

Amplify Communities (Sony Justice Fund 2021)

External Evaluation Report

Outcomes and learning from the programme, January 2022



Avenues Crew and Isatta, Summer 2021

Headlines

- Amplify Communities built on YUAF's strong track record by offering an exciting and varied programme of online and in-person creative drop-ins and courses for young people during Spring-Summer 2021. 93 unique young people, aged 13-19, from under-represented communities took part (51 male, 41 female, 1 non-binary).
- 100% of respondents reported high overall satisfaction with their Amplify Communities experience and would recommend courses to their friends.
- 86 young people (YP) participated in 17 online Thrive and Connect advanced courses and drop-ins (over 90 individual sessions) in Rap, Poetry, Drama, Singing/Songwriting and World of Hip Hop during Spring 2021. 28 young people regularly attended sessions each week. Advanced courses that YP had to book onto were particularly well attended, and provided a focused space for creative and personal development.
- During Summer 2021, YUAF successfully piloted Level Up: a new intensive artist development course for YP working towards a career in the music industry. 23 unique YP (14 male, 9 female) took part in five weekly sessions with YUAF delivery team and Sony artists. Sessions took place on the YUAF Outreach Media Bus in three different neighbourhoods of London. YP remained highly engaged, enjoyed the course and left sessions feeling elevated, inspired, and positive.
- The community drop-in element of the summer programme was poorly attended, pointing to the need to further develop planning and partnerships in future outreach work. Those YP that did attend enjoyed the sessions.
- 2021 saw the Pathways Service develop its role of supporting YP from under-represented communities into creative opportunities. 37 YP received intensive support from the Pathways Coordinator, and hundreds received regular inboxed opportunities. The service worked particularly well for YP with less acute need, who were ready to take their next steps towards creative careers.
- Taking part in Thrive and Connect or Level Up led to wellbeing outcomes for over 80% of respondents. These outcomes included improved mood, happiness levels, self esteem, self belief and optimism about the future. Around 70% of YP receiving Pathways Service support reported improved wellbeing by the time they exited the service.
- Around 90% of YP who attended Thrive and Connect courses and all Level Up participants grew in confidence and skills to support their employability as a result of taking part. Around 70% of Pathways Service users grew in confidence.
- The majority of YP who took part in Level Up learned something about Black Music History. The online Black History element remained fairly unrealized due to low attendance.
- Taking part in Level Up or advanced online courses and masterclasses boosted almost all young people's motivation and aspiration. Level Up in particular led to YP feeling inspired and ready to take their next steps towards an industry career, with over half stepping directly into further opportunities after the programme.

- Support from the Pathways Service led to around 90% of participants accessing further creative industries opportunities (including YUAF programmes).
- An important additional outcome for the majority of service users proved to be increased networks and a sense of being part of a creative community.
- Key enabling mechanisms for positive outcomes for YP (alongside their own motivation and commitment) included YUAF's positive 'family' vibe, the passionate and supportive facilitators, support staff and artists, and the sense of safety and care generated within courses.
- The experienced and skilled YUAF delivery team was particularly welcoming of, and adept at, adapting to diverse personalities, skill sets, levels of experience and aspirations. The course content and technical tools on offer to YP proved to be relevant, inspiring, and engaging throughout.
- YP were especially motivated by listening to, learning from, and receiving encouragement and attention from the Sony guest artists and professionals, many of whom started their careers from similar backgrounds to themselves.
- YP felt seen, appreciated, responded to, and found they had space to finally be themselves and to express themselves freely during creative courses. They particularly enjoyed and benefited from the growing sense of trust, respect and mutual support developed amongst peers as structured courses progressed.
- YUAF is growing particularly adept at structuring planned courses to enable YP to grow at their own pace, step more deeply into their personal and creative identities and develop the confidence and self esteem necessary to express themselves creatively in front of others.
- YUAF was committed to participatory monitoring, evaluating and learning throughout the programme, and set out to involve all stakeholders in reflecting on programme quality and effectiveness.

Recommendations:

1. Continue to work on developing more powerful marketing stories related to progression and outcomes for YP who take part in online drop-ins and courses.
2. Work with the Youth Advisory Board to consult with service users during project planning – including on marketing strategy for online course / masterclasses, plus timings for courses and drop-ins.
3. Further explore and develop relationships with local agencies and multi-agency partnerships in order to reach out to and engage with more of the 'hardest-to-reach' YP.
4. Develop foundational work on 'Identity' with YP across the output of the organisation.
5. Continue to manage the fundraising strategy and business planning so as to be able to meet to plan summer programmes earlier and start the selection process earlier for intensive Level Up style courses.

6. Continue to explore the potential for offering smaller artist development courses - in a variety of formats, course lengths and artistic areas - as progression from YUAF online courses, drop ins, Awesome Coaching and Futures.
7. Continue to liaise with Sony/Universal and recruit other industry partners to provide Masterclasses and industry insights for YP from artists and existing professionals.
8. Conduct ongoing relationship-building work with targeted neighbourhood partners and their service users prior to project delivery and ongoing, so as to better understand local challenges, needs and opportunities, and augment existing provision.
9. Develop the processes for referring the hardest to reach young people to Pathways from courses, and for referring on to external mental health / other specialist services.
10. Explore and discuss (including with service users with lived experience) how YUAF can better monitor engagement by YP with disabilities and learning disabilities, and generate strategies for their increased inclusion in creative courses and opportunities.

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Section 1: Introduction and Context

The Sony Justice Programme

Young Urban Arts Foundation (YUAF) kindly received funding from the Sony Social Justice Fund in 2021 to develop 'Amplify Communities': a programme of out-of-school activities in under-served communities in London.

The original programme plan involved building on 2020's vibrant 'Educate to Create' Outreach Media Bus project. In 2021, YUAF planned to offer 60-80 young people (YP) weekly after-school opportunities in music education, production and song-writing. Due to ongoing pandemic uncertainty and the early 2021 lockdown, YUAF adapted the initial Amplify Communities plan.

Phase 1 (April-July 2021) involved building on the 2020 online Thrive and Connect programme, which itself responded to conversations with young people who expressed that their mental health was suffering as a result of lockdown. The team decided to incorporate online workshops into the Spring 2021 programme due to their positive impacts for confidence, self-esteem and enthusiasm. With many YP living in homes of deprivation, digital activities offered a way to feel connected and express feelings and emotions in artistic and creative ways, and without the barrier of travel expenses.

A Doctored Sound (a registered charity focused on increasing awareness of Black History and exploring black cultures and heritage across a range of genres) course was added to the Phase 1 programme, to enable YP to explore the history of Black Music. A series of Masterclasses with Sony artists and professionals was also added to the programme, to allow YP to gain further insight and knowledge into the creative industries.

Phase 2, delivered Summer 2021 (August-September), consisted of Outreach Media Bus activities in three local areas of London. 'Level Up' was designed to be an intensive artist development course, providing an in-depth 6-week programme of weekly training and mentoring for selected YP who had demonstrated ongoing commitment to developing employment pathways into the creative industries. A more informal weekly drop-in, open to all YP in local areas, and designed to bring new YP to YUAF's work, was also offered earlier each day.

Equipped with state-of-the-art music production facilities, Outreach Media Bus activities are facilitated by established, relevant artists who have achieved a level of excellence in their art-form, and who come from similar backgrounds to the YP, in order to support YP to gain aspirations, skills, well-being and resilience. The partnership with Doctored Sound led to including Level Up modules on African cultural awareness, the history of hip hop and the history of Black women in the music industry.

The Pathways Service

The Pathways Service was initially proposed in late 2020 with the aim of working directly with individual young people to identify their goals and aspirations through assessments and personal

development plans and then helping them overcome challenges and obstacles to moving forward. This work was developed in 2021, with support from Sony. Two part time Pathways Coordinators joined the team to work with young aspiring artists taking Amplify Communities courses who required extra support as they developed personally and creatively, and explored options to get into the industry.

The context and safeguarding YP during the pandemic

The context for this work was the ongoing impact of the pandemic for young people, many of whom were already experiencing challenges in their lives due to poverty and discrimination. Young people had reported how social distancing measures, school closures and postponed exams had heightened existing anxiety and emotional difficulties. With face-to-face projects having to stop, many young people the organisations knew became isolated and at risk. Many YP also reported worrying about what their future holds, and how the pandemic may impact on their future education or employment opportunities.

As one of the only small youth organisations in London delivering face-to-face engagement, The YUAF management team continued to be vigilant and agile in order to adapt to ongoing uncertainty. Online Engagement courses were offered as a contingency to continue engagement with YP should further restrictions or more lockdowns be recommended. The success of the courses had been tested since May 2020. New policies, procedures, risk assessments and protocols were developed and implemented across the charity to ensure the safety of all YP, staff and stakeholders in both the online and face-to-face setting.

Programme aims and objectives

Output targets:

- 60 - 80 young people from underserved communities engage in online and/or summer Outreach Media Bus activities.
- Deliver three in-person “Level Up” artist development courses to 24 YP from 3 different areas, plus drop-ins for 13-19s earlier the same day in each area.
- Identify aspirations and needs of YP and provide Pathways support where required.
- Deliver a range of online digital and creative courses.
- Deliver a series of Q&As with Sony artists and industry professionals.

Outcome targets:

All activities shared the following outcomes targets. Young people will:

- 1) Experience improved wellbeing.
- 2) Develop confidence and transferable creative / technical / professional skills that improve their employability.
- 3) Gain awareness around Black History
- 4) Have more access to opportunities into Pathways

The Pathways Service – aims and objectives

The initial aim was for each Pathways Coordinator (PC) to work with a new cohort of 10 YP every six weeks, with a varied level of one-to-one support and group opportunities provided, depending on each individual’s needs and aspirations.

The key Pathways Service outcome areas (with the key indicators used to evidence them) were as follows:

- 1. Young people will experience improved wellbeing**
 - Longer periods of happiness
 - Increased positivity about the future
 - Increased clarity about next steps
 - Increased sense of togetherness/community
- 2. Young people will gain confidence**
 - Increased confidence reported and/or observed
 - More comfortable expressing themselves creatively
- 3. Young people will gain more access to opportunities into pathways.**
 - More aware of opportunities
 - More able to apply for opportunities
 - Access further opportunities by Pathways Service exit date.

Section 2: Programme Outputs

Beneficiaries (user data)

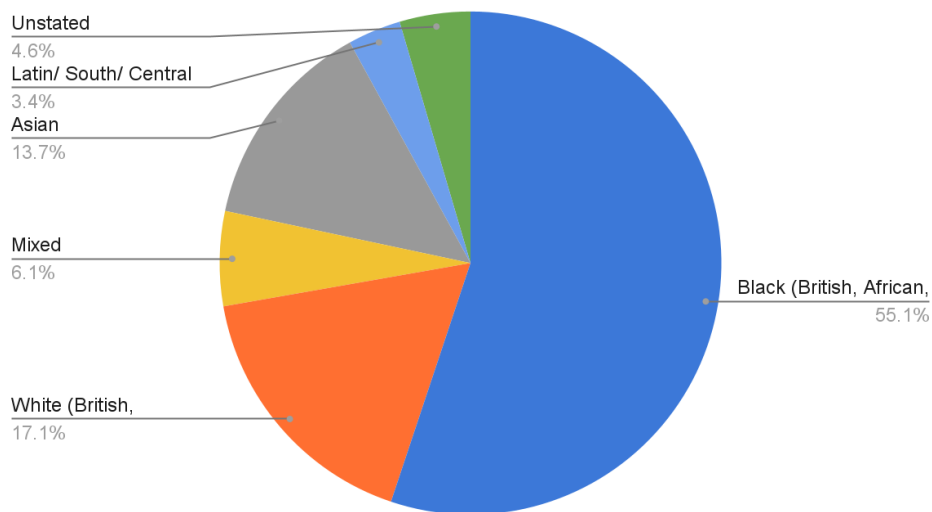
Table 1: Summary of service users and pathways for Phase 1 and Phase 2

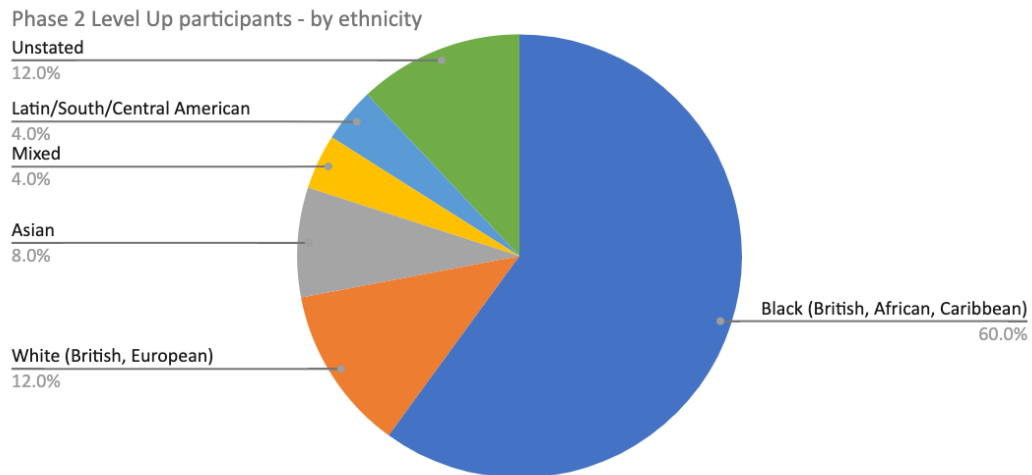
	No. unique users	No. users returning	No. new users	No. of users took >1 course	No. regular attendees *	Total attendance	No. users progressing post-course
PHASE 1 April-May June-July	47	29	18	26	21	232	37
	39	24	15	22	14	170	38
PHASE 2	64	14	50	n/a	20 (Level Up)		
Totals:	150	67	83	48	96	416	

* 'Regulars' are defined here as having attended at least 3 sessions of one course.

Ethnicities of service users

Phase 1 Level Up participants - by ethnicity



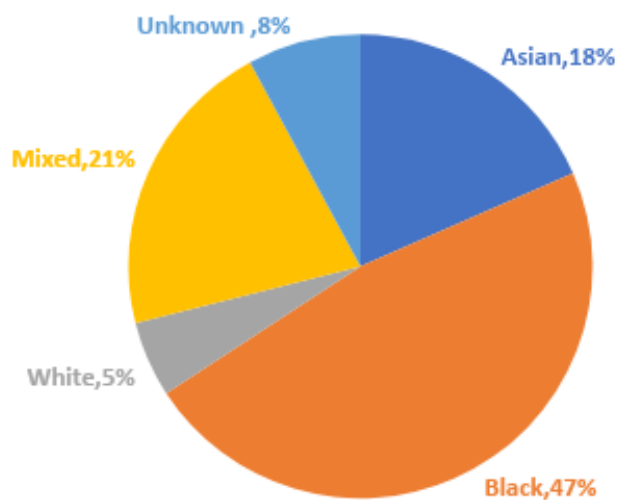


Identifying the needs and aspirations of Young People

Needs and aspirations were centred in the following ways during both phases of the programme:

- Online registration forms gathered information about YP's support needs, issues and relative abilities, so that YUAF LICs could alert Pathways Coordinators and support the most vulnerable YP or those lacking confidence, language skills, or with learning disabilities or neuro-diversities to access online courses and content, plus the Level Up course.
- End-of-session online debrief forms, plus whole-team and in-person, end-of-phase debrief sessions enabled all delivery staff to cross reference ongoing support needs, aspirations, and potential pathways beyond the programme for each individual young person, based on close observations during sessions.

Diagram 8: Ethnicities of Pathways caseload YP, Y1



Delivery and engagement

Phase 1:

YUAF delivered 9 x weekly online courses for 5 weeks across April and May 2021. This was followed by a second series of 8 x weekly courses across June and July 2021. Each course was led by a creative facilitator and supported by a YUAF Leader in Charge (LIC). Attendance varied by course, ranging from a total attendance of 59 all the way down to 4, and the number of unique users taking part in each course ranged from 19 to 2. Attendance was consistently higher at advanced courses than drop-ins, at courses starting later in the evening, and during the earlier series of courses which took place whilst intensive Covid19 restrictions were still in place.

Additionally, four evening Masterclasses for YP were delivered in partnership with Sony professionals and artists. Participants were targeted through outreach projects, existing courses and via the YUAF Pathways service. YP were invited to perform their material at Friday evening online open mics during Phase 1.

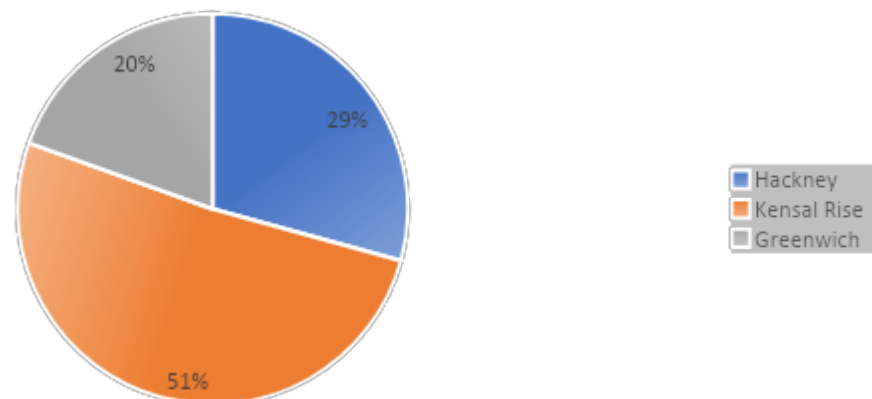
Phase 2:

Phase 2 planning began in Spring 2021. The Summer programme took place on the outreach media bus. It included the Level Up programme, a 5-week intensive course for 8 young artists each in three areas of London, led by YUAF facilitators Shauna, Joel, Isatta Sheriff from Doctored Sound, with support from YUAF LICs and Pathways Coordinator, and input from Sony artists from week 3. Level UP Attendance and engagement was high and consistent, particularly in Greenwich and Hackney, with occasional absences due to illness and Covid isolation. When it became clear that some young people from the Kensal Rise (Avenues) area were not going to attend due to a competing opportunity, efforts were made to fill their places.

The summer programme also included community drop-in sessions in the same local areas, earlier the same day as each weekly Level Up session. The community drop-in sessions ran well Avenues (Kensal Rise). Attendance was poor at Hackney and Greenwich, despite good Level Up attendance in these areas and a strong YUAF online marketing campaign beforehand. The timing clash between late afternoon youth clubs and Level Up sessions prevented some local young people from attending the Greenwich drop-in, which was unknown at the time of coordinating the program.

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No. of Media Bus Community Drop in participants by location, Summer 2021



The Pathways Service – delivery and engagement (Phase 1 and Phase 2)

YP were referred to the Pathways Service from Sony courses (via debriefs and feedback from LICs/facilitators) and via the online signup process.

The Pathways Service delivered 300 one-to-one support calls/zooms or WhatsApp check-ins with YP, plus many more regular extra WhatsApp chats with YP not on the caseload.

Around 200 YP received notification of at least 294 unique opportunities via the YUAF Pathways WhatsApp Status between February and December 2021. Opportunities were varied, ranging from YUAF's Futures and Level Up programmes, to BBC Tech mentoring, partner organisation training courses, workshops and Masterclasses, casting calls, festivals, the Halle's Launchpad, music workshops, free tickets to concerts, industry academies e.g. Sony Music's A&R Academy etc.

Section 3: Programme outcomes for service users

“There is so much depth to our young people - we just need to sit back and listen.” LIC, survey, September 2021

3.1 Young people’s overall experience and satisfaction – a summary of the evidence

Phase 1:

- 100% of all respondents reported a positive overall experience of taking part in online courses and all reported several positive outcomes from having taken part.
- 100% of all respondents said they would recommend YUAF courses to their friends.
- 84% of 63 respondents reported their overall experience of Thrive and Connect courses as 5/5. A further 14% gave their overall experience a score of 4/5.
- 65% of 63 respondents said YUAF completely reached its goal with delivering the course, and 33% said YUAF mostly reached its goal.
- 86% of 22 respondents reported feeling fully safe to express themselves during the course they took part in during June/July 2021. 9% felt safe to some extent, and 5% or 1 YP reported feeling shy as it was their first time attending.

Phase 2:

- 93% or 13 out of 14 of all Level Up respondents (14 provided feedback out of 23 total unique participants) said they definitely enjoyed the course. 7% or 1 YP enjoyed it to some extent.
- 86% of Level Up respondents gave the course a top rating of 5/5 overall, 7% gave it 4/5 and 7% gave it 3/5.
- 100% of 5 drop-in respondents gave the drop-in a top rating of 5/5 and 80% gave activities a 5/5. 20% gave activities a rating of 4/5. All young respondents listed something they found interesting during the sessions and there was no negative feedback about the sessions.
- 100% of drop-in respondents said they would definitely come again.

3.2 Improved wellbeing for young people – a summary of the evidence

Phase 1

- 91% of 22 respondents agreed that they felt happier overall as a result of taking part in a Thrive and Connect online course in June/July 2021.
- Taking mood gauges (0-5) at the start and end of sessions showed that sessions led to improved / continued high mood for all participants in the following courses: Poetry drop in June/July, Rap Advanced in June/July, Singing/Songwriting Advanced in June/July, Singing/Songwriting Drop in in June/July 2021.
- 88% of 41 respondents agreed that they felt more optimistic about their life as a result of taking part in a Thrive and Connect online creative course in April/May 2021.
- 97% of 63 respondents agreed that they have more belief in what they can achieve as a result of taking part in a Thrive and Connect online creative course in Phase 1.

LIC observation during Poetry drop in at 7pm, June/July 2021:

“At the start of the session NE said they already felt better by being here. They have said in previous sessions how writing really helps them.” “When Zikko asked everyone how they were when they came back from the breakout room BG, who had been in a room with MO, said

'Amazing.' Their energy had lifted from when the session first began. BO also said they felt much better at the end of session. DK felt good because they learned about poetic device."

Open ended feedback about post-course wellbeing and happiness from respondents who attended 15-20 sessions of several courses during Phase 1 included:

"I feel better and more positive :) It makes me feel better when I am stressful." Age 18, Rap, Poetry, Singing/Songwriting

"The atmosphere was so welcoming and the feedback was so helpful. The accommodators were so kind and I felt so safe and I thoroughly enjoyed the sessions. I felt safe in sharing my work and have grown in confidence and joy." Age 16, Poetry

Feedback about post-course wellbeing and happiness from respondents who attended all the sessions from one course in Phase 1 included:

"Great, it was a great way to make me feel brighter if I was down." Age 20, Poetry

"The session was flowing, we were flowing with words and rhymes, the love was flowing."
Poetry, June 2021

In particular YP experiencing difficulties in their lives provided feedback that taking part in expressive artforms, and having a space where it felt safe to express where they were emotionally, helped to support their mental health and wellbeing:

"I feel calmer than before." Age 17, Poetry, May 2021

"Haven't been feeling that great today but the session has improved my mood." NE,
Singing/Songwriting Advanced

Phase 2:

- 100% of 14 respondents agreed that taking part in the Level Up programme in July/August definitely (93%) or to some extent (7%) made them feel good. Various YP reported feeling elevated, excited, inspired, positive, buzzing and grateful at the end of sessions.
- 100% of 14 respondents agreed that they got to definitely (79%) or to some extent (21%) express their authentic voice during Level Up sessions.
- All 5 drop-in respondents said they enjoyed the session they attended.

3.3 Young people developing confidence and transferable creative / technical / professional skills that improve their employability

Phase 1:

- 95% of 63 respondents agreed that they have new skills and knowledge as a result of taking part in a Thrive and Connect online creative course (online surveys).
- All 3 respondents picked up some new creative skills from attending a Sony Masterclass.
- All respondents learned some useful things about getting into the industry through attending a Sony Masterclass, including CV dos and don'ts and what A&R work comprises.
- 89% of 63 respondents agreed that they felt more confident to express themselves as a result of taking part in a Thrive and Connect online creative course.
- Staff observations indicate that every course led to growing confidence amongst participants and progression in terms of skills amongst those who repeatedly attended.
- 100% of YUAF delivery team respondents strongly agreed that taking part led to most YP feeling more confident (2021 surveys).

- All respondents felt more confident and motivated to some extent as a result of attending a Sony Masterclass.
- As well as growing confidence in their technical and creative skills, YP were observed to be overcoming their initial shyness, and developing confidence in their personal and professional identity as a result of feeling increasingly safe and expressing themselves during the courses.

"The session has been very inspiring. I'm now going to go and develop that story." JR, Singing /Songwriting, July 2021

"I am taking away the confidence I gained during these sessions, and that it's ok to be outside your comfort zone and try something new!" MD Drama May 2021

LIC observation, Drama Advanced, June/July 2021:

"Some great shares, MR and JA who are returning participants, have grown a lot in terms of their confidence when sharing and creating characters." "They are working together to direct each other and seem confident doing so; they give good peer to peer feedback. A group of confident young creatives."

Phase 2:

- 100% of 14 respondents agreed that taking part in the Level Up programme in July/August 2021 definitely (93%) or to some extent (7%) helped them to develop their creative production skills.
- 100% of Level Up respondents gave examples of new skills they had picked up during the course – these included: marketing, technical production skills, writing songs, freestyling and branding.
- All 5 drop-in respondents said they had learned something during the session, including Logic Pro X and word play (for younger participants).
- 100% of 14 respondents agreed that taking part in the Level Up programme in July/August 2021 definitely (79%) or to some extent (21%) helped them to develop their marketing skills.
- 100% of 14 Level Up respondents agreed that they took away useful information about getting into the industry through taking part.
- YP taking part in Level Up were strongly encouraged to be committed, punctual and respectful, deepening their level of professionalism.

"The process of creating our own tracks was challenging but I saw it as a learning curve. This is because I was able to identify the kinds of sounds I like to use for producing and learnt how to speed up workflow off the back of it. I have learnt that I need to identify "my scene" to be able to market my music to a particular audience, allowing me to know where to place my music." YP (M, 18, Kensal Rise), survey August 2021

"Everything that was unprepared or on the spot really and truly: but that's a good thing because uncomfortability equals growth!" YP (M, 18, Hackney), survey August 2021

"I've rediscovered what I really want to write about through understanding my identity." YP (F, 18, Hackney), survey August 2021

3.4 Young people's growing awareness around Black History in relation to music

10 YP in total attended the World of Hip hop course in Phase 1; however the course was cancelled due to low attendance in later weeks, with little outcome data collected with regards YP learning about Black history and music.

Feedback from a Pathways Service beneficiary during their exit interview suggests that the course made an impact on some participants nonetheless:

“The World of Hip Hop was amazing. It taught me how to flow properly and rap on beat, and the different styles. I learned a lot from those sessions!”

In Phase 2, YP responded well to the session on Black History with Doctored Sound during Level Up:

- 93% of 14 respondents agreed that taking part in the Level Up programme in July/August definitely (64%) or to some extent (29%) helped them learn about Black history in music.

3.5 Outcome 4: Improved aspirations and opportunities into Pathways for young people

Phase 1:

Aspirations:

- All 41 respondents agreed that they felt motivated to build on their experience of a June/July Thrive and Connect online creative course by the end of the course.
- All respondents felt to some extent more motivated as a result of attending a Sony Masterclass.
- 93% of 41 respondents agreed that they felt more able to speak up knowing their voice will be heard as a result of taking part in a Thrive and Connect online creative course in April/May 2021.
- 100% of YUAF delivery team respondents agreed that taking part in courses boosted most YP’s aspirations.

Opportunities:

- Two out of three Masterclass respondents signed up for further opportunities as a result of attending a Masterclass.
- 86% of 22 respondents agreed that they are part of a creative network as a result of taking part in a Thrive and Connect online creative course in June/July 2021.
- 11 young people who attended Thrive and Connect courses were referred and accepted into the Phase 2 Level Up Workshops
- 30 female and 7 male YP entered further opportunities

Phase 2:

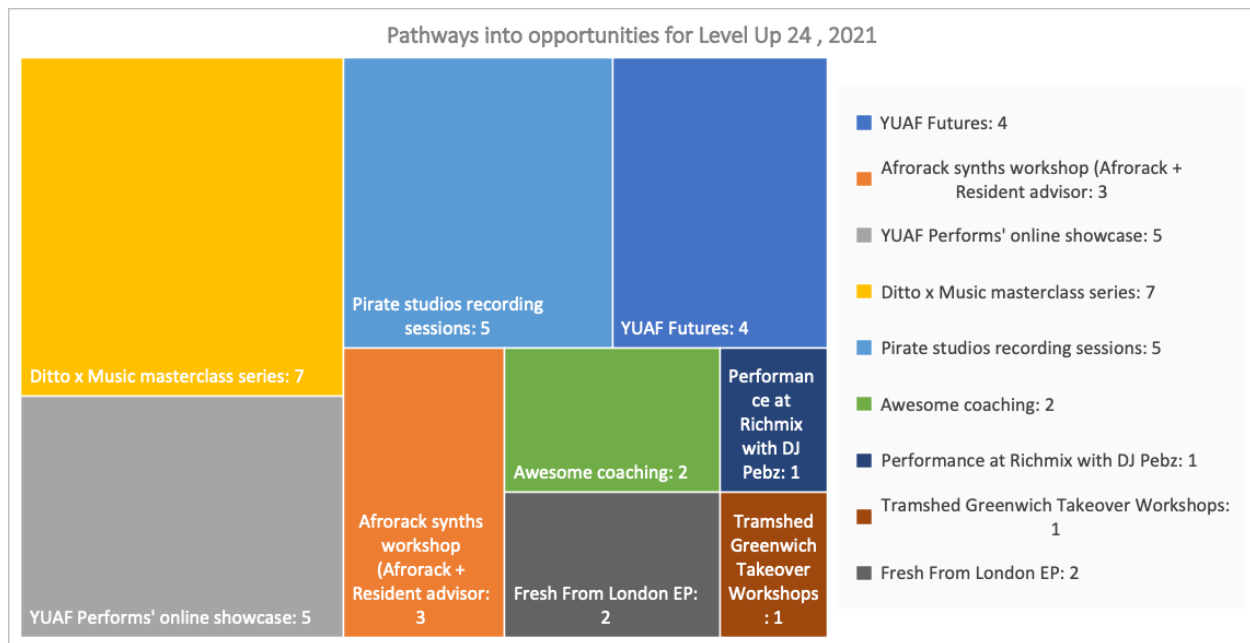
Aspirations:

- 100% of 14 respondents agreed that they felt inspired and ready to take their next steps after taking part in the Level Up programme in July/August.
- 100% of Level Up respondents provided details of what they wanted to do in the future, inspired by the course. Aspirations included: taking their musical career further, being involved in youth projects, recording an EP, album or mixtape, getting a record label, expressing themselves more authentically and collaborating with other artists.

“I would like to be a performing artist. I think this course has helped me to understand what I stand for as an artist and let me know that I don’t have to hide parts of my identity. It’s inspired me to make moves and put some music out there!” YP (F, 18, Hackney), survey August 2021

Opportunities:

- The Pathways Coordinator followed up on the next steps of all 25 YP who signed up for Level UP, after the course: 13 out of 23 active users progressed into one or more pathways:



Case Study 1: Enzo

16-year-old Enzo found YUAF online and was drawn to the courses as they were aimed at his age group and were free. He took Rap, Singing/Songwriting and Poetry courses during Phase 1, as he was seeking the opportunities and knowledge within the industry and was hoping to try something new and learn from the courses, especially Rap. At the point of joining he felt anxious and fragile as his emotions were more temperamental during the lockdown, and he sometimes lacked confidence due to his stammer.

Enzo found it easier to take the courses online than if they had been face-to-face - due to his personal anxiety, and being based in a different area to YUAF. He found the energy of the Facilitators amazing and loved how they made things easy. In Drama he enjoyed the warm-ups, free talk and group work learning from each other and on the Rap course the lyrical work: learning how to do a beat count and be creative with words. He found Singing/songwriting the most inspiring and felt empowered by performing in front of the group individually: "It was great to show off my beginner skills!"

Enzo felt grateful for meeting other talents – both students and teachers, and learning from others' experiences, and he's still in touch with the other participants beyond the course. He described his new songwriting skills, and the ability to understand the messages behind the text in poems. Learning to write his own poetry allowed Enzo to understand other poets- which in turn helped him with his English exam. Meanwhile, learning the Stanislavski Method helped with a piece for his GCSE Drama. Receiving support from the Pathways service provided Enzo with access to so many new opportunities to look into, which he really appreciates.

"I have gained so much confidence. I don't think I would have performed a solo in a group and I did so. I am moving closer to my goals. I will be busy with more opportunities and will be in the next cohort for YUAF Futures [a coaching programme]."

3.6 Outcomes for YP who experienced the Pathways Service support service

1. Young people will experience improved wellbeing

69% of the full Pathways caseload experienced improved wellbeing. Of those who completed:

- 83% YP experienced improved happiness levels
- 75% YP felt more positive about the future
- 88% were clearer about their direction and next steps
- 86% felt more part of a creative community

2. Young people will gain confidence

71% of the full Pathways caseload gained in confidence. Of those who completed:

- 88% YP reported their self-confidence had grown
- 96% reported increased creative skills

3. Young people will gain more access to opportunities into pathways.

90% of the full Pathways caseload accessed further opportunities by the time they exited. Of those who completed:

- 100% YP knew more about what opportunities were available to them
- 88% were clearer about their direction and next steps
- 83% reported improved communication and transferable work skills

“I wasn't very educated on where to find out where opportunities were available - but Pathways has been eye-opening and helped me see what's out there.” S, exit chat with web graph, November 2021

3.7 Additional outcome: building networks and a sense of community

Working collaboratively on creative projects and supporting one another's expressions, especially when they came from the heart, helped many regular attendees develop social skills and a deeper sense of connection. For example, the April/May advanced Drama group became friends through working together, and set up their own WhatsApp group and project.

- 90% agreed they had made some new connections as a result of taking part in a Thrive and Connect course in April / May 2021.
- 90% agreed they felt more socially confident as a result of taking part in a Thrive and Connect course in April / May 2021.
- 86% agreed that they felt part of a creative network as a result of taking part in a Thrive and Connect online creative course in June/July 2021.
- 86% of Pathways Service caseload YP who completed pre/post intervention web graphs felt more a part of a creative community by the time they exited the service. 100% of Phase 1 caseload YP felt more part of a creative community.

3.8 Outcomes for YUAF delivery team and Sony staff

- 80% of YUAF delivery team respondents agreed that their professional skills had developed during Phase 1. 75% of YUAF team respondents agreed their professional skills had developed during the summer programme.
- 100% of Sony artists/professionals said they have learned about YP as a result of taking part in YUAF Masterclasses.

75% of Sony artists/professionals said they grew on a personal level as a result of taking part in YUAF Masterclasses, and 50% said they grew on a professional level.

25% said they had learned new things about their industry as a result of taking part, and 50% said it led to them having some new ideas for urban arts.

Case study 2: MMN

MMN is an 18-year-old black male from North London. MMN took the Level Up artist development course in Kensal Rise in West London, as a result of his involvement with YUAF's Open Mic nights and the Pathways Service. Over the 5 weeks of Level Up workshops he tells us he met loads of people and tried lots of new things.

As a result of taking part in Level Up he feels he has taken the next steps on his journey as an artist and knows what to do next and how he can do it. His highlights included observing Mister Lees produce five different beats of different genres over a couple of hours in the small bus space – which provided him with the insight that he had no excuse to not get going with his own. He was inspired by the way artists used particular instruments and techniques, and feels inspired to go away and put his own spin on these new ideas.

“Next I want to be collaborating with different music artists to try and develop myself in that respect, and I want to develop a clearer plan of what I want to release as a producer. In terms of creating music I knew exactly what I wanted to do and exactly what I wanted to get out of it. Now it's about releasing my music, and being smart about doing that, and not just putting stuff out there with no plan.”

Section 4: Learning from the Sony Justice Project

The following sections list learning points in relation to the strengths and challenges of the programme that emerged from the data. It also presents some recommendations for further discussion and development.

Phase 1 – Thrive and Connect online, Spring 2021

Strengths

- The YUAF team built on a strong track record delivering high quality online courses during lockdown. Facilitators adapted session structure to meet varying levels of attendance and ability.
- Advanced courses were well structured: engaging with the varied creative tasks – whether solo, collaborating in small breakout groups or as one group – helped YP to develop their expression and skill. YP were provided the opportunity to ask questions around their interests. Having a focused space over several weeks enabled YP to deepen their relationships, confidence and skills.
- Having YUAF LICs within sessions helped create a warm, respectful space and helped meet needs and any issues (making use of breakout rooms as needed). LICs and Facilitators worked together well to support creative engagement and personal development amongst YP.
- Working with the enthusiastic Sony artists and professionals to deliver industry Masterclasses to YP proved to be successful in inspiring YP. The Masterclasses worked particularly well as final sessions within advanced courses. YP were able to ask questions related to their own creative work and progression. They learned about getting into the industry, picked up new creative skills, and felt motivated and confident through attending.

“The experience of working with young people was great! They were very passionate, asked interesting questions and were engaging. I feel proud of being able to make a positive difference in the lives of young people, especially young people of colour.” Sync & Licensing Executive, Sony Music Publishing.

- 75% of YP respondents provided open-ended responses about what helped them feel safe and included during June/July online courses. Their answers included:
 - Caring, friendly and supportive facilitators and LICs – mentioned most by participants.
 - A positive, supportive, comfortable and non-judgemental overall vibe (Poetry).
 - Feeling encouraged to express themselves freely.
 - Being encouraged to be their unique selves.
 - Being supported to share work and being asked for consent to do so.
 - Having their questions answered.
- The following ingredients emerged from the data as helping YP to cultivate confidence and skills:
 - The safe and encouraging atmosphere cultivated by delivery staff helped YP to step out of comfort zones and try new things; even leading sessions.
 - Feeling seen and heard through having a safe space to share their thoughts, feelings, experiences and their creative work to a positive and receptive audience.
 - YP’s own engagement and commitment to their creative development.
 - The growing sense of familiarity and respect between YP within ongoing /advanced groups (including prior relationships established during earlier courses) helped YP to feel safe and comfortable and progress creatively.

- o Emotional support from peers when YP felt a lack of confidence or became emotional.
 - o Receiving appreciation and positive peer-to-peer feedback about their creative expression and growing skills.
 - o Receiving positive feedback and detailed constructive criticism from course facilitators.
 - o Being able to track their own creative progress and have the opportunity to self-critique and share around this.
- The held feeling of advanced courses in particular led to YP deepening into exploring much more personal themes.
 - Safeguarding issues were immediately reported via session debrief forms, safeguarding forms and by contacting senior staff.

Challenges

- Converting signups to attendances: attendance in general and consistent attendance by regular participants were both much lower in drop ins than planned/booked courses. Project coordinators subsequently discussed how YUAF could generate a clearer story within its social media marketing of the benefits of progression from drop-in to advance into masterclasses.
- 5pm sessions were more poorly attended than later sessions, whether drop-ins or intermediate courses. Attendance dropped off during the June/July 2021 sessions – perhaps as lockdown ended and the weather improved.
- Nearly half of Sony A&R Masterclass sign-ups didn't attend. Project coordinators responded by discussing ways to make the description clearer within social media marketing – so YP understood what was on offer in relation to learning inside knowledge directly from industry figures.
- Engagement dropped off in the World of Hip Hop course, despite additional text and social media marketing, leading to this programme to eventually be cancelled after week 5 out of 10. YP within the course experienced language barriers, time management issues and the group changed weekly – leading to mixed levels within the ongoing group.

Recommendation 1:

Continue to work on developing more powerful marketing stories related to progression and outcomes for YP who take part in online drop-ins and courses.

Recommendation 2:

Work with the Youth Advisory Board to consult with service users during project planning – including on marketing strategy for online course / masterclasses, plus timings for courses and drop-ins.

Recommendation 3:

Further explore and develop relationships with local agencies and multi-agency partnerships in order to reach out to and engage with more of the 'hardest-to-reach' YP.

Phase 2: The Level Up Programme, Summer 2021

Strengths of the programme

The Level Up programme successfully built on YUAF's growing expertise in delivering intensive courses at a more advanced level for young artists, with 23/25 YP regularly engaging in four hours of structured learning and development weekly with skilled YUAF facilitators, and guest artists from Sony. YP and the staff team identified the following ingredients as key to producing great outcomes for YP during Level Up:

- Level Up provided a focused space within which committed YP who were ready to learn could go deeper than was possible within a drop-in setting.
- Planning a full course for a consistent group of learners enabled the flow of the course structure to be maximised to build YP's confidence over time.
- The knowledge areas and technical tools presented during Level Up were highly relevant to the YP and their lives and creative interests.
- The varied expertise of the delivery team and content met the needs of YP who joined with diverse skill sets, levels of experience and objectives for joining.
- The facilitators created a safe, held space which welcomed YP as they were and in which their authentic expression was welcome.
- The commitment and accessibility of the Sony guest artists was important to the success of the Level Up course. Receiving encouraging feedback and specific advice in terms of shaping lyrics, production and how to promote their music from established artists proved to be highly motivating and confidence boosting for the participants. Asking for and receiving follow-backs showed YP that the distance between themselves and successful artists wasn't so wide.

"No one knew I could rap and so it was good to hear everyone in the crowd cheering [concert at school - performing 2Pac's "Keep Your Head Up"]. I never would have performed before meeting Joy Crooks during Level Up, she gave me some really good advice, and said that she believes in me. That and the workshops was massive motivation for me. Pushed me to take my passion for music more seriously. Be more Intuitive. Cherish the gift I've been given." YP, Pathways exit chat, 2021

- The session on identity proved to be the first time many YP explored their identity and experienced an opportunity for deeper self-work and ultimately to grow their self-awareness. They learned about their strengths and capabilities which boosted their self-esteem. This session laid the foundations for YP's authentic expression and confidence to develop, and helped them to create meaningful lyrics.

"It was a highlight to see the YP get so philosophical and dig deep into who they were and they wrote some very profound stuff. Their feedback session that day had a lot of tender moments." Level Up facilitator, debrief notes, September 2021

- YP experienced 'the YUAF family' vibe as positive, passionate, empathic and caring, and thrived within it during the course. The facilitators had space and time to get to know each YP, and their sticking points, individually, and provided continual enthusiastic appreciation for their progress. Meanwhile any needs and specific issues were seen/heard and met with understanding and support.
- The YUAF team included members who had themselves been YP supported by the programme, which proved to be inspiring.

- Being together creating in a face-to-face space after lockdown isolation and online relating helped YP regain their social confidence.
- YP found themselves ‘put on the spot’ in the live group setting – helping them realise that their creative output was good enough, as opposed to over-focusing on ‘getting it right’.
- Level Up was well planned and well managed. 100% of the team respondents said everything they needed to support their role was in place during the summer programme.

Challenges

- Level Up attendance was lower in Kensal Rise with just five YP forming the core group. Youth workers from the Avenues took two YP off the bus to participate in another recording activity in the youth club and they didn’t return to later sessions – perhaps due to miscommunication between YUAF and the Avenues team about expectations around the Level Up programme. This is an ongoing challenge sector-wide when working with youth partners which we are mitigating by developing more robust partnership agreements.
- The skills, capabilities and levels of self-awareness and of level Up participants varied wildly at entry, despite the labour-intensive application and vetting process. This detracted from the course flow at times when less experienced participants needed extra support.

Recommendation 4:

Develop foundational work on ‘Identity’ with YP across the output of the organisation.

Recommendation 5:

Continue to manage the fundraising strategy and business planning so as to be able to meet to plan summer programmes earlier and start the selection process earlier for intensive Level Up style courses.

Recommendation 6:

Continue to explore the potential for offering smaller artist development courses - in a variety of formats, course lengths and artistic areas - as progression from YUAF online courses, drop ins, Awesome Coaching and Futures.

“What the [Level Up] certificate means to me is improvement, and identity. This course has made me realise what I really want to write about and what I should write about, and a lot about marketing and putting myself out there and taking any opportunity. I recommend this course to any young artist who wants to put themselves out there and get more confident.” Kemi, Hackney video testimonial, 2021

The community drop-in sessions – what worked and what didn’t

- The community drop-in sessions ran well when the community partner was well engaged and brought along YP to participate, as at Avenues (Kensal Rise).
- Low attendance at Hackney and Greenwich due to timing issues and clashes, and issues within partnership expectations and agreements with local centres.
- Outreach work in the local Greenwich area by YUAF team members helped generate attendance the following week, however this engagement remained inconsistent.
- Getting registration details for drop-ins proved difficult due to casual and brief attendance.

Recommendation 7:

Continue to liaise with Sony/Universal and recruit other industry partners to provide Masterclasses and industry insights for YP from artists and existing professionals.

Recommendation 8:

Conduct ongoing relationship-building work with targeted neighbourhood partners and their service users prior to project delivery and ongoing, so as to better understand local challenges, needs and opportunities, and augment existing provision. Make clearer agreements with partners around mutual expectations for future projects.

The Pathways Service

- The Pathways Service worked well in parallel to Thrive and Connect and Level Up courses, to boost the confidence and meet support needs arising for YP. The formula of regular supportive one-to-one check-ins, receiving opportunities via WhatsApp and direct referrals to YUAF and industry partners' opportunities and the ensuing experiences was a winning one. The extra support with accessing opportunities also proved to be instrumental – e.g. CV, research skills, brainstorming, support with applications.
- The Pathways team worked closely with industry partners and charities to ensure ongoing support and new destinations were accessible to YP, wherever possible. YP appreciated how tailored the service and opportunities were to their specific interests.
- The Service worked with both YP who were ready for growth but in need of a confidence boost plus support with finding suitable opportunities (greens), as well as YP who required more in-depth support to overcome obstacles due to difficult life challenges (ambers and reds). The Pathways Service formula worked more effectively with greens - who tended to achieve more outcomes in all three areas. Many red/ambers did access further opportunities, though most disengaged before formally exiting.
- Challenges included case/role overwhelm for one of the PCs, when the other left part way through the year. As a result the initial 6-week structure of Pathways intervention became more diffuse for many YP, depending on their relative level of need.

Recommendation 9:

Develop the processes for referring the hardest to reach young people to Pathways from courses, and for referring them on to external mental health and other more specialist services.

Recommendation 10:

Explore and discuss (including with service users with lived experience) how YUAF can better monitor engagement by YP with disabilities and learning disabilities, and generate strategies for their increased inclusion in creative courses and opportunities.

Case Study 3: DP

DP is a 17-year-old black male from London, in his final year of college. The Pathways Service contacted DP in early Spring 2021 as he had indicated that he needed support to move forward when registering for a Rap course. DP wished to improve his work ethic and take steps towards developing a satisfying creative career. DP said he used to overthink things a lot and that his confidence was quite low

before joining YUAF: “I wanted to start rapping years ago, but my lack of confidence stopped me.” DP also struggled to make new friends due to low confidence.

The PC kept in touch with DP via five fortnightly WhatsApp check-ins, and provided opportunities posted via status updates in the WhatsApp Business Chat group. Through Pathways DP was referred to YUAF Futures. DP went on to producing at home, making use of an Ableton licence that YUAF provided, and building on the learning with Joss during YUAF Futures. DP then enrolled onto Level Up in August 2021.

DP also found YUAF’s World of Hip Hop course very useful: “That was amazing, it taught me how to flow properly and rap on beat, and the different styles. I learned a lot from those sessions.”

The opportunities that DP took up at YUAF’s Open Mic Night, Ditto Masterclasses, Tramshed, Breaking Convention and Soapbox shaped his experiences and outlook on what he wanted to do. DP was excited to realise how far he’d come whilst completing his exit web graph particularly in terms of his confidence: “I am amazed at how far I have come since taking that leap to join the online session... with communication, confidence in my abilities, and I am even able to self-reflect now on my work and remind myself of my growth; which is helpful for me to stay focused and have a positive mindset.”

DP’s general happiness increased through becoming part of a creative community and his increased social skills and confidence. He also felt 100% more optimistic about the future.

“I only wanted to become an animator and didn’t think much about anything else, until now. I now know that working in music and drawing can be achieved and I am positive about what’s next.

APPENDIX

1. Evaluation Methodology

YUAF contracted A5cend Ltd, an independent consultancy, to work alongside the YUAF Programme Coordinators to design an evaluation strategy for the programme. The strategy included monitoring and evaluation data collection by both A5cend and the YUAF team with a variety of stakeholders, including service users. Y1 of the YUAF Pathways Service was evaluated separately (internal annual evaluation), and key findings were added to this Sony report. This report is the culmination of both evaluation processes, and is based on an analysis of the following data sources:

Table 8: Summary of evidence collected for the Amplify Communities evaluation:

Stakeholder type	Data collection method	Theme / content of enquiry	Number of respondents
Programme Coordinators	Research conversation	Programme management and delivery	2
Pathways Coordinator	Research conversations	Pathways management and delivery	1
Programme Coordinators	Spreadsheet	Notes on key programme developments throughout both Sony phases	1
Programme Coordinators	Monitoring data	Attendance registers and demographic data from both phases	2
Pathways Coordinator/s	Monitoring data	Demographic and engagement data (+ some outcomes) for Pathways users	37 YP
Service users	Google form	Course feedback and reflections on outcomes after April/May online courses	41*YP
Service users	Google form	Course feedback and reflections on outcomes after June/July online courses	22**YP
Service users	Google form	Masterclass feedback	3 YP
Service users	Google form	Feedback after outreach bus drop ins	5 YP
Service users	Google form	Feedback at end of Level Up	14***
Service users	Video testimonies	Feedback about Level Up	6
Service users (Pathways)	Web graphs	Self-assessed pre/post intervention outcomes data	24 YP

Service users	Case studies	In depth stories with YP (including Pathways)	8 YP
YUAF LICs	Debrief forms after each course session	Observations and records about session delivery in both phases	125 records
YUAF LICs	End of phase 1 group debrief	Phase 1 – what worked well and what challenges arose, plus changes needed.	5
YUAF delivery team, CEO, Coordinators	End of phase 2 group debrief	Phase 2 – discussion and analysis regarding what worked well and what challenges arose, plus next steps	10
Staff – LICs, facilitators	Surveys	Reflections at end of Phase 1	4
Staff – LICs, facilitators	Surveys	Reflections at end of Phase 2	5
Sony artists/ professionals	Surveys	Reflections on having been part of Amplify Communities	4

Notes:

*Due to the timing of the evaluation, the new survey was only designed in time for the second set of courses, so a previous version was used for the first set of courses.

** 40 UNIQUE YP provided feedback about their experience of Phase 1 courses and the outcomes of taking part.

*** 61% or 14 of the total of 23 unique Level Up participants provided end of course feedback.

2. How YP came to join Amplify Communities

Table 2: Summary of pathways into Amplify Communities

Course / phase	Referral pathways
Thrive and Connect – April/May signups	82% YUAF Network: social media marketing (mainly Instagram)/ website, 7% via YUAF Pathways, 6% emails to partners, 5% word of mouth (including parents, mentors & friends)
Thrive and Connect – June/July signups	82% YUAF Network: social media marketing (mainly Instagram)/ website, 8% via YUAF Pathways, 5% emails to partners, 5% word of mouth (including parents, mentors & friends)
Masterclass signups	80% YUAF Network: social media marketing (mainly Instagram)/ website, 10% via YUAF Pathways, 5% emails to partners, 5% word of mouth (including parents, mentors & friends)

Level Up - respondents	64% YUAF network: social media marketing (mainly Instagram), 29% via word of mouth (including parents, mentor, friend), 7% (1) via YUAF Futures
Summer community drop ins - bus	69% of participants came from the attached youth centre memberships, 18% came through YUAF's membership (including one from the Pathways service), 7% came via YUAF's advertising campaigns (and therefore were new to YUAF), and 4% came via local outreach.
Pathways	22% ex-PC caseload, 14% Level Up, 13% YUAF team, 11% via online courses, 11% summer community outreach/drop ins, 8% partner referrals, 5% Eventbrite signups, 5% open mics, 3% via artists and 5% no data.