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From NEET to ETE: An evaluation of the longer term outcomes of the Pathways programme at Fight for Peace

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Research Reports, Working Papers, Provocation Commentaries

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Executive summary

This report reviews data on the longer term outcomes for those who have attended the Fight for Peace (FFP) Pathways programme and is funded by Credit Suisse, the major funders of the Programme between 2009 and 2014.

A total of 134 young people have attended the Pathways programme and data are included on the lives of young people who graduated up to six years ago.

The research findings show that the Pathways programme at FFP has exceeded its targets over a sustained period of time and has a discernable and significant longer term influence on the lives of young people who attend.

After they graduated, the majority of young people continued to improve their CVs by taking courses and by finding work. They remain optimistic about their future.

Pathways programme

Pathways is intended for those who have no, or few, formal educational qualifications. The programme starts with a preparatory three week course to assess a young person's level of literacy and numeracy and to integrate them into the FFP Five Pillars model with sessions on personal development, mentoring, sport, and employability.

Young people can progress to Pathways module 1 that combines level 1 English and Maths, a level 2 community sports leadership award, and a level 1 active and healthy living qualification as well as continuing with the other FFP activities they began during their preparatory course.

Those who pass module 1 attend module 2 to gain level 2 in English and Maths and a level 2 YMCA Gym instructor qualification. Students continue with their FFP activities which are integral to the Pathways programmes.

Research

The challenge for the research is to identify if there are any connections between the qualifications and social skills Pathways graduates learn whilst attending FFP and their subsequent life course.

The study is designed using the following logic: if changes in attitudes and behaviour are discernable and qualifications were gained during the time a young person attended FFP then it reasonable to assume that longer term outcomes are plausible.

In analysing the data three types of Pathways effects are possible; a positive contribution, no identified effect, or harm to young people and each have been taken into account during data collection.

The effects identified in this study are not reduced to the Pathways programme alone. FFP is a holistic Five Pillars model and the Pathways programme is embedded in the ethos of FFP which also explains outcomes.

Data for this study includes: monitoring data; information from the annual self-completion questionnaires completed by 89 attendees between 2009 and 2014, a response rate of 66%; and telephone interviews with 40 young people conducted by FFP staff during December

2014 and January 2015 using a structured interview schedule, giving a response rate of 30% (of all attendees).

The interview schedule was designed to find out if graduates think that their current life-style is connected to their 'FFP experience'.

Outcomes whilst at FFP

The overwhelming majority of young people completed their courses. The pass rates for their examinations exceeded the target 70% for most years for level 1 in English and Maths, but rarely achieved this target for level 2.

The completion rates of courses are high; typically 90% or more.

On average, three quarters or more young people reported positive changes in attitudes and improvements in social skills and over two thirds reported improvements in social relationships.

Some young people report 'no change', and for a very few their attitudes and behaviour had deteriorated.

The majority of young people described their attitudes as law-abiding.

Thus, it is plausible that attending the Pathways programme at FFP could have longer term effects on life chances of the overwhelming majority of participants.

Overall, there has been a year-on-year improvement in the proportion of attendees achieving positive outcomes, suggesting that a greater number of graduates will have longer term benefits in the future.

Impacts

Of the 134 participants 95 (71%) were known to be not in employment, education or training (NEET) prior to joining Pathways.

Of the 40 young people interviewed 92% were NEET prior to the programme and since their graduation 75% have taken further education and/or training courses and 85% found employment, exceeding the 70% progression target.

Data on 105 of the 134 young people are available and 23% were involved in criminal activities prior to joining Pathways and at the end of Programme there was a 79% reduction in reoffending. One young person offending for the first time during their time on the programme.

The criminal activities of those who have graduated gives a more stringent test for assessing reoffending. Of those who were interviewed, 19% had offended before they joined the programme and of these seven young people two subsequently offended, giving a 71% reduction in reoffending. One young person offended for the first time after they had graduated.

In the short term and longer term the target reduction of 70% in reoffending was achieved.

Connecting Pathways at FFP to subsequent training, education, and employment

For just over a quarter (28%) the Pathways qualification was a requirement to be accepted on to the training or education courses taken by participants after they had graduated. The majority of courses were short-term and for low skilled casual or part-time work such as security, fitness instructing and retail.

Very few graduates planned, or are planning to, attend higher education or gain a professional qualification for which the Pathways qualification is an essential stepping stone.

Over two thirds of the interviewees (69%) said that they have plans for the future that require using Pathways qualifications.

Of those interviewed, 95% have tried to find paid employment since leaving Pathways and 85% have been successful. Of the four young people who have not been successful, one went straight into a full time course, two have not tried to find work and one cannot find work.

The overwhelming majority (83%) said that the following support helped them get jobs; writing CVs, job search and application process, mock interviews, communication skills, 1-2-1 support, and personal development.

Under two thirds (61%) said that they had support when applying for specific jobs. A further analysis of the data shows that the majority of young people have changed jobs several times; some have had three or four jobs since they graduated. FFP staff have continued to give assistance several times over several years to some young people.

An analysis of the employment pattern of 26 young people shows that most of their jobs lasted less than a year (64%) and that most were working as sessional workers, casually or part time (60%).

97% said that they had future employment plans suggesting that they continue to progress and remain motivated.

The overwhelming majority (90%) said that they are satisfied with how their employment plans are progressing. They feel that they are '*headed in the right direction*', like what they are doing, and have a sense of achievement.

The overwhelming majority (95%) said that they would be doing something different if they had not attended Pathways and many indicated that they would be leading a life of crime and worklessness.

Connecting Pathways at FFP to current motivation, aspirations and lifestyles

Pathways also aims to improve young people's confidence to learn, develop positive relationships, and social skills that enable young people to negotiate and compromise, and set goals for the future.

Achieving these changes in values, attitudes, and social skills are integral to explaining the longer term effects of attending the programme. This study shows that these attributes have remained part of the everyday lives of the overwhelming majority of graduates.

Graduates described how what they had learnt at FFP is part of their current lifestyle and has contributed to their life course since leaving the Pathways programme. For example,

- Their use of Maths and English
- Career – they have qualifications for career choice, clearer goals and access to better opportunities
- Positive attitudes to do the best they can and to think positively, mentally stronger, feel more confident and understand the importance of working hard
- Social skills – communication, positive body language, helping others, teamwork, reasoning, make friends
- Lifestyle – fitness, healthy eating.

Over three quarters (78%) said that they are currently participating in sport or taking regular exercise, and most are continuing with boxing and Muay Thai.

The majority of young people (63%) said that they were still in contact with students they met on Pathways and they consider them to be friends (88%). Maintaining these friendships over time suggests a greater sense of inclusion.

Most felt optimistic about their future (84%), and said that they were achieving their plans.

The values and ethos of FFP, the high quality of the delivery of the programme, as well as low staff turnover have contributed to these positive findings.

1. Introduction

This report reviews data on the longer term outcomes for those who have attended the Fight for Peace (FFP) Pathways programme situated in the London Borough of Newham, East London, UK. The main funders of the programme are Credit Suisse who also funded this study. The research took place between December 2014 and February 2015.

The purpose of this research is to find out if young people's attendance on the programme has enabled graduates to access further education and training courses and if Pathways has any lasting social and lifestyle effects.

Programmes like Pathways are designed to enable young people to make better choices about their future and to increase their opportunities to find work. Thus, outcomes will be influenced by the state of the national economy, local economic circumstances and the local job market. Data on economic indicators suggest that since 2009, and before, the economic environment for those who typically attend Pathways, is likely to constrain their choices and limit their opportunities. In East London the proportion of 16-24 year olds who are NEET (not in education, training or employment) declined between 2010 and 2011 but rose again in 2012, has continued to rise, and in 2014 increased across London by 12.5% (Aldridge et al 2013; LSEO 2015). Unemployment rates of economically active young adults (16-24 years) has risen since 2002 and in 2014 was over 45% for young black African and Caribbean men, nearly twice the average across London (25%) (LSEO 2015; Aldridge et al 2013). Minority ethnic women are also more likely to be unemployed than their white peers, although the gap is less than the men's (Aldridge et al 2013).

Part time work has also increased in London and is associated with low pay, particularly for young people (Shildrick et al 2012; Aldridge et al 2013). A third of employees in the London Borough of Newham are paid less than the London Living wage, the highest for all London boroughs, and similarly the percentage of workless households, 23% in 2013, is one of the highest in London (Aldridge et al 2013; LSEO 2015). High levels of rent make it even more difficult for families to 'make ends meet' and limits on housing benefits have added to household economic insecurity.

The economic marginality of young people and their families/carers is compounded by their experiences of growing up in households where their parents/carers work long hours for low pay and are still not being able to provide sufficient food or clothing. This encourages some young people to seek alternative ways of leading a 'better life' by, for example, turning to crime, and for others provides a disincentive to look for work (Densley and Stevens 2015). Further, searching for jobs with limited education and skills is challenging and requires persistence (Tunstall et al 2012). Further, when young people attend compulsory employability skills training schemes only a small minority (3.4%) secure a sustainable job at the end of the programme (Department for Work and Pensions 2012).

In these circumstances the challenges for programmes like Pathways to achieve positive outcomes are multiple and require working with young people to make life choices that may

not be immediately attractive to them. Nevertheless, there is an absence of studies that have researched if there are longer term outcomes of such programmes that affect the life course of young people. In a recent synthesis of evaluations of education-based interventions for young people it was noted that there is an absence of information that evidences causal links between programmes and long-term outcomes (Belur 2013). Whilst this FFP Pathways study provides useful insights into how such initiatives can produce some lasting effects, comparisons with other similar initiatives have not been possible.

This report is structured as follows: the Pathways programme is described, the data collected and collated for the study is documented, and the outcomes for young people whilst they attended Pathways presented, followed by longer term outcomes that continued after they graduated.

2. Pathways at Fight for Peace

The Pathways programme has run since 2009 and over the years has been adapted and refined to improve attendance and completion rates, as well as progression into further education, training and/or employment. A total of 134 young people attended the Pathways programme between 2009 and 2014.

The Pathways programme is intended for those who have no, or few, formal educational qualifications and starts with a preparatory three week course that enables staff to develop relationships with those wishing to take the courses. During these three weeks a young person's level of literacy and numeracy is assessed and young people are integrated into the FFP Five Pillars model with sessions on personal development, mentoring, sport, and employability.

Young people progress to Pathways module 1 that combines level 1 English and Maths, a level 2 community sports leadership award, a level 1 active and healthy living qualification as well as continuing with the other FFP activities they began during their preparatory programme.

For those who successfully complete Pathways module 1 and for those assessed to be suitable, module 2 enables participants to gain level 2 in English and Maths and a level 2 YMCA Gym instructor qualification. Students continue with their FFP activities which are integral to the Pathways programmes.

The programme has three outcomes with an achievement target of 70% for each. They are:

- Passing level 1-2 English and Maths
- Progressing to further education, training and/or employment
- Reduction in offending

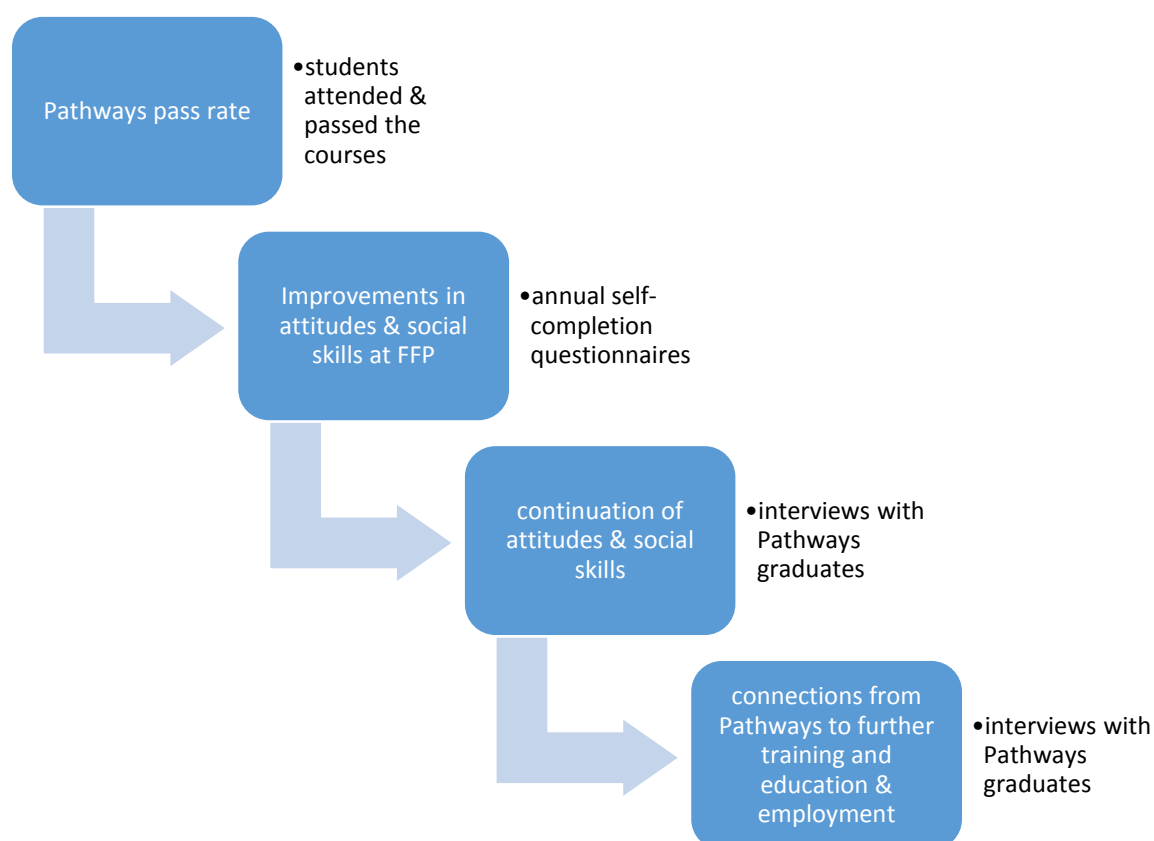
Other outcomes include improvements in confidence to learn, developing positive relationships with other young people and FFP staff, improved social skills that enable young people to negotiate and compromise, setting goals for the future and using Pathways as a route to achieving these goals. It is anticipated that these personal and social changes will lead to greater life opportunities.

3. Research

The purpose of the research is to identify if there are any connections between the qualifications and social skills Pathways graduates learnt whilst attending FFP and their subsequent life course. To find out if causality is a possibility, that is, if there are plausible links between the graduates' progress whilst attending FFP and their current attitudes, social skills and life-styles, a logical sequence of events is traced from a young person's time at FFP to their present situation and is depicted in figure 1.

The logical model in figure 1 is designed to produce reliable findings and can be described as follows: if attendees attend and pass their English and Maths programmes and if, as stated in the objectives of Pathways, changes in aspirations, motivation and improvements in social skills are discernible during their time at FFP, then a continuation of these newly acquired attitudes and changes in behaviour is plausible. Information on the data collected to test these possibilities are also given in figure 1 to show how possible causal mechanisms are identified.

Figure 1: Assessing the possibility of causal connections from attendance at Pathways to current situation of Pathways graduates



The research questions addressed in this study are: where young people learn positive attitudes and use their social skills acquired at FFP, do they last beyond the Pathways programme and, if they are still 'in use' then have they occurred due to other circumstances and/or can they be traced back to the Pathways programme? Similarly, are there any connections between training and education qualifications acquired at FFP and employment gained by young people after they graduated from Pathways?

In analysing the data three types of Pathways effects are possible; a positive contribution, no identified effect, or harm to young people. Each possibility has been taken into account during data collection. Where either positive or negative linkages are identified – the causal mechanisms - their strength has not been measured to assess the extent of the effect, rather we only know from this study if there is a plausible connection. However, this approach enables a causal explanation of the processes of change to be identified (Cartwright and Hardie 2012).

Any Pathways effects identified in this study cannot, however, be reduced to the Pathways programme alone. FFP is a holistic Five Pillars model and the Pathways programme is embedded in the ethos of FFP. Young people participate in the other four pillars of the Five Pillars model and the learning from these experiences impact upon how young people respond to the Pathways programme.

3.1 Data sources

Data on number of attendees and pass rates were collated from the monitoring data.

Data from the annual self-completion questionnaires completed each year since the beginning of the Pathways programme in 2009 were collated. The majority of the questions have been the same each year, although some change have been made in the last two years. Each question is designed to assess changes in attitudes and behaviour, as set out in the Pathways objectives. Respondents can identify improvements, no change, or negative changes. A total of 89 attendees completed a questionnaire between 2009 and 2014, a response rate of 66%. The number of young people who have completed a questionnaire for each year are as follows: 12 young people in 2009; 13 young people in 2010; 12 young people in 2011; 25 young people in 2012; 13 young people in 2013; and, 14 young people in 2014.

Forty young people were interviewed by telephone by FFP staff during December 2014 and January 2015 using a structured questionnaire, giving a response rate of 30%. The response rate was, however, heavily skewed in favour of those who had completed the Pathways programme and are still attending the gym and training sessions at FFP. Four graduates were no longer in contact with FFP. It can be expected that young people will respond more favourably to telephone calls from staff who delivered the programme.

Of these 40 young people demographic data are available for 36 young people of whom 3 are young women and 33 young men, 75% are aged between 18 and 25 years and 25% aged between 26 and 29 years. Half of the sample are black British/African/African-Caribbean, followed by dual heritage (22%), Asian (11%), and white British and white Other with 8% each. The cohorts attended by the 40 interviewees are outlined in table 1 below and shows that

information is available for four young people who graduated five years ago, but most of the young people graduated within the last two years (46%).

Table 1: Cohort, year graduated, percentage and number of interviewees

Cohort	Year graduated	Percentage (Number) interviewed
1 and 2	2009	10 (4)
3 and 4	2010	18 (7)
5 and 6	2011	8 (3)
7 and 8	2012	20 (8)
9 and 10	2013	23 (9)
11	March 2014	23 (9)
Total number of interviewees		40

Note: percentage does not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down.

The interview schedule was designed to elicit free flowing answers at the beginning of the interview to obtain initial or spontaneous reactions. Respondents were asked what their memories were of their time at FFP and if they felt that their current life-style is in anyway connected to their 'FFP experience'. Detailed questions were asked about education and training courses they had attended and their employment record. They were also asked the extent to which the knowledge and skills they had gained at FFP contributed to their progress and about their plans and goals for the future.

4. Outcomes whilst attending Pathways

To assess the plausibility of the Pathways programme contributing to longer term outcomes information was collated on qualifications gained, changes in attitudes and behaviour, and changes in criminal intentions whilst attending Pathways. These findings are presented in this section.

4.1. Pathways pass rates

Data show that pass rates for the Pathways level 1 are high for English and Maths and as may be expected, the results for level 2 show a decrease. The introduction of vocational qualifications in coaching, for example, have broadened the opportunities for young people to achieve formal qualifications.

The tables below show that for level 1 in English and Maths the 70% target was exceeded for most years. For level 2 in English and Maths the 70% target was rarely achieved.

Table 4.1. English pass rates (percentage)

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Level 1	67	100	81	54	81	82
Level 2	n/a	67	20	67	60	57

Table 4.2. Maths pass rates (percentage)

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Level 1	67	100	81	67	76	87
Level 2	n/a	49	30	59	70	50

The engagement rates are, however, high: a completion rate of 90% and above is typical, indicating that one or two young people do not complete a course, even though fewer pass. The completion rate suggests that students are engaged and motivated to achieve. Young people who do not gain the qualifications the first time are given additional support and are able to retake the examinations. These qualifications provide young people with opportunities to apply to colleges and training courses and to apply for work in retail, for example, where they require maths.

4.2. Attitudes, aspirations, and social skills

Data from the annual self-report questionnaires completed by Pathways' attendees show high levels of improvement in attitudes and behaviour.

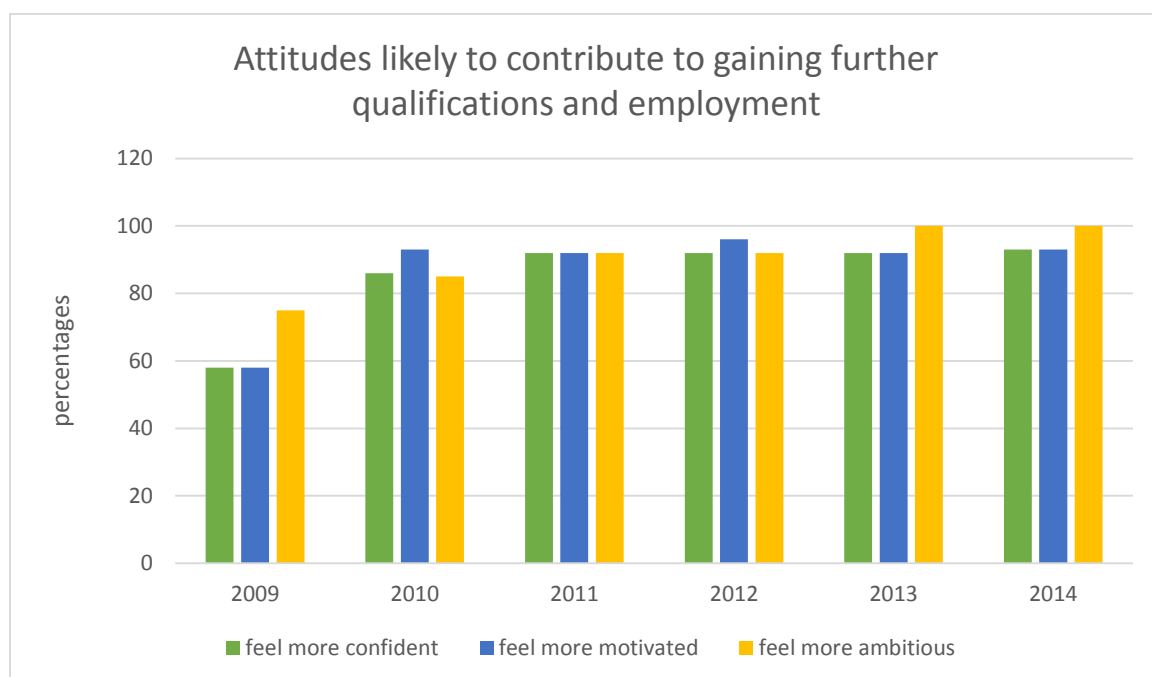
The findings show that, on average, three quarters or more young people reported positive changes in attitudes and improvements in social skills and over two thirds reported improvements in social relationships.

Some young people report 'no change', implicitly shown in the charts below – the percentage difference between improvement and 100%. The data show that for these young people some positive changes occur on some, but not all indicators, suggesting a weaker 'FFP effect'.

Very few attendees reported that their attitudes and behaviour had deteriorated suggesting that the staff who deliver the courses successfully engage with young people and that the level of the courses are appropriate for those who attend.

The findings presented measure the objectives of the Pathways programme to assess the extent to which they have been achieved each year from the start of the programme in 2009.

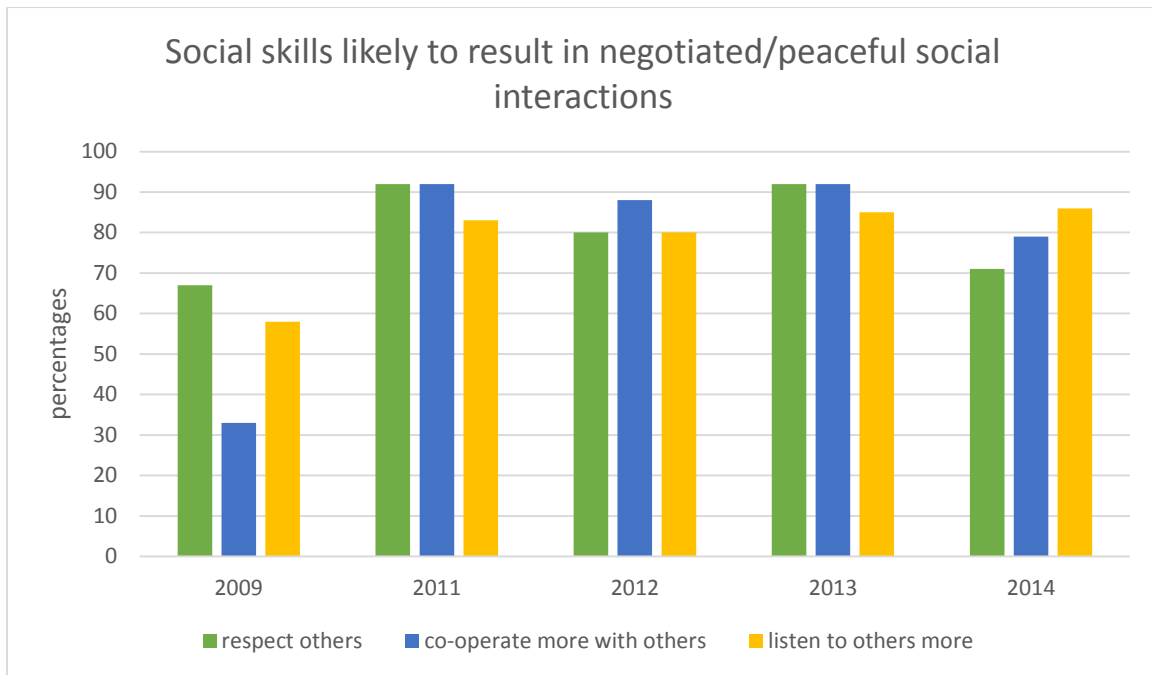
The chart below shows that the majority of young people self-reported that they have gained in confidence and their self-esteem has improved and they feel more motivated. They also feel more ambitious.



Note: the question 'feel more ambitious' was changed in 2013 and the closest question is 'increased ability to achieve'.

In 2012 one person felt less confident and less ambitious, otherwise no young people reported any adverse effects.

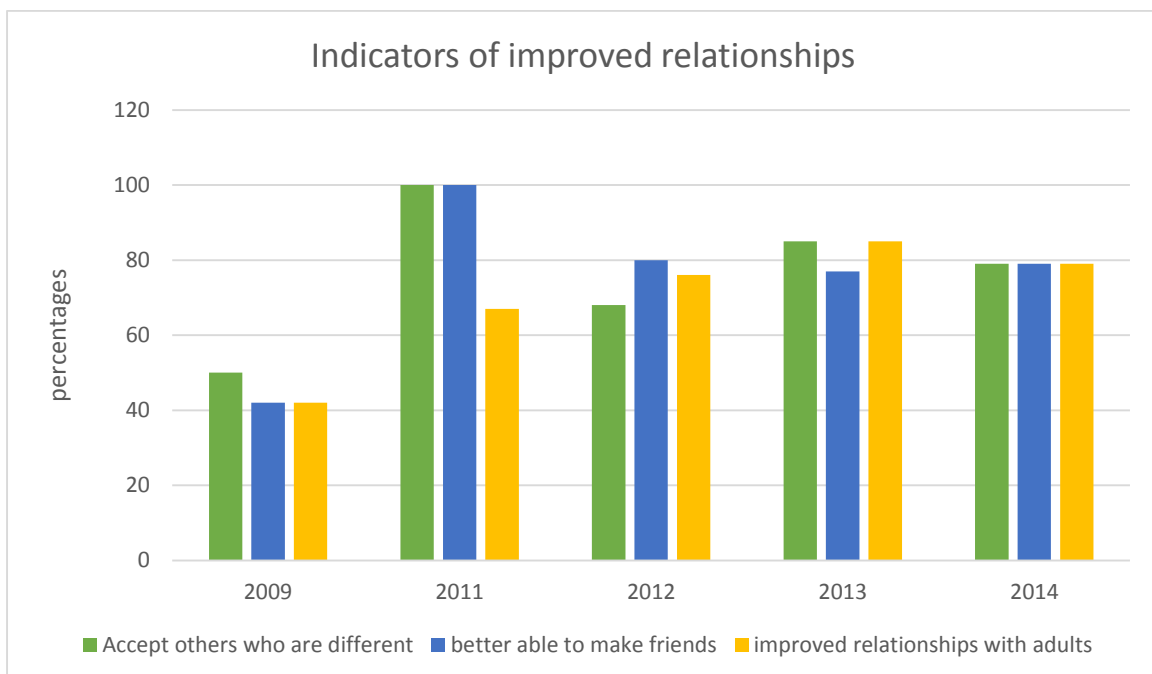
The findings presented below show that the overwhelming majority have developed positive relationships, have values that are likely to lead to less confrontational and aggressive behaviour and to less social exclusion.



Note: Data for 2010 are missing.

In 2009 one person said that they were less co-operative with others, otherwise no other young person report any adverse effects from attending FFP.

The findings presented below show that the majority of young people said that they have better social relationships with adults, feel better able to accept people who are different to themselves and to make friends.



Note: data for 2010 are missing.

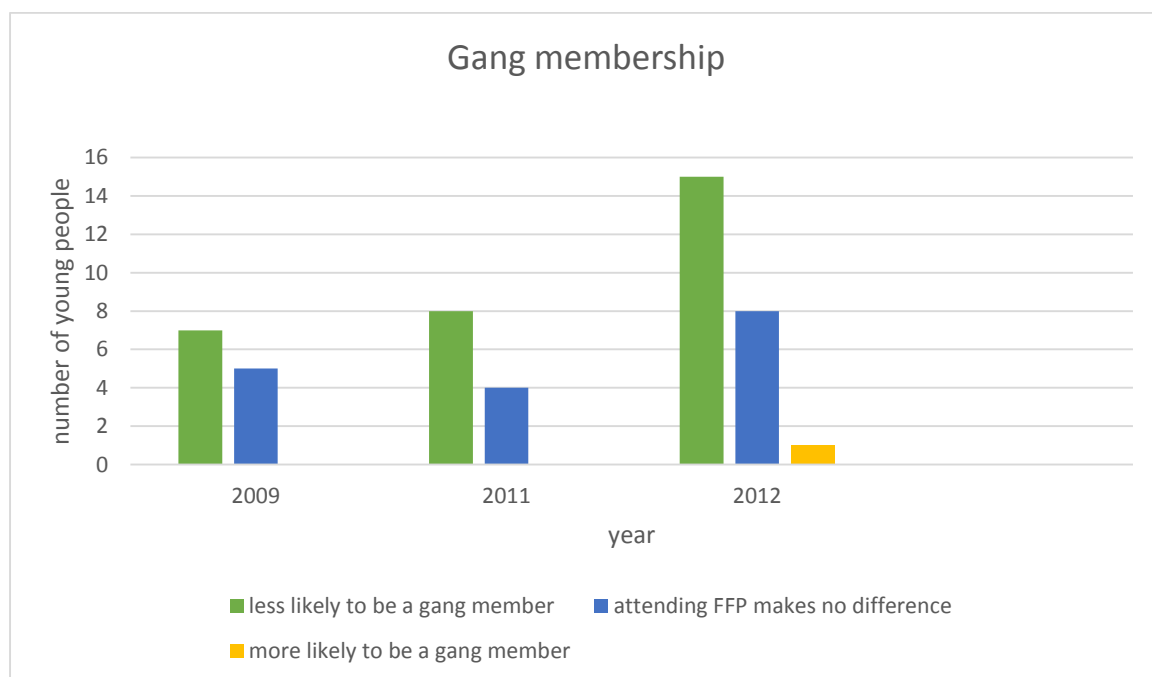
The findings presented in the chart above demonstrate that the vast majority of Pathways graduates have positive outcomes and, therefore, it is plausible that these changes may continue in the longer term.

Since 2009 the findings presented above also show, overall, a year-on-year improvement in the proportion of attendees achieving positive outcomes. It is therefore reasonable to expect a greater number of Pathways graduates will have longer term benefits in the future.

4.3. Attitudes towards criminality and crime-related behaviour

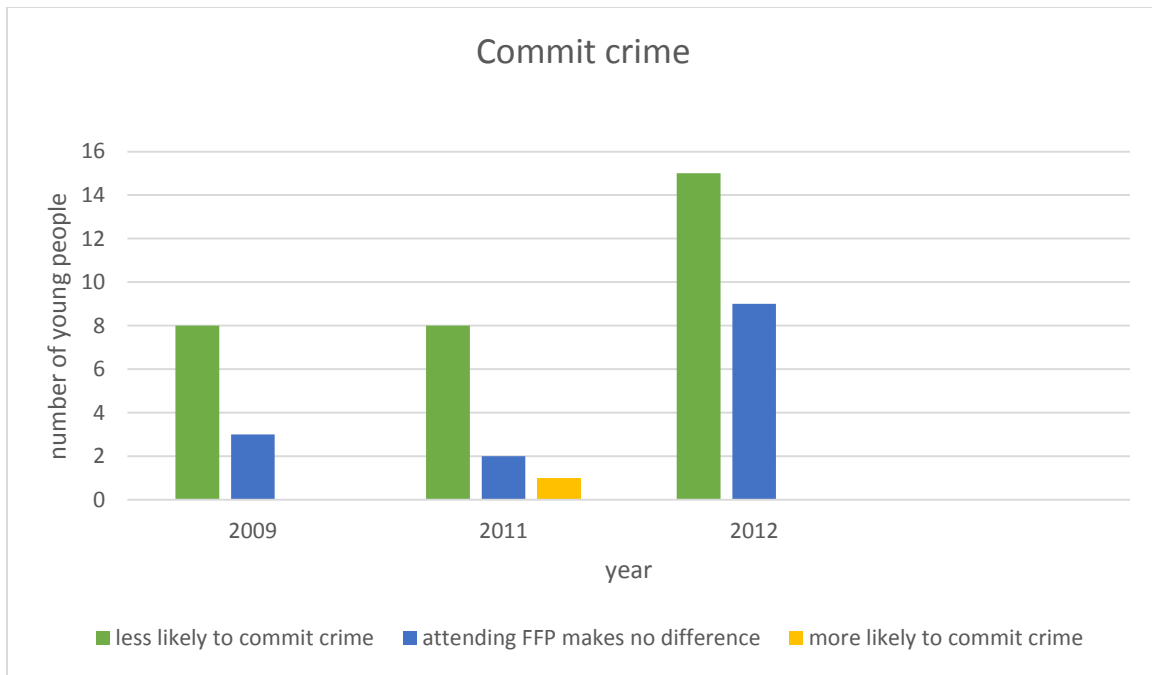
The expectation that a Pathways programme will affect criminality is interesting. A complex relationship exists between supporting young people to achieve and criminal behaviour, and research suggests that the two are not necessarily linked, that there may be some association to some types of crime but not others, and if there is causality it can be temporal (Cartwright and Hardie 2012). The findings from the self-completion questionnaires reflect these complexities, yet FFP does, on the whole, have a positive influence on young people's attitudes towards crime. The programme has an adverse effect for hardly any young people.

The chart below illustrates how the majority of young people consistently say that they are less likely to be a member of a gang. Over the three years one person said that they were more likely to join a gang and a minority said that attending FFP makes no difference.



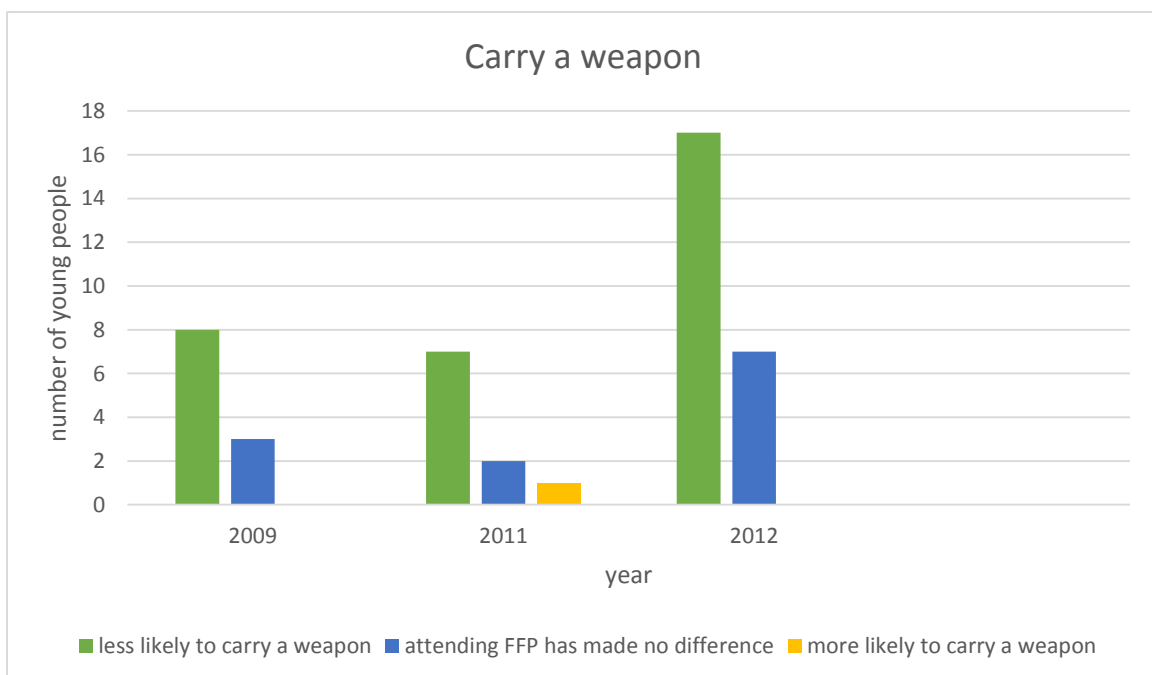
Note: the data for 2010 are missing.

The majority of those attending Pathways for the three years shown in the chart below said that they were less likely to commit a crime (67%), some said that attending FFP made no difference (30%) and one young person said that they were more likely to commit a crime.



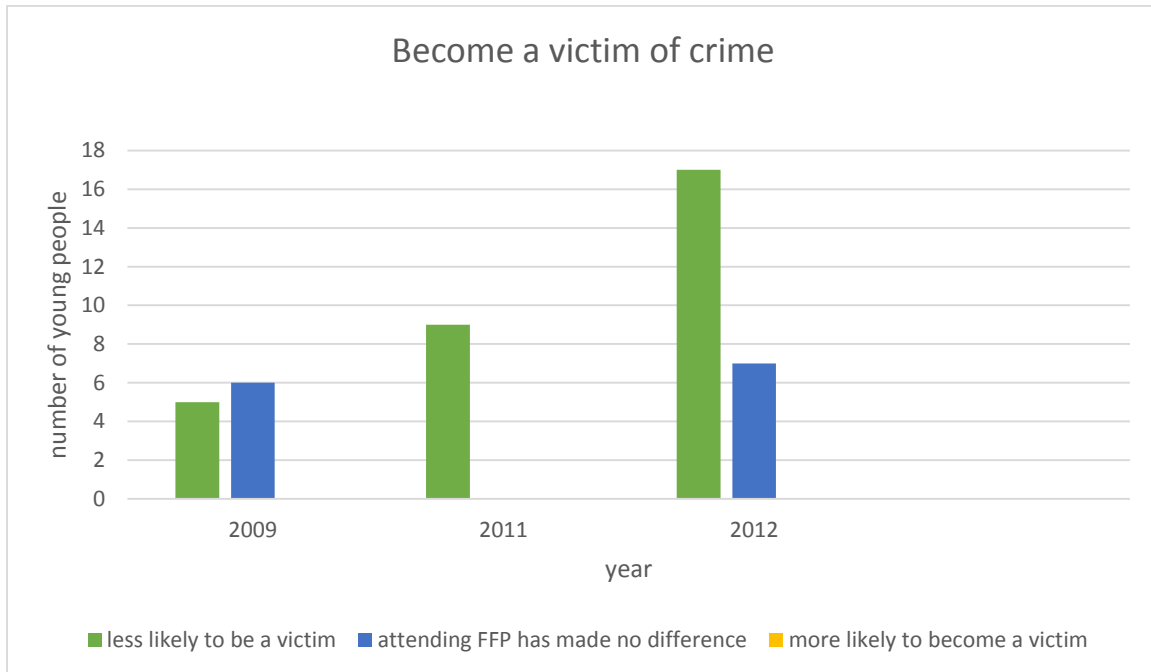
Note: the data for 2010 are missing.

Similarly, most young people said that they were less likely to carry a weapon (71%), some said that attending FFP made no difference (27%) and the young person who said that they were more likely to commit a crime said that they were also more likely to carry a weapon. In interviews with young people in a previous study (Sampson and Vilella 2014) they described how they felt fitter and safer on the streets, and therefore had less 'need' to carry weapons.



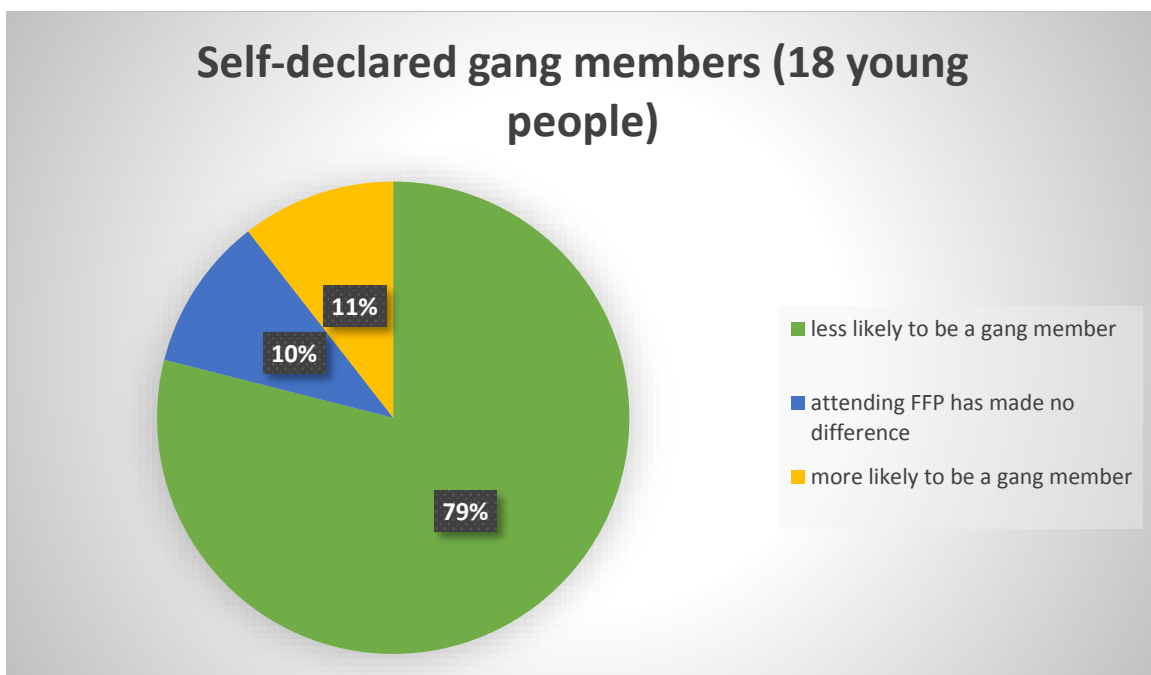
Note: the data for 2010 are missing.

Research has found that there is a strong association between being a victim of crime and criminality (see, for example, Densley and Stevens 2015). The findings presented below provides evidence that the majority of young people thought that they are less likely to become a victim (67%) suggesting a reduced possibility of their involvement in criminal activities.

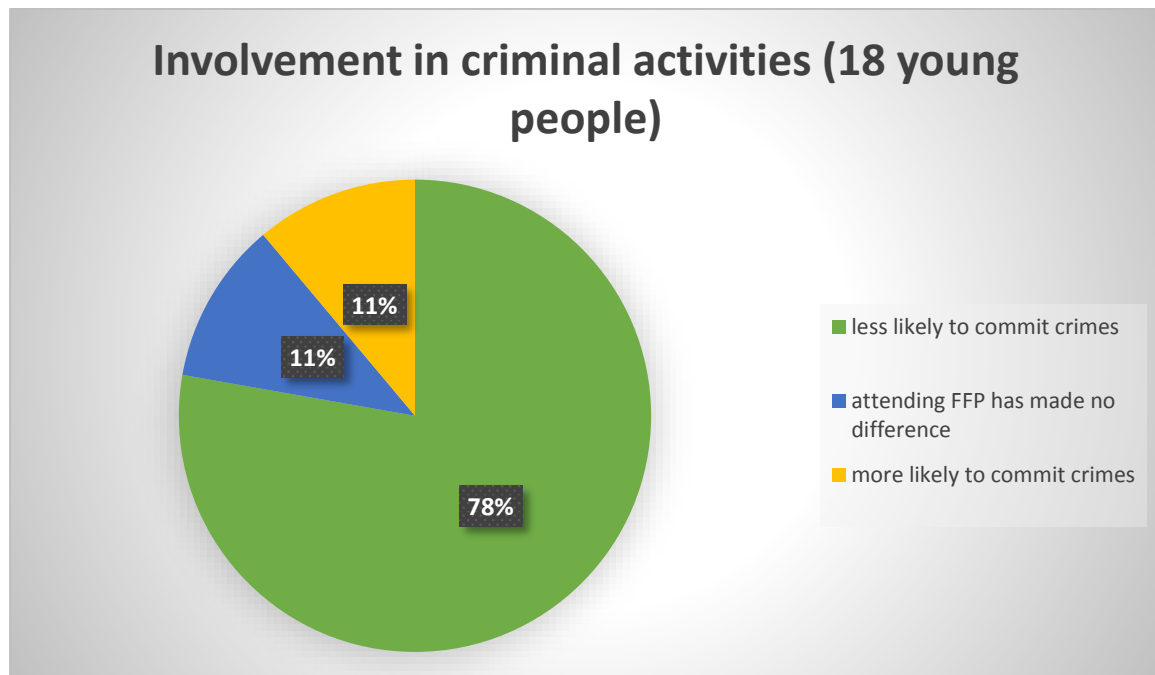


Note: the data for 2010 are missing.

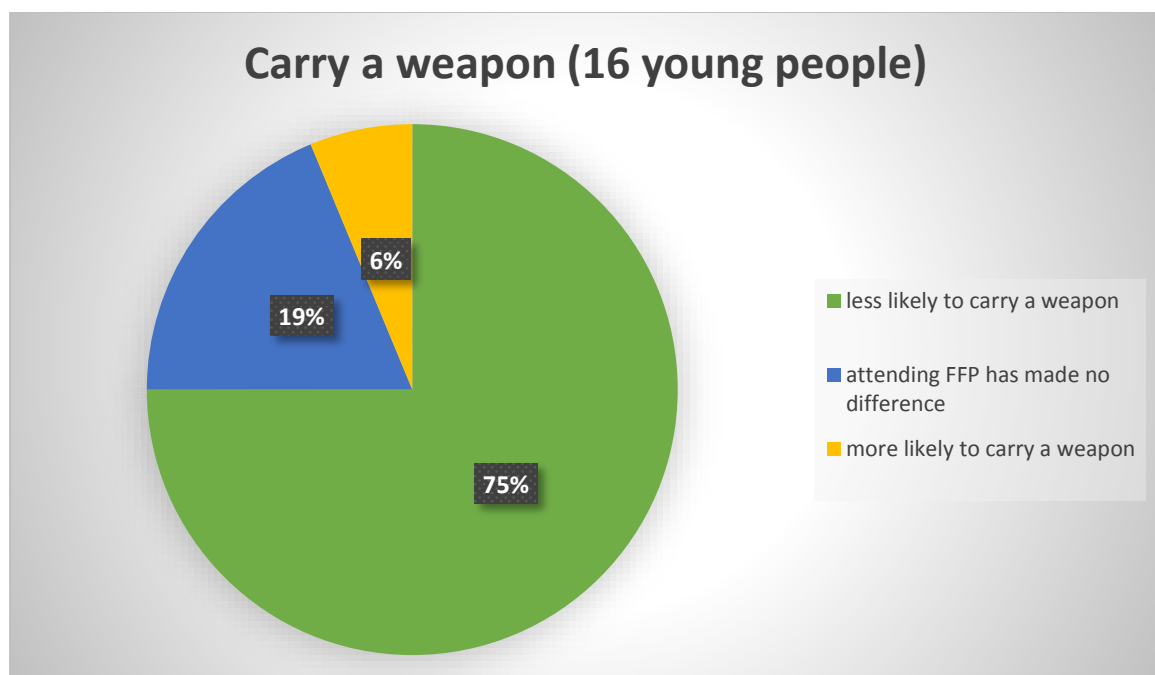
The questions on the self-completion questionnaires for crime and crime-related activities were changed in 2013 and the question asked those who were involved in crime prior to attending FFP if there are any changes in their intentions. The following findings pertain to cohorts 9 to 11 (2013 and 2014).



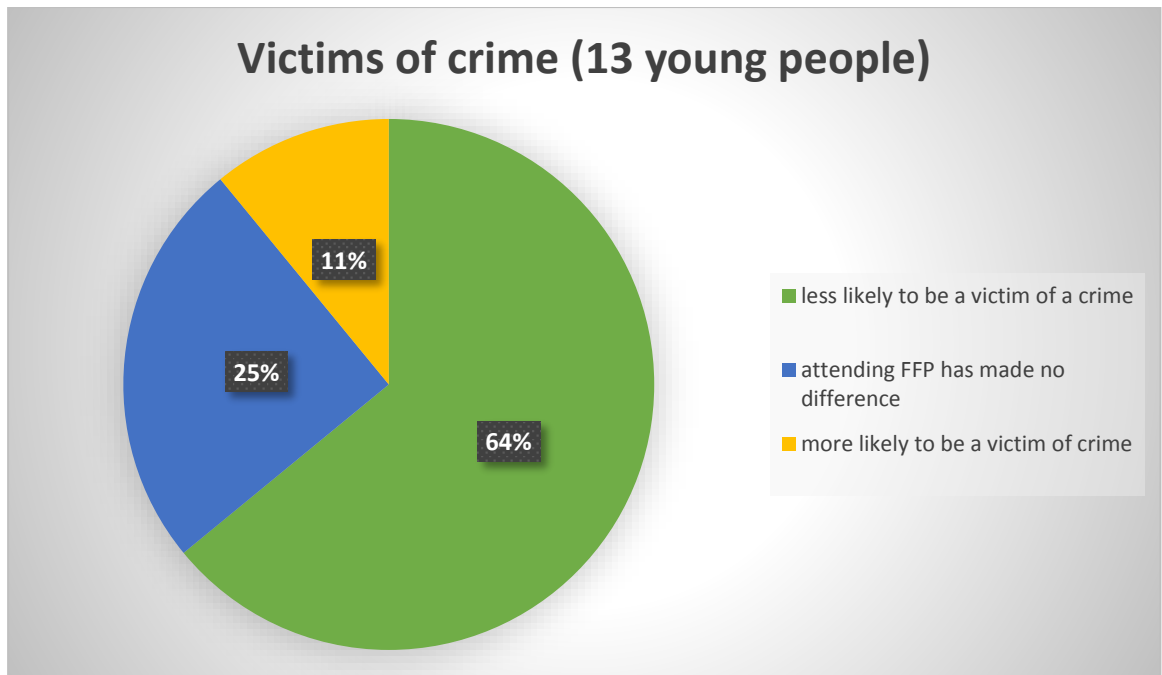
Of the 18 young people involved in criminal activities over three quarters (78%) said that they were less likely to commit crimes since attending FFP. Two young people said that attending FFP has not made a difference to their chances of committing crimes and two young people said that they were more likely to.



Of the 16 young people who carried weapons prior to attending FFP, three quarters (75%) said that they were less likely to continue, three people said attending FFP made no difference and one young person said that they were more likely to carry a weapon.



Of the 13 young people who had previously been victimised, just under two thirds (64%) said that they were less likely to be a victim in the future, three young people said attending FFP has made no difference and one person said that they were more likely to be a victim of crime.



These findings from the self-completion questionnaires show that the majority of Pathways graduates said that they were more likely to be law abiding. A change in attitudes does not always equate with a reduction in criminal behaviour, but the findings suggest that this outcome is a possibility.

5. Impact of attending Pathways at Fight for Peace

Attendance on the Pathways programme has two intended longer term outcomes or impacts; enabling young people to move from a NEET status to one where they are either in education, training or employment (ETE) and reducing criminality.

5.1 From NEET to ETE

Of the 134 young people who attended Pathways, the status of 102 young people is known and of these 93% (95) were not in training, education or employment (NEETs) prior to attending Pathways. Further, these young people started with the level 1 courses in Maths and English, reflecting their lack of knowledge of basic numeracy and literacy and absence of formal educational qualifications. Of these young people just over a quarter (26%) were also involved in gang related activities.

The overwhelming majority were young men (79%), and of those where ethnicity was specified (105 young people), the majority were black British, African or African-Caribbean (57%), white British (15%), and 9 young people were Asian, 8 young people were dual heritage, and 7 described themselves as white Other. Many of these young people are likely to find it particularly difficult to find work due to racial discrimination and prejudice and this also makes the task of FFP even more challenging (Simmons and Thompson 2011).

Of the 40 young people interviewed, 92% were NEET prior to the programme and since their graduation 75% have taken further education and/or training courses and 85% found employment, exceeding the 70% progression target.

Of particular interest are three interviewees who were in the first cohorts and attended FFP in 2009. All three, one dual heritage young woman and two white British young men are now in their mid-20s, were NEETs before attending Pathways and since leaving have all participated in training courses and have had several jobs. At the time of the interview all these young people were employed. They said that they have maintained their motivation to find work and are pleased with their progress towards achieving their goals. They recognise that their time spent at FFP contributed to their current circumstances. One young person said that they had learnt to read at FFP and another commented on their positive '*can do attitude*.'

5.2 Reduction in offending

Data on 105 of the 134 young people are available and 23% were involved in criminal activities prior to joining Pathways and at the end of Programme there was a 79% reduction in reoffending, and one young person offending for the first time during their time on the programme.

Since those who were interviewed are graduates they have had more time to be involved in criminal activities and this additional time period gives a more stringent test for reoffending. Of those who were interviewed, 19% had offended before they joined the Programme and of these seven young people two subsequently offended, giving a 71% reduction in reoffending. They have committed two offences each since graduating, including assault. One of these

young men was in the 2009 cohort and he said that he is still making efforts to change his lifestyle:

'I'm trying to change my lifestyle now to pay the bills and come away from the bad.'

One young person offended for the first time after they had graduated.

Thus, in the short term and longer term the target reduction of 70% in reoffending was achieved.

6. Making connections; links between Pathways and subsequent lifestyles and life chances

The overwhelming majority of young people made connections between their current situation and their attendance on the Pathways programme and their experiences at FFP. Identified causal connections are summarised in table 6.1 below:

Table 6.1. Possible causal links

	Percentage (number of responses/total number)
Was a Pathways qualification a requirement to be accepted on these training or education courses?	28 (16/52)
Did FFP support you to get this job?	61 (36/59)
Is there anything you learnt at FFP that helped you get these jobs?	83 (33/40)
Would you be doing anything differently had you not attended FFP?	95 (38/40)
Do you think that the life you are leading now is connected in anyway – positive or negative – to your FFP experience?	95 (36/38) (all positive responses)

Note: Some young people attended more than one course and have had more than one job since graduating. They responded to a question about each course/job and therefore the responses are greater than 40.

The following sections explain the findings presented in table 6.1 above and analyse them with respect to the expected outcomes specified for the Pathways programmes.

6.1 Pathways as a route to further training and education

At the time of the interviews 14 young people were on training courses or in education and 30 (75%) young people said that they have taken courses since graduating from Pathways. The reasons why 10 graduates have not applied for further training or education courses are: two went straight into work, one has no legal status in the UK and cannot apply, one is applying to go to University, and one is in prison. Two students said that they did not intend to take more courses. Only three of these students said that they are unsure about what courses to take. Thus, by the time they graduated the overwhelming majority of Pathways students had a clear understanding of how they wanted to progress and what courses to attend to achieve their goal.

A few key findings explain why the Pathways qualification was a requirement to be accepted on a course for just over a quarter of students (28%):

- Few students are on a trajectory that requires high level educational or professional qualifications. The exceptions are one student who attends University and four who are thinking of applying to a University and a trainee dentist and accountant. For these students Pathways qualifications are an essential stepping stone that enabled them to start on their journey.

- The majority of training courses attended are overwhelmingly short term and for low skilled work. An analysis of data pertaining to 24 courses shows that the length of the courses vary from one day to five years, with half the courses one month or less (12), a quarter two to six months in duration (6) and the remaining quarter between 9 months and five years (6). The majority of the qualifications are for security work, fitness instructors, and retail work.
- High completion rate with hardly any graduate failing to pass demonstrates that the majority of students are accumulating qualifications and improving their CVs.
- Repeatedly applying to attend courses suggests that FFP graduates continue to be motivated and are making genuine efforts to seek employment, although under recent changes to the regulations of the benefits system applying for work is compulsory.

Over two thirds of the interviewees (69%) said that they have plans for the future that require using Pathways qualifications. This finding illustrates how the qualifications remain a valuable influence on life courses sometime after young people have completed the Pathways programme. The data suggest that this FFP 'effect' can last for at least five years.

6.2 Learning and support at FFP that facilitates finding work

Of the 40 young people interviewed, 38 (95%) have tried to find paid employment since leaving Pathways and 34 (85%) have been successful. Of the four young people who have not been successful, one went straight into full time course, two have not tried and one cannot find work.

The overwhelming majority of respondents (83%) said that the following support helped them get jobs; writing CVs, mock interviews, job search and application process (48%) and communication skills, 1-2-1 support, personal development (66%).¹

These young people were asked about the support they received from Pathways staff to acquire work since they graduated from Pathways and 61% confirmed that they had received assistance. Young people's responses refer to support for specific jobs and a further analysis of the data shows that the majority of young people have changed jobs, with some having had three or four jobs since they graduated. Although Pathways staff continue to support some young people find work well after they have graduated there is probably a limit that is reasonable to expect this to happen and 61% reflects a considerable amount of continued direct support.

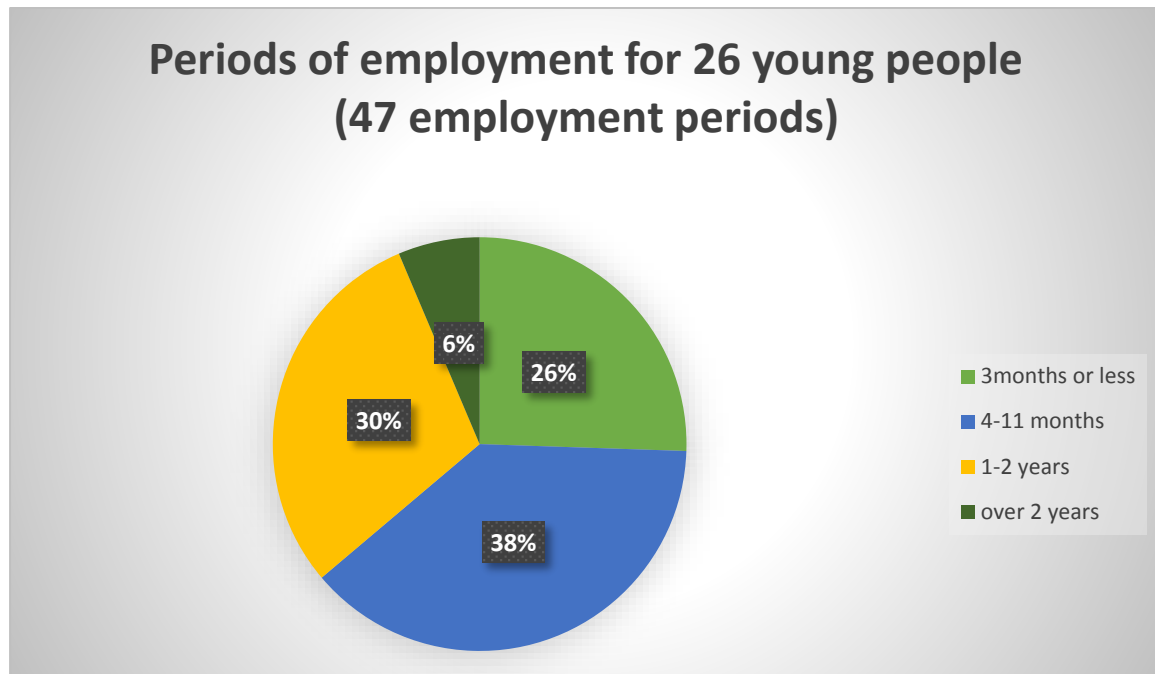
Of those who thought that they could have received more support to find work; four young people (10%) said they would have liked more support to look for employment and two young people thought that they lacked the right qualification.

The intention is that the Pathways programme will offer a stepping stone for progression into the world of work and the data show that the majority of young people find short-term, part-time and low skilled work. The length of employment and employment status of 26 young

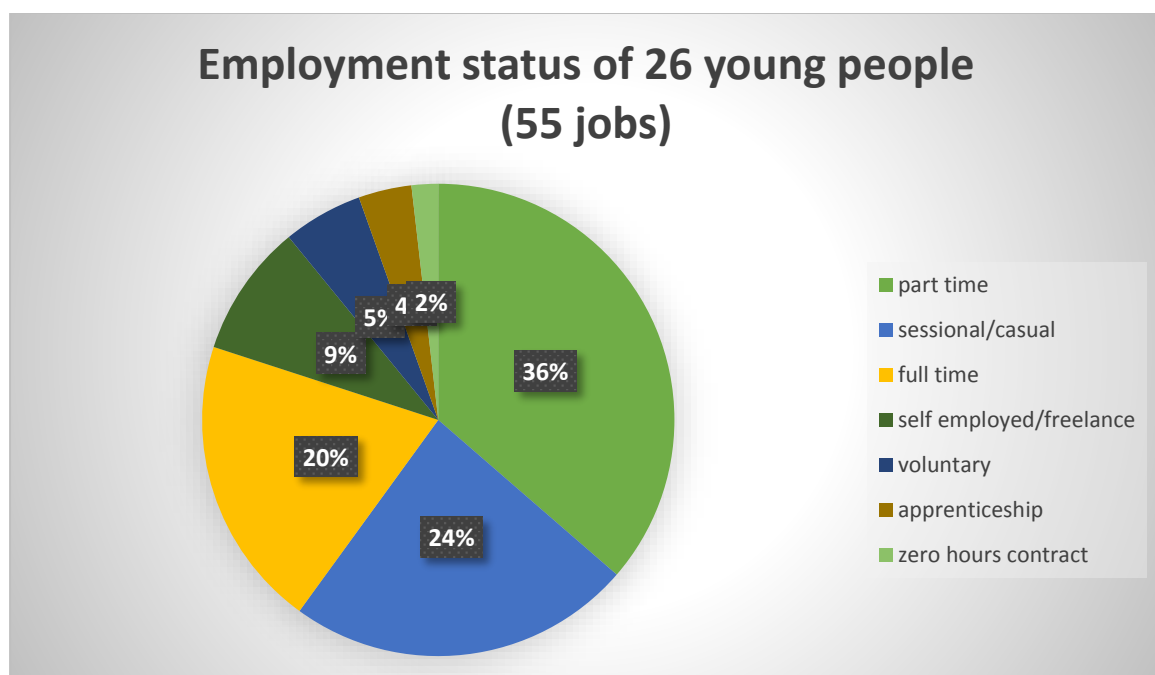
¹ Information is missing for seven interviewees.

people illustrates the reality for young people who were NEET and who seek employment during a recession.

The chart below shows the length of time 26 young people have been in employment and the number of times they have been employed for each period of employment.



Most of this work is low-skilled security work, employment in retail or catering. These jobs tend to be part time (36%) or casual/sessional (24%) with 20% in full time work, as shown in the chart below. Some young people work as sports coaches at FFP.



Many young people said that they find their work interesting, and of those who responded, 97% said that they had future employment plans suggesting that they continue to progress and remain motivated. The employment plans of these young people are most frequently related to sport and fitness and are summarised in the table below.

Table 6.2. Future employment plans

	Percentage (Number of young people) (n=32)
Professional: accountancy and physiotherapy	9 (3)
Run own business (often a gym)	25 (8)
Personal trainer/coach	41 (13)
Other: mechanic/construction; administration; teaching assistant; tourism	25 (8)

The overwhelming majority (90%) of young people are satisfied with how their employment plans are progressing. They feel that they are *'headed in the right direction'*, like what they are doing, and have a sense of achievement. Most of all they can see the difference in their lives since they first started at FFP (65%).

The following comments by a young person indicates how they have the qualifications and skills to be independent:

'I'm working, I have more qualifications and I learnt how to apply and get jobs myself.'

Others have progressed with their plans and value the ongoing support given to them at FFP:

'What I got out of FFP is keeping me alive in terms of my career and what I want to do. If I feel down I come down to the gym and get cheered up and empower me. I feel good leaving the gym.'

Interviewees were asked if they would be doing something different if they had not attended FFP and the Pathways programme and the overwhelming majority (95%) said that they would. Many of the responses suggest that young people would be leading a life of crime and worklessness.

Table 6.3. What young people thought they might be doing if they had not attended FFP

	No of responses (n=21)
'bad stuff'; criminal; in prison; on street	7
Doing nothing; not working; lazy; not have friends	9
Don't know – would be different career; life would be different	5

The following comments reflect those given by young people when they considered what they might be doing if they had not attended FFP:

'Bad stuff – I wouldn't be self-motivated. I would be following the wrong crowd if I didn't get help from FFP'

'I'd be a failed criminal, probably in jail'

'I'd be in and out of jobs and be back on the streets again'

'I would be lost as FFP gave me the opportunity I was looking for – they gave me hope in my life'.

6.3 Connections between current life style and attendance at FFP

In addition to supporting young people in practical ways to find a place on further courses and to find employment Pathways also aims to motivate young people to learn, improve their social relationships and to instil values that produce negotiated and peaceful behaviour.

Of those who were interviewed, 95% said that the life they are leading now is connected in some way to their 'FFP experience'.

The following findings are inter-related and show that for many young people the values, social skills, healthy life styles, and qualifications learnt at FFP remain integral to their everyday lives.

Interviewees were asked if they had learnt anything at FFP that was now part of their everyday life. One young person said that they did not know if there was a connection and all the other young people (39) responded positively. The responses are shown in the table below.

Table 6.4. Things learnt at FFP that are part of interviewees' everyday lives (n=39)

		Number of responses
Practical	Use qualifications everyday: Maths and/or English	7
Attitudinal	Think positively; keep calm; motivated; self-belief – do the best I can; do not give up; know I have lots of options	12
Social skills	Communication skills; positive body language; public speaking; listening; helping others; know how to treat people; teamwork; leadership; organised; reasoning	17
Life-style	Health eating; healthy living; fitness; sport	14

Note: some respondents gave more than one response.

This young person explained how they have put into practice what they learnt about leading a healthy lifestyle:

'Yes, I learnt a lot about nutrition and healthy living which I use every day in my diet'

And another young person talked about their determination to achieve their goals and the values they acquired whilst attending at FFP:

'If I want to achieve something even if it's difficult, don't give up – follow your dreams. Helping others and listening more'.

A further question was asked about any connections between what young people had learnt at FFP and their current lifestyle to find out more about possible linkages. The findings

presented in the table below reflects the similarity of these questions and gives more confidence that the 'FFP effect' is continuing for Pathways graduates.

Table 6.5. Connections made by interviewees between what they learnt at FFP and their current lifestyle (n= 29)

		Number of responses
Career	Have qualifications for career choice; plans for future and access to better opportunities; clearer goals	12
Healthy life-style		12
Social skills & positive outlook on life	Improved communication; increased confidence; calmer; positive thinking; friends	18

Note: some respondents gave more than one response.

The comments by these three young people describes how attending FFP has affected many aspects of their current life-style and it is, perhaps, the multiple effects that strengthen the connections:

'Yes, fitness, pretty much everything, self-control, motivation, public speaking, interaction with people from different backgrounds and compromising'

'Yes, quite a lot, the discipline, staying focussed, trying to organise myself better, my confidence has risen!'

'I schedule my life better now. I have priorities and set payment plans for my bills'

It was also apparent that some young people were able to explain how they changed their habits and attitudes towards work during their time at FFP and the information presented in table 6.6 below reflects changes that are compatible with the values that underpin all activities at FFP.

Table 6.6. Connections between FFP experience and changes in values and habits (n= 33)

	Number of responses
New habits: keeping out of trouble; mentally stronger; healthier; have friends; training	22
Values of hard work; setting goals; taking responsibility; increased confidence; improved communication	15
Attending FFP made no difference	1

Over three quarters (78%) said that they are currently participating in sport or taking regular exercise, well above the national average, and for all but three young people, these are a continuation of the routines started at FFP. Indeed, most are boxing and taking Muay Thai.

The majority of young people (63%) said that they were still in contact with students they met at FFP and they considered the overwhelming majority of them to be their friends (88%),

rather than acquaintances. These findings show how a group of previously NEET young people who often feel marginalised and socially isolated have made friends at FFP and have maintained these friendships over time, suggesting a greater sense of inclusion.

6.4 Future prospects

Interviewees were asked how they felt about their future and most were optimistic (84%), some said they felt 'neutral' (four young people), one young person had mixed feelings and one said that they were pessimistic. Most said that they were achieving their plans. Of the eleven young people who said that their plans had 'slipped', many said that they have not achieved their short term goals, for example; getting level 2 or 3 examinations and boxing in more competitions to become professional fighters.

The following comments by three young people are illustrative of the attitudes of other graduates:

'I know I am on the right path to achieve what I need to be successful in life'

'I am positive and feel like I am working towards my goals'

'I feel like everything is going my way at the moment. If I try and it doesn't work, I'll carry on anyway.'

7. Concluding comments

Research for this study and findings from a previous assessment of the progress and impact of FFP (Sampson and Vilella 2012, 2014) identifies the importance of integrating a Pathways programme that combines numeracy and literacy learning with vocational qualifications into a holistic approach. As the findings show such an approach adds considerable value to a Pathways programme.

The findings presented in this study indicate that Pathways at FFP benefits from its continuity, including the low turnover of staff and from being situated in a voluntary organisation that is reflective in its practice. The values and ethos of FFP as well as the high quality of the delivery of the programme also explain how the outcomes are maintained and become embedded into the lives of young people to influence their life course.

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