
InUnity is increasingly being recognised for its work with young women and girls. Founder Hannah Brooman received an award for Entrepreneurial Spirit in the needs of girls and young women at the inaugural [Sport Gives Back](#) awards. InUnity has also participated in research on reducing risks of young women and girls to serious youth violence and exploitation conducted by the University of Loughborough.<sup>8</sup>





# WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

InUnity has invested significant time in building strong partnerships with community and strategic partners, and feedback from partner interviews has been included throughout this report. Partners characterised InUnity's approach as:



# LEARNING AND NEXT STEPS

Interviews with partners and the InUnity team also offered opportunities for further learning and development, which InUnity has embedded into its organisational development going forward.

## SHARING THE BIG PICTURE

### LEARNING

Interviews with partners revealed the need to show how the Young Brum fits together and the role of partners in the work as a whole.

### NEXT STOPS FOR INUNITY

InUnity has developed an organisation-wide theory of change, commissioned this impact report, and invested in its website in response to this feedback.

### WHAT WE NEED TO GET THERE

Further resource into growing the brand through marketing, social media presence & developing wider networks.

## INCREASING CAPACITY TO FACILITATE EARLIER ACTION

### LEARNING

The mentoring programme in particular revealed the impact of Covid-19 and the massive ongoing need for mentoring and small group support. Due to this need, young people were often referred once matters had become urgent - meaning that they needed more intensive and longer support.

### NEXT STOPS FOR INUNITY

InUnity are working on securing further funding, based on the evidence collated, to develop a mentoring programme.

### WHAT WE NEED TO GET THERE

Mentoring is resource heavy, but also needs a staff team with the right skills set.

Significant funding is needed to invest in a robust, trusted mentoring programme that will include bespoke training for future mentors & developing the next generation of workers.

## LEARNING AND NEXT STEPS... (CONTINUED)

### THE NEED TO WORK LONGER TERM

#### LEARNING

Discussions with our school partners reflected that when young people have multiple adverse childhood experiences, progress is complex and not linear. This underscores the need to support targeted interventions with longer-term community support for young people.

#### NEXT STEPS FOR INUNITY

InUnity have demonstrated our impact in some schools and have been funded / commissioned by some from their own budgets to return to support teaching staff. InUnity will work with existing partners to advocate for this approach, whilst continuing to build the evidence base.

#### WHAT WE NEED TO GET THERE

We need the buy-in from senior management teams in schools, that they understand the value & benefit that InUnity can bring to their school community. This relationship building takes time but we are starting to get there with 3 local high schools. InUnity must collate the evidence & in partnership with these schools, share the good practice and learnings.

### BUILDING A CONNECTION TO THE WIDER CITY

#### LEARNING

Many young people in South Birmingham do not feel connected to the wider city - a fact which is exacerbated by the negative perceptions of the city and public transport.

#### NEXT STEPS FOR INUNITY

InUnity's Children In Need funded project, Back on Track, will address this issue using the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham in 2022 as an opportunity to build pride in, and connection to, the city.

#### WHAT WE NEED TO GET THERE

We must not lose the identity of south Birmingham. The demographics of the south are very different to other areas of the city, but InUnity must continue to provide further platforms of opportunity for young Brummies living in the south to have their views and voices heard across the city.

## LEARNING AND NEXT STEPS... (CONTINUED)

### INCLUDING FAMILIES

#### LEARNING

Strong and supportive family relationships are a key factor to building resilience in young people. Incorporating work with families, particularly in targeted activity, is therefore crucial.

#### NEXT STEPS FOR INUNITY

This sort of work has been key to the mentoring element of the programme, and has also been embedded in other elements of the programme e.g. celebration events, family-centred social action and at home activities. InUnity will continue to consider how to embed this in all future programming.

#### WHAT WE NEED TO GET THERE

Our network of partners and stakeholders needs to grow to accommodate this needed area of work.

InUnity will need to look at the staff team to ensure we have a work-force that can support this new area of work.

### THE NEED FOR SYSTEMIC RESILIENCE

#### LEARNING

The pandemic has revealed a lack of systemic resilience in the youth sector. The lack of face to face contact from statutory services has been of particular concern, raising a number of safeguarding issues in the short term.

#### NEXT STEPS FOR INUNITY

InUnity's work during the pandemic has illustrated its ability to act as a connector in young people's ecosystems of support, and more broadly the role of community-based organisations play in developing systemic resilience.

There is more work to do here, particularly in terms of developing communication between partners on young people's progress and sharing best practice around support.

InUnity will work towards a 'south Birmingham youth partnership' -bringing together like-minded organisations to build capacity, share resources and good practice to create a more sustainable, coherent offer for young people.

#### WHAT WE NEED TO GET THERE

Need to ensure the right partners (who are like-minded and share our ethos) are sat around the table with us to develop a local youth partnership. The right partners will help us influence statutory services, of which are so crucial and fundamental to young people's ability to develop their resilience.

## And finally... Sam's journey really encapsulates what Young Brum is all about

# S | T | O | R | Y

## DESTINATION > RESILIENCE

When I was 11, I started experiencing mental illness - due to childhood trauma. **I had always felt alone**. I never actually believed people care or would help, until I met InUnity at an I aMH aware session at my school. They encouraged me to attend one of their girls' groups.

I hardly used to get out of the house before, but one day a week **I had a safe place to be myself**. I would leave girls' group sessions feeling less lonely, isolated or judged. The group made me feel empowered to do my best, and it generally helped in the recovery of my mental health. **I felt seen, heard, motivated and empowered to make change**

Recently, I've had a few struggles maintaining my mental health. In December 2020, I nearly lost my life. It made me realise that I have hope and reason to carry on fighting. If I have made it so far in my life, **why give up?**

Throughout my hospital admissions, InUnity have supported my family and me in various ways e.g. provided a game box for my younger brothers, and really gave me hope to carry on. I've always felt no one was really caring for me, so having weekly mentoring sessions with Melissa or Mandy really benefited me throughout lockdown.

InUnity staff have made sure I was always well enough and don't let it get to that bad stage again. I've become so much **more confident** with talking about what I experienced as a young child, and **it's given me so much more resilience**.

I've always been the kind of person that's helped out, but having **opportunities to help others has really supported my mental health**. InUnity has given me those opportunities. I want to work with children, and volunteering at Junior Youth Club and Bake in a Bag on a Monday night is something I'm really proud of. It keeps me busy and distracted, and gives me a reason to be

happy, because I'm making an impact with these children - not on their whole life, but just playing and doing activities. InUnity also supported me to get my NSPCC safeguarding certificate.

I've also created my own project, sending letters of support to people struggling with their mental health in the pandemic - just to let them know they are not alone. **If I can make someone smile, then that makes me feel better.**





nice cool funny kind joyful empathetic kind quiet confident helpful  
independence dunno ugly underweight skinny cool funny rude helpful kind  
talkative, loud crazy shy moody kind intelligent helpful kind caring sweet  
sensitive nervous shy funny kind determined kind nice helpful quiet  
thoughtful thinker quiet funny nice friendly shy kind funny intelligent crazy weird  
creepy energetic annoying smart quiet shy weird confident loud talented loud  
confident funny determination kind listens confident funny friend confident  
nice spectacular loud quiet crazy adventurous helpful kind funny friendly  
funny energetic famous happy safe nice loving caring amazing  
cool fantastic kind loving caring funny weird kind helpful crazy chonky  
funny smiley clever energetic funny crazy stubborn moody happy confident  
happy funny determined committed family-orientated active lowkey  
friendly helpful funny helpful kind energetic sporty ugly nice unique amazing  
kind funny caring unique amazing funny amazing bubbly  
intelligent funny helpful tall helpful annoying kind loving caring small kind  
caring funny focused athletic funny weird small funny antisocial funny  
cheeky hyper chatty friendly loud funny loud crazy stylish attitude funny  
honest self-conscious emotional funny clumsy moody self-conscious talkative  
shy energetic bubbly fun confident hungry nice kind respectful  
ontime loud confident respectful funny loud confident arty intelligent  
consistent fun artistic consistent kind funny happy funny mean ice big  
kind caring friendly fun  
annoying quirky great  
weird pretty unique

## HOW YOUNG BRUM DESCRIBE THEMSELVES

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# A BIG THANK YOU!

