Building young people's resilience in hard times:

an evaluation of O₂ Think Big in the UK

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Aims of the Think Big programme

Think Big is a youth programme, supported by O_2 Telefónica to provide young people with opportunities to set up projects to make a difference to their own lives and to the wellbeing of their communities. The programme's mission is defined as follows:

'We believe in young people. We believe they have the power to make a better society. We need to back them, celebrate their talent and release their true potential to fix the things that matter. We'll campaign for them. We'll support their projects and promote their achievements. We'll change attitudes. We'll challenge the stereotypes that stifle them and ensure they are connected to the heart of our communities'.

Think Big aims to benefit young people who lead projects or actively take part in them by:

- increasing aspirations, hope and confidence;
- providing new experiences and acquiring new skills;
- improving employability and entrepreneurial skills; and,
- developing the leadership potential of young people.

The project is socially inclusive in its design – but it is expected that at least 50% of young people on the programme will come from less advantaged backgrounds (the target is 80% for young people who are recruited by partner organisations). The programme expects to reach young people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds; young people with disabilities or limiting illnesses; and, from all regions and nations of the UK.

Think Big has been running since March 2010. The programme currently has two levels.

- *Think Big* projects are awarded to young people with good ideas about how to make a contribution to their community. They receive £300 in funding together with some other incentives to do their project and are given information, training and support along the way.

- *Think Bigger* projects get more funding: £2,500, and it is expected that they are larger in terms of scope, reach and ambition. Think Bigger is also accompanied by support and more in-depth training together with some further incentives to get involved and stay committed. Young people who apply to Think Bigger must have done a Think Big project first.

There is potential in the programme to have even larger projects once young people have finished the Think Bigger stage. While developments are not complete yet, it is anticipated that these more generously funded projects could pave the way for the development of social enterprises.

The Policy Research Group, at St Chad's College, Durham University has been appointed to evaluate the programme. This is a well resourced social evaluation project which is now in its third year. The objective of the evaluation is to monitor and analyse programme progress on the indicators and targets set out by O_2 outlined above. The research also aims to demonstrate the impact of the programme in bringing new opportunities to young people and challenging negative stereotypes. The action research element of the evaluation involves close integration into the programme in order to help enhance and deepen the impact of the intervention.

Young people and life transitions

Much of the evidence on young people's attitudes, as a whole, suggests that they share similar aspirations – a good long-term relationship; a decent home in a safe neighbourhood; a job with reasonable security, pay and prospects; and, a good start in life for their children if they have them now or intend to have them one day in the future. So it is tempting to assume that if young people work hard and make the right choices – they will have an equal chance of achieving what they want. But it's not that simple. A range of factors can block their progress and stop them thinking about, or knowing about, some options in the first place.

Making successful transitions from childhood to adulthood requires young people to make good decisions about how they want to shape their future and act on these decisions in a positive way. Such decisions are made in the context of the opportunity structures that are available (or perceived to be available) to young people.

Making such decisions involves choices which may be inherently risky. Risks might include the possibility (or even the probability in some contexts) of failure and disappointment. Not taking risks, by the same token can also have damaging consequences. There are few prospects available for achieving success for those people who are not prepared to take a chance.

Taking risks which may lead to positive outcomes requires young people to have self-belief and confidence. Affluence, as noted above, produces a

higher degree certainty and stability in people's lives – it affords opportunities to plan ahead, build stocks of human and social capital, experiment with alternatives and have a safety net if things do not work out first time around.

Deprivation, by contrast, limits the prospects of planning ahead and increases insecurity, closes down possibilities for building social and human capital, and restricts the range of opportunities available to them.

Being positive about young people, all young people, is the key to challenging society's (and often young people's own expectations) about what they can reasonably be expected achieve. Building young people's assets to bolster resilience is a central part of this process so that good choices can be made within the range of opportunities that are open to young people.

This report provides an evaluation of an 'open programme' for all young people who choose to take part – but in so doing, it recognises that some of these young people may have strong personal assets at the outset, while others have few. But it is not assumed that these differences will translate into particular outcomes for individuals – on the contrary, the point of the research, as it proceeds over the years, it to assess many different and often unpredictable sources of benefit emerging from participation.

Achievements of Think Big

The volume of Think Big project applications and approvals are as follows:

- In 2010 there were 1,037 completed applications, of which 338 were awarded Think Big project grants in 2010.

- In 2011 there were 2,498 completed applications, of which 1,370 had been awarded Think Big grants by the end of December 2011.

- The total number of Think Big completed applications by the end of December 2011is 3,535, of which 1,708 have been awarded grants.

- In 2011 there were 120 Think Bigger applications, of which 70 were awarded Think Bigger project grants.

It is estimated that for the programme as a whole:

- About 3,400 young people have been involved in the project in leadership roles.

- About 29,890 young people have benefitted as participants in the programme.

The programme is socially inclusive:

- Applications are being received from each UK Nation and English region broadly in proportion to population. The exceptions are London where applications are about twice as high than would be expected by population estimates, and Scotland

where only half as many projects are received as would be expected.

- Applications and awards by gender are equal. Applications from ethnic minority groups are also broadly similar by gender, except amongst Asians where male applications are about 25% higher. The success rate of female Asians is about 15% higher than for males.

- In 2011 the age distribution of applications was relatively balanced with 19% from 13-16 years, 30% for 16-18 years, 22% for 19-21years and 29% for the over 22 years. Awards of projects were not significantly dissimilar. Partner organisations tended to introduce young people aged 15-18 years into the programme. For the over 18s, most Awards were made to young people who made open applications

- Disabled young people, or young people with limiting illnesses currently make up about 5% of applications and awards. Similar numbers of applications come through open applications or via youth partner organisations.

- About 33% of participants in Think Big have achieved A Level qualifications or degrees. By contrast 24% have no qualifications and 17% have fewer than 5 GCSEs at A-C.

- The programme reaches all ethnic minority groups successfully. The programme is particularly successful at making awards to Asian and Black young people – especially from the most deprived quintile of the Index of Multiple Deprivation. White young people, and young men in particular, are less well represented in the more deprived communities.

- The distribution of projects by the Index of Multiple Deprivation indicate that the programme is successful in meeting its ambitions. 34% of awards come from the two most deprived deciles in the Index of Multiple Deprivation, and 57% from the four most deprived deciles (7% above target for the programme.

Figure 1 **Project reach to young people measured by the Index of Multiple**
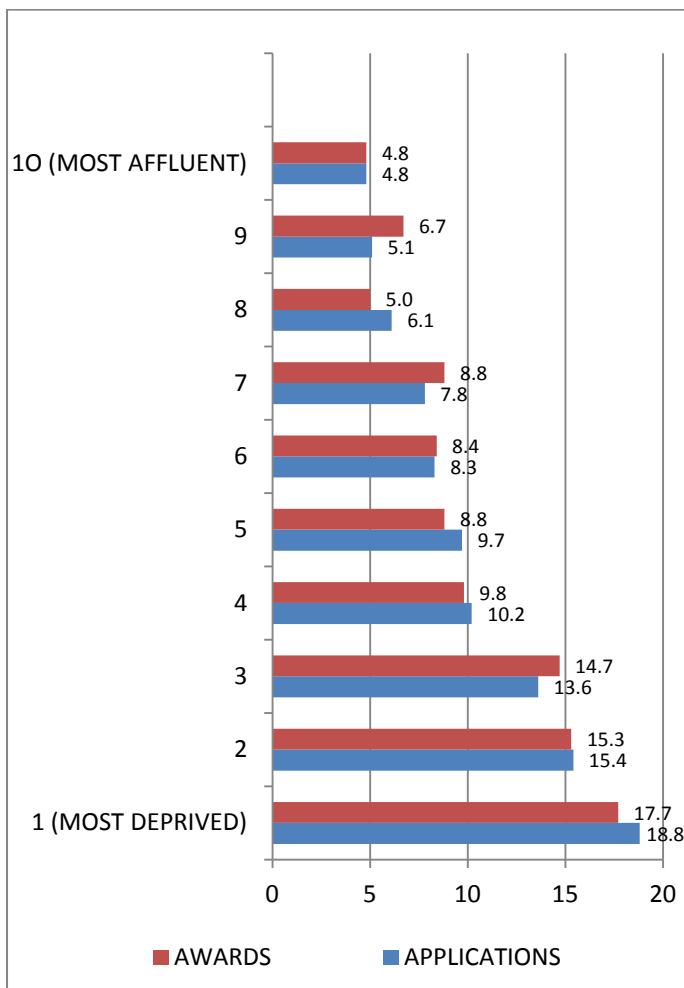
Social return on investment

The value of the programme has been assessed using methods broadly in line with those adopted by Social Return on Investment (SROI) practitioners. This aspect of the analysis is still in its early stages and estimates given may rise or fall once more is understood about the impact of the programme.

It is recognised that measuring the 'economic value' and 'social value' of interventions is difficult. But a range of quantitative indicators are used, and judgements on value are informed by intensive qualitative research. Data used include:

- *Data on programme volumes* – including the numbers of: projects started, young people trained and supported, project leaders, active participants and benefitting participants.

- *Biographical information on young people in the programme* – including age, gender, ethnicity, disability, employment and education status, educational achievement, and socio economic status as indicated by the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

- *Attitudinal data on young people in the programme* – data are collected on: pro-sociality; expectations and experiences of the programme; perceptions of person skills and attributes; and, confidence about the future.

- *Data on the involvement of employee supported volunteers*, including information on the impact of the programme on their changed attitudes towards young people.

The assessment is made on the basis of impact against the following assumptions that Think Big can help:

- young people feel more hopeful and confident (which may help them tackle problems/opportunities in a positive way).

- young people to become more resilient (so that they have the emotional strength to get through difficult times and make good choices).

- challenge negative stereotypes about young people (by showing that they can make a positive difference to community).

- young people in the programme develop employability skills which may help them get a job or spur them on to complete or start education and training.

It is estimated that the value of time invested by young people can be valued at £4.4m; that the pro-bono support by partner organisations is valued at £80,000; the value of time invested by employee supported volunteers is £1.175m.

On the basis of weighting data to account for the added value to the programme by reaching young people with fewer opportunities (measured by their position in the Index of Multiple Deprivation), it is estimated that this adds over 56% additional value to the programme.

When the value of the impact is set against the cost of programme delivery by O$_2$ Telefónica, it is estimated that the value of the investment is increased by about 290%, about three times the cost of the programme

Changed attitudes and beliefs

The impact of the programme on young people's confidence, attitudes and beliefs is significant as indicated by Figure 2.

Figure 2 **Changed attitudes**

- 85 per cent of young people cared more about their community by the end of the project

- 75 per cent have widening horizons – indicated by their willingness to state that they look at the world in a different way.

- Over two thirds state that they are now willing to try to do new things and that they have learned new skills.

- Just short of two thirds of young people say that they have met other young people from different social backgrounds

- While young people understandably feel worried about their future, after taking part in Think Big, 55% feel more confident about their future.

Think Big: in their own words

The programme helps young people to set themselves challenges:

'Being able to run a project such as I'm doing at the moment, seems to be a lot more possible. Before, these types of things seemed like, oh, it's something that other people would do and I can't manage, or I don't have the support. But things like this I could recommend to anybody. If you wanted to get a project up and running, that it is definitely possible. There is the support out there, financial support as well as just encouraging you to actually get it up and running.'

The aim of the programme is to encourage young people to think up ideas on projects which are important to them – this is appreciated by participants – but they also welcome the support they get as well.

'They're there to support you and [they're] not overbearing with it. They let you get on with it, which I really need that as an artist and I don't like people clouding my inspirations with too many rules and regulations.'

Think Big helps young people by improving their own skills – but also inspires them to behave altruistically.

'We started O₂ Think Big and I got really involved in it. I think that's probably inspired me to do other things as well because I'm now also a deputy member of the youth parliament… so it's really made me kind of get into more helping the community with volunteering about stuff.'

The ability to empathise with other young people and to bring them together to have new experiences was recognised by many as a significant benefit of the programme.

'It's not only in running the business [of a Think Big project], but actually face-to-face talking and interacting with people; and you know it's actually good to mix with other people that are outside [your] social group... I think the main thing was, yeah, just being part of the community and actually seeing everyone come together and enjoying the day.'

Having a voice and being taken seriously is important for many young people. When young people do get the opportunity to engage with a wider constituency of people, they benefit from this in terms of building their confidence.

'It shows the wider community that actually... [young people] do take a responsibility and they are not all standing on street corners and actually a lot of young people have got something very valid to say and its very important that we encourage them to think for themselves and actually understand where they are coming from, so it's definitely changed the perception of how young people are perceived.'

Many young people involved with Think Big were genuinely surprised that they can make a difference by challenging stereotypes. Challenging negative stereotypes about young people was particularly

important, following the riots in several UK cities in July 2011.

'Seeing as my event was a couple of weeks after the riots hit, I think it has challenged the ideas that people have about young people and their lack of ambition, drive and even talent. This event showed that there are young people who are determined to contribute to their community in a positive way and I think we sent out a strong message that not all youth are how they've been depicted in the media.'

Young people wanted it to be recognised that they are socially responsible citizens and that they have the potential to make a positive difference to society.

'I think that it's going to show people that we can be responsible, that we can run and maintain a project and that we can organise ourselves in something worthwhile.'

'I think some people who previously would have just passed us off as teenagers going out and doing horrible things, we've done a positive thing and I think it's just a good example of a group of young people putting on a positive event for a good cause and yeah, I think it has changed people's perceptions.'

'I think it's a good way to get involved in making a difference and showing that we've actually wanted to do something and we're not as the media portrays us to be negative. There's quite a lot of young people that actually want to make a difference and make something with their lives… it's a good way to get a positive look on young people.'

Integral to the process of making an impact for the community is the development of young people's leadership and planning skills.

'I think the best thing about it is that most people who wouldn't even think about doing project management that are only like 13 to 25, they wouldn't think about it. But when they've done their project, it gives them more experience in what to do in the future, if they want to do businesses or something like that.'

Unlocking young people's leadership potential and building their confidence is an important element of the aims of Think Big. Without that confidence, they would not have the authority to motivate others to get involved and stay involved in their projects.

'I'm sort of more confident now in terms of being able to plan a project from start to finish and actually deliver it and lead it so that would be the main thing more confidence in terms of speaking with different people as well to promote the project so that has really helped me, sort of people management skills has really improved, networking skills meeting different people and getting contacts as well which has been a big improvement.'

Developing soft skills such as the ability to lead and motivate others requires young people to have a stronger sense of self belief and the ability to convince others that they can be trusted to get things done.

'I think, definitely, I think in terms of confidence [I have benefitted]. I mean I have done projects before but this is a little bit out of my comfort zone… I've not run a project before looking at this subject and I think I developed in terms of confidence and leadership skills as well. Because I think they were seeing me as a role model (even though some of them were my parents age), so I think in terms of leadership and confidence that was quite a change but also just generally.'

Participants felt valued and trusted by being involved in Think Big. The investment of trust by giving young people responsibility for managing money, was a highly valued aspect of the programme.

'I think it went really well, I think O_2 was really helpful, if it wasn't for the money we got from O_2 none of this would have been possible, so I think they played a major part and I wouldn't change what they did for us.'

'You know, we weren't able to get to this stage if it wasn't for Think Big and O_2. And you know, people were actually quite surprised that a big organisation such as O_2 would do such a thing for local communities… it was a good experience and everyone recognised that O_2 and Think Big are actually here to do positive things so it really just boosted everyone knowing that.'

Experiencing Think Bigger

The second level of the programme, Think Bigger, provides young people with £2,500 worth of funding to do project work. To qualify for this level of funding, they must first have successfully completed a Think Big project.

The higher level of investment puts more demand on young people to invest in their own development at residential courses, run by UK Youth.

'The lectures were just brilliant because they gave us a talk on things you would never have thought of. For example one of them was just literally a lecture on the use of Facebook which was brilliant because we use Facebook every day, but not once had I thought about how it could actually improve a business or improve publicity.'

'There was a lot of stuff that I did really take on board... everything that UK Youth done was cool. Then we had O_2 people come in and talk and there was a couple of them that I really felt had a genuine concern for Think Big. And then there was other people that what they were talking about wasn't really that useful to my project, but I still got something out of it.'

The residential helped to cement a community of practice so that project leaders could draw on each other's advice and experience as their projects developed.

'[It was] really motivational to be around other young people with bright ideas because where I'm based, I'm one of few young people to carry an optimistic perspective on life. So being in a room full of kids like me showed me there's actually a lot more young people out there and it should be celebrated do you know what I mean, for what they're doing and that was great.'

The tangible benefits of training included information on issues such as safeguarding, communication budgeting and business planning.

'I learnt how to do a business plan. I've never done one before… also how to publicise, how to get my name out there, how to get physically out there and to get people to hear about my project, rather than just word of mouth. I thought that was really helpful because before that I had no idea. I didn't know how to you know, I didn't want to go out and fork out for adverts in newspapers and stuff but at the training we were taught how to use free supplies and how you can use publicity.'

Residential training gave young people a lasting sense of confidence to get their project done. This was particularly important in relation to their ability to communicate with people at different levels.

'Speaking to people that you usually wouldn't, like corporate individuals and trying to understand the language. It's just having a greater self awareness, you've got to be aware of how people are perceiving you… but the more I'd done it the more I kind of engaged with the project and the people and the more and more comfortable I became.'

Building realism into their project planning was supported by their O₂ Helpers who were present at the residential. Subsequently, Helpers gave project leaders a great deal of support in many cases.

'She was amazing… she was a huge support… like if I had any concerns then I'd email her and let her know and she'd email me back or she'd call me, always checking to see how everything's going, even if there wasn't anything wrong she'd still see if everything was in check and see I hadn't forgot anything.'

'He's been sending a load of stuff and trying to get us into radio stations and he's sent me application forms for work experience with the BBC and stuff and… sometimes when we plan an event he looks for stuff like venues and that kind of stuff for us and what's going on at O₂. So I think it's really good that he's there to back us up from that aspect and then if I ever need help with anything, he's there.'

'To be honest I haven't got one criticism, I know that I'm not the kind of person she would normally be dealing with. Like I know I'm very different to her staff and that but she's so patient with me… She's really like open minded to me as an individual and my project and I can't give her any more credibility, I think she's great, she's a good help.'

In some cases reliance on Helpers was considerable, but this support was gladly given.

'I'm literally in contact with her every couple of days sending emails back and forth, keeping each other updated. She's helping me with other stuff as well not just my project like she's helping me with my CV and helping me getting an idea of what kind of industry I could work in. What I could use my skills in, she's helped me in more ways than just the project.'

Being seen to have completed their projects successfully was important for participants. Many talked about their experiences in terms of a 'rite of passage'. In some case, this produced effusive testimonials:

'I've loved the journey we have been on throughout this project and I highly recommend it to every young person who has passion to share skills to benefit others.'

'I couldn't have a break from it, if I was ill and had to have a day off school, just because I loved it so much … I'd have to keep going at it just because I enjoy it…it was a challenge to keep going and keep doing it every single day.'

Support in Think Bigger provided young people with the confidence to see the project through to completion and built their skill sets as project managers. Many of the young people were grateful for this opportunity as they felt it had a real impact on their lives.

'It's really made me who I am now, it's really shaped me. I mean, I know I was doing it while I was doing my GCSE's as well… but anyone can get qualifications but not anyone can do that - actually gain funding. I had an amazing experience and it wasn't just about me as well - it was about everyone - which I really liked. Yeah, it was just amazing.'

In some cases, young people took this further and stated that involvement in Think Bigger helped them to make a more successful transition towards adult life.

'It's just helped me find my path in life earlier on than other people, I've found that already.'

'It's given us opportunities to go places and meet people you wouldn't have had if you hadn't had the project because I mean, there's just so many different things happening. It's helped me get into college as well because of all my experience and stuff, so that helped me get into college.'

As was shown to be the case amongst the Think Big project leaders, participants in Think Bigger felt the investment by O₂ was important to them in more ways than just the investment of funding.

'It's been a great experience it's helped me in a lot of ways... It's done a lot more than, like a lot of people just write cheques to me and you go and do your work and come back with a form but this has been much more like, it's been really involved... they have a genuine concern of the kids I'm trying to help rather than just like signing off a cheque they're a lot more than that, but everybody as well not just the O₂ people but the UK Youth people. I almost feel like I have a personal

relationship with the individuals and they all genuinely have a concern for what I'm doing.'

'…the fact I can now tell people I've got this close working partnership with a company like O₂ Telefõnica says a lot and has given a lot of credibility to me and my work, so that for me is like the top thing about the whole programme being able to use this as an opportunity to develop myself further.'

Social impact: four case studies

The social impact of their work was the principal source of satisfaction for young people, even if it involved a difficult journey. Daniel led a project called **Project Change**,

'I think the community has benefited because they see young people from their community doing something positive... And it has also helped to build communication between young people and the older people, where there can sometimes be quite a bit of a divide. But there seems to be quite a good sort of atmosphere between the two generations which is good.'

Working with young people from the estate where he lives, Daniel believes, has helped to change negative perceptions of those young people who tend to 'hang out' wearing hooded sweatshirts. It has shown that they can be just as friendly as the young people who were taking part in the project:

'A few young people walking to the shop with a hooded jumper, there's the assumption that they are going to cause havoc, so anything that we can do which is obviously positive helps a lot and especially the estate where we've been [working], where young people look exactly the same, wear the same hoodies and look like any other teenager but doing something like [our project] changes their perception, you know, quite a lot.'

The project not only helped the community by completing practical tasks, it also provided a sense of achievement and fulfilment for the young people

involved. The project has also encouraged and enhanced a sense of community cohesion. The visibility of young people out in their community doing something positive has helped challenge and change negative perceptions of young people on the estate. It has also raised awareness of the work that Project Change does and increased opportunities for them to get involved in other projects in the local area.

The main aim of Josh's Think Bigger project, **Disability Awareness Road Shows,** was to raise awareness of one of his passions: wheelchair basketball. He was interested in promoting the sport and raising awareness about the skills needed to play it. To do this, Josh arranged visits to schools with members of his team to make presentations. They also took wheelchairs along, to let young people have a go and see what playing the game entailed. Josh concluded:

'Not many people knew how to play wheelchair basketball… the amount of people that came up before [the road show] and said - 'oh it's easy we'll be able to score'! Then after[wards], we had people coming up saying 'my hands are killing me', or 'I've got blisters' or 'wow that was hard' - it changed people's views very fast.'

The sessions provided an opportunity to raise awareness about the lives of wheelchair users. As Josh pointed out, it gave able-bodied young people the chance to ask questions - which was important for widening understanding of disabilities.

'…A lot of people now know how to treat [disabled] people and just treating everyone the same. Everyone wants to be treated exactly the same and everyone be equal.'

Laura's Think Bigger project. **Sound Skills**, involved making music with children and young people who are autistic. Laura was already involved with other music projects but wanted to do something different.

'I think from a personal point of view, it's learning to communicate differently. Working with children from different autism units that haven't met before and I

wasn't familiar with, it was challenging in that, trying to get to know someone who has learning difficulties can be quite tough and sometimes they aren't happy to communicate. [They] find it quite difficult to integrate with other children who are struggling with the same problems - so that was quite tough at times. Trying to get them all to get along and to listen to me and to co-ordinate and be happy to share some of the roles…it has been very rewarding'

The Think Big website became an integral part of Laura's project. The project webpage helped to engage participants by showing their achievements:

'I've tried to keep the young people that I'm working with involved [by] keeping an online track of what they are doing… Having an online space that documents what they are doing is beneficial for them because it's something tangible that they can look at and remember… and get to see their work documented, so yes I do think it's useful'

Abbie's Think Bigger project, **Kingston Crew,** involved setting up a dance group due to a lack other opportunities for young people in her local area.

'Our project was all about getting the kids and youths off the street and out of trouble by teaching them new skills and bringing different parts of the community together which would not normally and we did this through dance'.

Abbie's project had the unexpected outcome of attracting participants from older generations. So the age range of the group stretched between 2 to 60. Her Think Bigger project aimed to build on her now established dance group and to branch out into other kinds of dance.

Abbie's project has been successful in reaching across all generations with a total of 70 people of all ages now attending her classes. It has encouraged girls and women of all ages to get involved with their local community, interact with those of different ages broaden their horizons by going to new places and meeting people who share the passion of dancing.

Their increased interaction with the local community has helped to raise awareness of the positive actions of young people. For example, Abbie's dance group got involved with a charity event at a local supermarket, and as Abbie explained*:*

'When we were doing the display we heard an old man saying to his wife 'see, all these youngsters ain't bad'. It put a smile on my face. So it is changing slowly, that we ain't all bad'.

The role of employee volunteers: key findings

Many ESVs were keen to find an opportunity to get involved in volunteering and Think Big provided a route to achieve this objective. 61% ESVs in the survey had previously volunteered.

Nearly half of participants were encouraged by friends and colleagues in the company who were getting involved. A significant minority, 36%, were encouraged to get involved by their line manager.

Altruistic motivations are more important to ESVs than instrumental ones. Nearly 90 per cent of respondents wanted to make a positive contribution to society; well over two thirds wanted to get more involved with their communities; and, nearly a half wanted specifically to work with young people.

Personal development is important to them too: about a half of ESVs wanted to learn new skills and over 60 per cent wanted to improve their personal management skills.

Well over 60 per cent of respondents felt that Think Big had helped them feel more a part of their community and about 58 per cent felt that they had a stronger understanding of social issues.

About half felt that they were more able to have new experiences and were willing try to do new things - suggesting a broadening of outlook, building self confidence and strengthening of pro-sociality.

Being involved with Think Big has a positive impact on ESVs feelings about their working lives and relationships with immediate colleagues and the company more generally.

Almost half of survey respondents felt that Think Big had made them feel like they were part of a distinctive social group and that Think Big had become part of the 'social glue' of the organisation.

Many ESVs make a significant out-of-work time commitment to Think Big. More than a third of participants said that they were now more likely to get involved in voluntary work with external organisations.

Nearly 45 per cent of ESVs agreed that involvement with Think Big had changed their perceptions of young people in a positive way.

Changed attitudes about young people helped ESVs to think about themselves in different ways and could affect the way they related to colleagues at work:

'I think what was most surprising for me was that... you can't just categorise young people, you know the ones who are on the path to do academic work and have a great future and then these others who you see a hopeless cases, and then the others who you see as borderline delinquents. I've had my eyes opened, you know, they're not a bad lot, they've just had bad breaks. So I think that my views have change. Changed about colleagues in the workplace too. Interacting with people on the outside has made me see things differently here – I have found that I get less stressed in the workplace [laughs]. If I am getting wound up, I'm better at walking away for a few minutes and not making anything of it.'

ESVs generally believe that Think Big has brought benefit to the company: almost 85 per cent of respondents felt that the general public would have more positive attitudes about the company, and 84 per cent thought that Think Big demonstrated that O_2 had a sense of social purpose and that the work they did personally shows how the company helps communities.

Conclusion

This report shows that Think Big has matured as a successful social programme. It was ambitious from the start in scope, which set its key partner organisations very significant challenges. Because it is innovative in its approach, enormous effort had to be put in to develop the systems, processes and support mechanisms to get it up and running. Furthermore, when things didn't work out first time – compromise, flexibility and creativity was needed to get the programme in shape. This has been something of a voyage of discovery, not merely the delivery of a set of outputs.

Many CSR programmes are much less ambitious. Often they are short term and involve handing money over to an organisation to do more of what they already do – a form of corporate sponsorship. Others put money in fast into things which get a quick win. Think Big, on the other hand, is in for the long term. It has allowed itself to evolve into a programme which will get better as it grows and have more impact too.

The process is not yet complete. The programme is now being rolled out across six European countries which will throw up many new challenges. And in the UK, where the programme began, there is much yet to do. The Alumni programme is developing fast now – which needs to be evaluated over the next year. The role of partner organisations needs to be explored in more detail – to see which organisations are having the biggest impact – and finding out if what they do can be adopted by others. Think Bigger is now getting off the ground – so we need to see what works well for young people and what makes the biggest difference for society. We still need to know more about the longer-term impact on young people's skills, confidence and resilience – which means capitalising on opportunities for more in depth qualitative analysis.

Last year, the headline finding of the report was that investing trust in young people paid the biggest dividends. I think it is important to keep that in mind as the programme evolves. This year, one of the key messages is that young people and older people (in the guise of employee supported volunteers) are capable of challenging their stereotypes and tackling their prejudices – so that they can both understand and appreciate other young people more. It's a key objective of the programme - but it's not the most important message.

In the 2011 report, it was stated that the programme could not have come at a better time as unemployment was rising. In reality, this was just the start – unemployment has rocketed since then and this is having a strong impact on young people's hope and confidence about the future. They know, no matter how hard they try, that there is a risk that they will not get a good job – or perhaps a job of any kind for some time to come.

In times like these, it is easy to become fatalistic – trust in luck not personal effort. So young people need to be resilient. And that resilience will help them make better choices when opportunities come their way – or be able to manage their lives more successfully when they don't. Think Big, in my view, is making a very important contribution to young people by helping them build their resilience. That is the key finding of this year's study.

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Section One
Introduction

Think Big is a youth programme, supported by O_2 to provide young people with opportunities to set up projects to make a difference to their own lives and to the wellbeing of their communities. The aim of the programme is ambitious in scope. The programme hopes to engage and inspire young people to make positive choices for themselves and their communities. Moreover, the programme sets out to engage with adults, through campaigns, to think differently about the positive role young people can and do play in their communities.

> *'We believe in young people. We believe they have the power to make a better society. We need to back them, celebrate their talent and release their true potential to fix the things that matter. We'll campaign for them. We'll support their projects and promote their achievements. We'll change attitudes. We'll challenge the stereotypes that stifle them and ensure they are connected to the heart of our communities'.*

The purpose of this report is to evaluate how the programme has progressed in its second year and to make observations on how its full potential can be enhanced in future years.

1.1   Aims and structure of the programme

Think Big aims to benefit young people who lead projects or actively take part in them by:

- increasing aspirations, hope and confidence;
- providing new experiences, and acquiring new skills;
- improving employability and entrepreneurial skills; and,
- developing the leadership potential of young people.

The project is socially inclusive in its design – but is particularly keen to provide opportunities to young people from less advantaged backgrounds or who lack social or emotional resilience. It is expected that at least 50% of young people on the programme will come from less advantaged backgrounds (the target is higher, standing at 80% for young people who are recruited by partner organisations).

It is expected that all young people can benefit, the project expects to reach young people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds; young people with disabilities or limiting illnesses; and, from all regions and nations of the UK. So, progress is being monitored to ensure that all levels of participation are representative.

Think Big has been running since March 2010. The programme currently has two levels.

- **Think Big** projects are awarded to young people with good ideas about how to make a contribution to their community. They receive £300 in funding together with some

other incentives to do their project and are given information, training and support along the way.

- *Think Bigger* projects get more funding: £2,500, and it is expected that they are larger in terms of scope, reach and ambition. Think Bigger is also accompanied by support and more in-depth training together with some further incentives to get involved and stay committed. Young people who apply to Think Bigger must have done a Think Big project first.

There is potential in the programme to have even larger projects once young people have finished the Think Bigger stage. While developments are not complete yet, it is anticipated that these more generously funded projects could pave the way for the development of social enterprises.

Formal and informal support is provided in the programme by a range of individuals and organisations:

- **Think Big core partnership**: this includes contributions from:
  - *O₂* (overseeing website development and operation, campaigning, media and comms, providing and incentivising employee volunteers);
  - *National Youth Agency* (overall project management, partnership arrangements, recruiting and engaging Think Big national and regional partner organisations, providing opportunities for employee volunteers);
  - *Conservation Foundation* (managing the application process, coordinating the allocation of resources to young people, monitoring young people's progress through the Think Big journey); and,
  - *UK Youth* (coordinating training and mentoring for Think Bigger project leaders and employee volunteers).

- **Think Big partner organisations**: there are now over fifty youth partners organisations supporting the programme, including small local organisations and large national partners.

- **O₂ Helpers:** are employee volunteers who provide support for Think Big.

- **Community stakeholders**: individuals (family, friends, community champions) and organisations (such as non-partner youth organisations, faith groups, schools and colleges) who encourage young people to apply and give support to the projects.

- **Think Big alumni**: Think Big alumni will play an important role in building the momentum and ethos of the programme.

Figure 1.1 presents a diagram on the stages through which individual Think Big projects are initiated, supported and completed as they go through the first level.

Figure 1.1   **Stages of the Think Big project**

	Sources of information and support	**Impact on project objectives and outcomes**
Involving: how young people find out about the programme	Think Big core partnership Think Big partner organisations Community stakeholders O₂ Helpers Think Big alumni/Young Advisors	Using Think Big website, local networks, media and campaigns to increase knowledge and interest in the programme and to attract and maximise interest of potential applicants
Engaging: how young people apply to enter the programme	Think Big core partnership Think Big partner organisations Community stakeholders O₂ Helpers Think Big alumni/Young Advisors	Secure successful applications and entry into programme via Think Big website Assess level of support needed by applicants and arrangements
Preparing: how young people are supported in planning and developing the right skills to do their projects	Think Big core partnership Think Big partner organisations O₂ Helpers Community stakeholders	Use web information tools, training, mentoring, networking to provide practical guidance on achieving outcomes and to build confidence and realism for project leaders to achieve objectives
Resourcing: how Think Big allocates resources to young people	Think Big core partnership	Provide funding and incentives and invest 'social trust' in young people
Supporting: how young people get support while they are doing their projects	Think Big core partnership O₂ Helpers Community stakeholders Think Big partner organisations Think Big alumni/Young Advisors	Provide mentoring, training and encouragement to improve participants' imagination, confidence, skills, capability, resilience, positive risk taking & achievement
Celebrating: how young people communicate and share knowledge on the success of their projects	Think Big core partnership O₂ Helpers Think Big alumni/Young Advisors	Use media, local and larger events, social media / Think Big website to celebrate successes in order to: challenge stereotypes of young people; build commitment and confidence of new entrants; embed alumni in supporting Think Big; and, strengthen commitment to Think Bigger
Re-investing: how young people who have completed projects can invest more energy into the programme	Think Big core partnership Think Big alumni/Young Advisors Think Big partner organisations O₂ Helpers, wider stakeholders	Think Big alumni move on to Think Bigger, encourage others to enter the programme in order to embed identity and build momentum into the programme and invigorate campaigns to challenge stereotypes

1.2   Approach to the evaluation

There are many approaches which can be adopted to evaluate the social impact of projects. While there are variations on the theme there are, essentially, three basic approaches:

- Qualitative methodologies which assess impact through in-depth interview and observation of the young people, practitioners and community stakeholders who are associated with interventions.

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- Quantitative methodologies which collect evidence on the biographical characteristics and social circumstances of young people and the employment of research instruments to test how attitudes and behaviour have changed across the life-time (and beyond) of the project.

- Impact assessment measures (drawing upon either or both qualitative and quantitative evidence) which produce indications of the wider social benefit of the programme to society.

This is a well resourced social evaluation project which is now in its third year. The objective of the evaluation is to monitor and analyse programme progress on the indicators and targets set out by O_2 outlined above. The research also aims to demonstrate the impact of the programme in bringing new opportunities to young people and challenging negative stereotypes. The action research element of the evaluation involves close integration into the programme in order to help enhance and deepen the impact of the intervention.

There are several sources of evidence which are used in the evaluation:

- Collection of quantitative biographical data on young people drawn from the Think Big website to assess inclusivity of the programme and map these data with national indicators of multiple deprivation to assess project reach.

- Collection of quantitative data on young people's pro-social attitudes and expectations about the impact of their projects collected from the Think Big website at different stages of their project journey.

- Gathering information on web usage through analysis of samples of projects.

- Observation and evaluation of training and mentoring of young people for Think Big and Think Bigger to assess how well they are prepared to undertake projects.

- In depth interviews with young people on a sample of project journeys throughout the life of the programme, focusing progressively on young people with different biographies.

- Research on partner organisations' contribution to Think Big to assess the impact of the programme as a whole and to identify and embed good practice across the programme.

- Evaluate employee volunteering participation and experience through questionnaires, focus groups, observation and interview throughout the programme.

This report draws on a wide range of evidence which has been collected in 2011 including:

- 60 qualitative interviews with young people undertaking Think Big and Think Bigger projects.

- Collection and analysis of quantitative biographical and pro-social data from all participants in the Think Big programme.

- Participant observation at Team Away days and participation in weekly team conference calls.

- 30 informal qualitative interviews with ESVs, observation at National Volunteer Day in Leeds and London, 4 focus groups in Preston Brook and Slough and a survey of 195 O_2 employee volunteers.

- 10 in-depth interviews with youth partner organisations (9 face-to-face, 1 by phone)

- Participant observation of 3 Think Bigger (level 2) training residentials.

- Participant observation at Conservation Foundation at project award meetings

1.3 Structure of the report

This report is divided into several sections. Section 2 provides a contextual discussion of the social, policy and economic background for the evaluation and a position statement on the way that research on young people will be framed. Section 3 explores progress in the programme by evaluating its reach to the full range of potential participants. Section 4 begins the process of undertaking a social impact analysis for young people, their communities and for society in general. Section 5 explores, drawing on qualitative research, the experiences of young people on the programme. Section 6 reports on the participation of employee supported volunteers who assist the young people on the programme. Section 7 provides a summary of key conclusions from the analysis.

Section Two

Young people and life transitions

'Our parents thought we might be corrupted by one another into becoming whatever it was they most feared… On our behalf they dreaded the closeness of adolescent friendship, the predatory behaviour of strangers on trains, the lure of the wrong kind of girl. How far their anxieties outran our experience.'

Julian Barnes *The Sense of an Ending, 2011.*

Society as a whole, adults in general and parents in particular worry about young people. These worries can take people in two directions. For those young people adults know and care about, as parents, teachers and family friends – well-meaning efforts are made to help them make successful transitions into adult life. Attempts are made to socialise young people into the 'right' frame of mind – whatever that is perceived to be – and to position them for opportunities that will set them on the course adults believe is good for them.

For those young people adults don't know, conversely, stereotypical or prejudicial ideas are often received or constructed about the potential threats they might pose. Such threats might be felt by adults themselves, or they may fear the potential bad influence or danger to the young people they care about. These 'other' young people are unknown in experiential terms, tend to be regarded with suspicion and more often than not, tend to be avoided.

A recent Barnardo's poll for example asked 2,102 members of the general public if they felt 'children in this country are becoming feral', or if 'British children are beginning to behave like animals'. Similarly, respondents were asked to comment on this statement 'the trouble with youngsters is that they're angry, violent and abusive'. Fewer respondents agreed with these stereotypes than might be expected. Nevertheless, nearly 50 per cent of adults could be cajoled into agreeing that most young people were 'feral', 'animals' and 'abusive'.

Studies such as this may not produce reliable evidence. But deeper analysis of these data provide interesting clues about who is most worried about young people in society. Background analysis of the Barnardo's data show that it is people aged between 35-44 who are, by far, the most worried – which is not surprising because they are more likely to be parents and will be concerned about the wellbeing of their growing children.[1]

Ironically, the world adults try, with the best intentions, to prepare young people for, has changed by the time young people arrive at adulthood. Theirs is a world where they must make choices, take risks and make mistakes as they find their way. So most young people

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[1] Data were provided by ECM via Barnardo's press office to undertake this analysis.

become in the eyes of adults, to a greater or lesser extent, strangers who think and behave inexplicably – or rather - not in the way that is expected or desired.

Figure 2.1   **Stereotypical attitudes about young people's negative attributes**
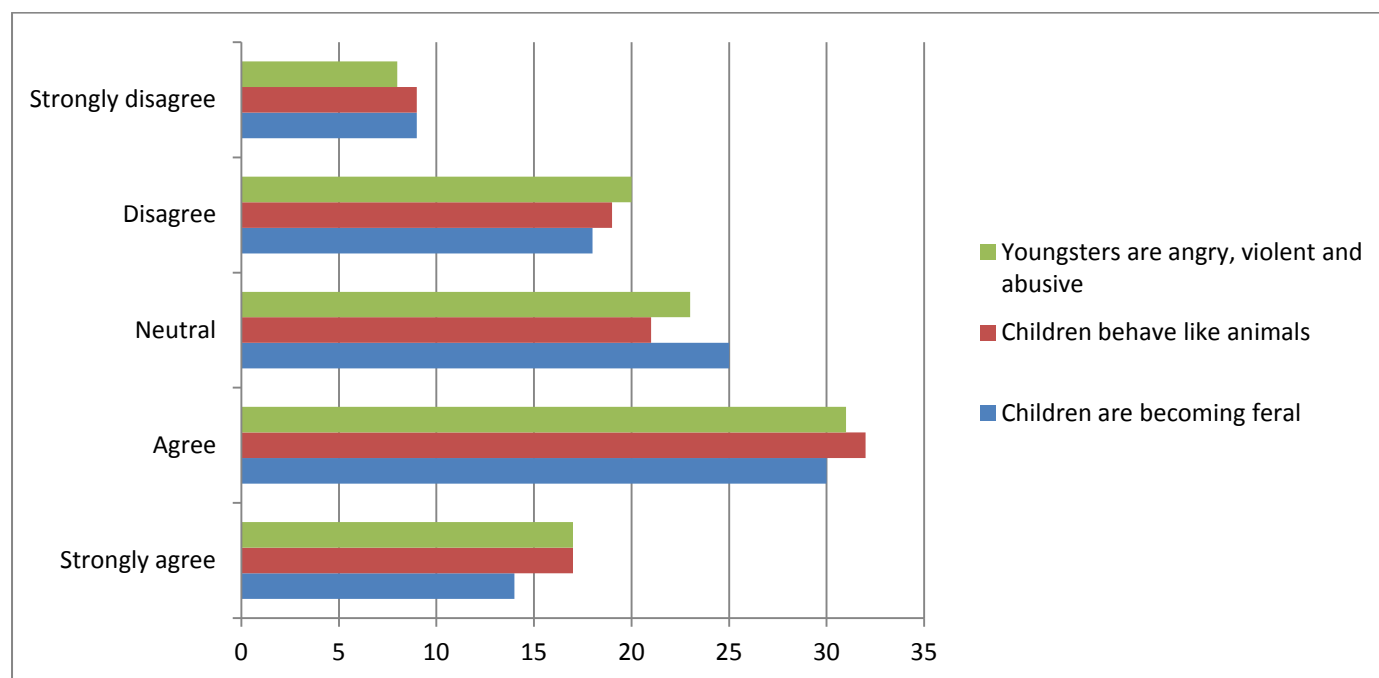
Young people may well feel stifled by, or rail against, the expectations of the adult world to some extent – as it has always been so. But it is equally important to recognise that the vast majority of young people hold quite conventional expectations about a successful and happy adult life – and the majority work hard to achieve a successful transition. The disjuncture between expectations of adults and young people tends to be exaggerated – from a big picture perspective.

The approach to analysis and understanding in this study is broad in scope but inclusive in principle. Its breadth allows the big picture to dominate the analysis, not the exception. Using exceptions to the rule is the trick often used by those who want to pursue a particular interest or to promulgate prejudice. Ideas and understanding have to be kept in proportion. In the summer of 2011 the UK witnessed riots and looting in the capital and some of its biggest cities. But few young people got involved – and like as not, many of those who did, will now be regretting it.

As one young man, who had been in trouble with the police before told post-riot researchers.

> *'On the night, people were asking me: 'Come on, come out.' But I said no. I don't cuss them for doing it. It's up to you, It's your life, not mine. But just know, that if you get caught, you're pissed. You go to court, these people don't know, they might have been arrested and let off, but they've never been to Crown Court, never been remanded … they don't realise that if they get arrested for looting they ain't getting bail. And then, you go to Crown Court and you're sitting there and it sinks in your heart, you're waiting to get picked up and transferred. That's when the shit hits the fan, and they'll be crying their eyes out wishing they never got involved. I've been through it myself.' (NatCen, 2011:40).*

This chilling statement, if read in the right context, might deflate the bravado even of those who have expended much effort in polishing the surfaces of their street persona. Having

'attitude', after all, can conceal as much as it reveals about a person. What's interesting about the riots, taking a step back, is that all young people have to look in the mirror of those events and think about where they stand. Ironically, some of those who were involved take a different view from that given in the quote above. Instead, some try to justify their actions, with the benefit of hindsight, and in some cases those actions are exaggerated and romanticised. As the story or the riots enters the realms of history, it will be easier for commentators to use the available evidence to tell the story they want. I think this is a good piece of evidence to keep in mind, from the O$_2$ Youth Matters study:

> *'The reaction to the events of August 2011 is clear: young people are almost unanimous in condemning the actions of peers who participated in the rioting and looting. More than eight in ten (81%) 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that the people involved in the trouble had no justification for their behaviour, and 83% see their behaviour as criminal. And the reaction directed at their peers doesn't stop there, as 87% feel that the actions of a small minority have seriously compromised the perception of young people as a whole within society.'* (O$_2$ *Youth Matters*, 2011)

Much of the evidence on young people's attitudes, as a whole group, suggests that they share similar aspirations – a good long-term relationship; a decent home in a safe neighbourhood; a job with reasonable security, pay and prospects; and, a good start in life for their children if they have them now or intend to have them one day in the future.

Taking a holistic point of view might tempt some commentators to assume that if young people work hard and make the right choices – they will all have an equal chance of achieving what they want. But it's not that simple. A range of factors can block their progress and stop them thinking about, or knowing about, some options in the first place.

Figure 2.2 summarises the factors that affect young people's life chances, ranging from structural factors which they can do little or nothing about – such as the state of the labour market to factors surrounding individual differences such as temperament and talents.

Figure 2.2 **Factors affecting young people's life chances**

Structural factors	Situational factors	Relational factors	Personal factors
Social, political and economic change **Institutional constraints** (e.g. educational, legal, criminal justice systems) **Labour market opportunities**	**Local political, economic and environmental factors** **Local demography, culture and community cohesion** **Local labour market conditions, infrastructure and facility**	**Family life** (quality of relationships with parents and guardians, siblings, etc.) **Material well-being** **Peer influences and friendship networks** **Intimate relationships**	**Individual attributes** (intelligence, health and well-being) **Skills and aptitudes** (credentials, talents, attractiveness, etc.) **Personality and temperament**

Structural factors are largely out of the control of individuals, such as the legal and bureaucratic frameworks which shape the way the education system works, or the structure of the labour market. Structural factors are not static. Social and economic change can rapidly transform the landscape for young people. As shown in Figure 2.3, dramatic global economic changes are currently having a severe impact on the youth labour market. The

most important statistic to demonstrate the impact of structural factors is that of youth unemployment.

Levels of unemployment amongst the under 25s is rising in most European countries due to the economic turbulence and there is no immediate sign of improvement. As Figure 2.3 shows, unemployment has reached an average of 21 per cent across all 27 European Union states. In the countries where the O₂ Think Big operates (also including Spain), levels of unemployment vary significantly. In Ireland, Spain and Slovakia, youth unemployment now ranges from 30 – 45 per cent – and unemployment in all three countries has almost doubled in the last three years. In Germany, youth unemployment remains relatively low and is falling slightly. In the Czech Republic and the UK, unemployment has now reached about one fifth of young people.

Figure 2.3 **Unemployment of the under 25s: 2008-2011[2]**
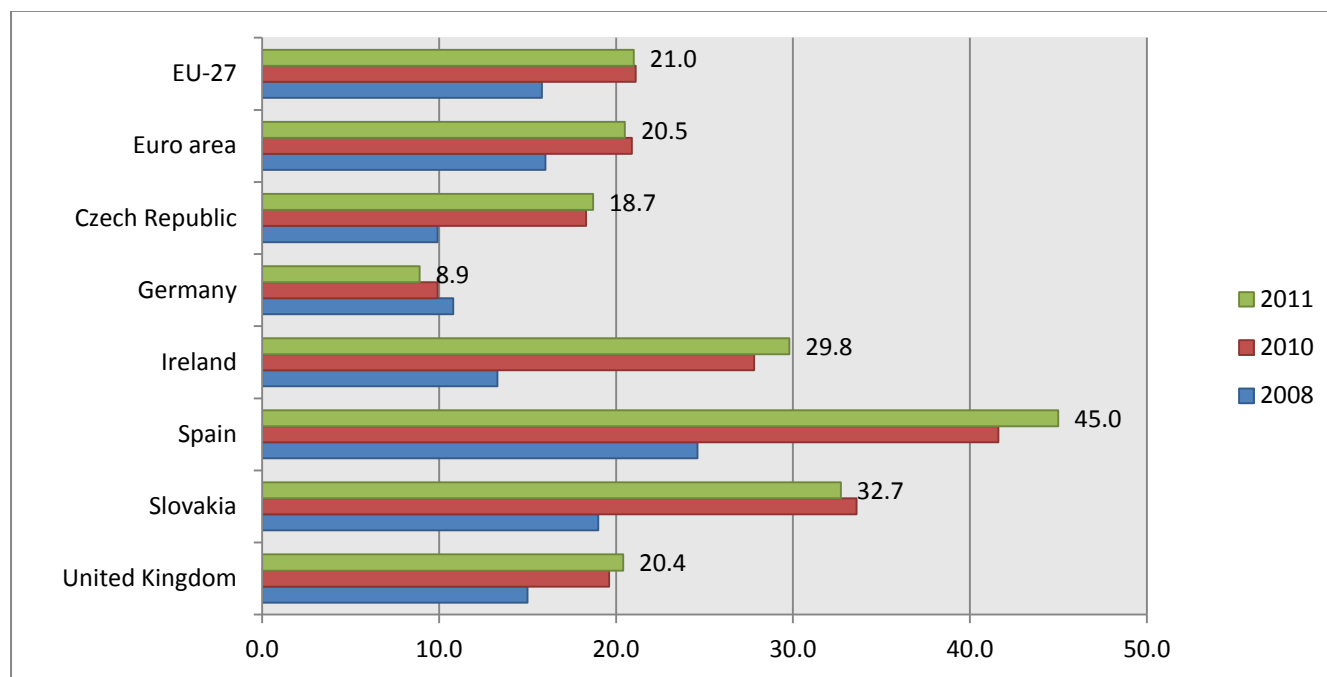
Situational factors are influenced by wider structural factors, but the local situation can exaggerate wider influences in significant ways. The economic, cultural and demographic makeup of the local area can affect expectations and experiences of young people. Local labour markets, community cohesion, health and wellbeing, public safety and neighbourliness, and local infrastructure (such as public transport, sport, leisure and youth recreation facilities) all affect opportunities. In his commentary on young people in post-riot Britain, David Lammy MP, illustrates the importance of place on individual's life chances.

> *'I know as well as anyone what effect material poverty can have on children. Cramped housing give children nowhere to learn or to play. Poverty starves homes of books and PCs. Scarce resources exclude children from sports clubs, drama classes and scout troops that build character, teach discipline and nurture healthy peer groups. Low pay blackmails parents into accepting another shift at work rather than going home to help with the homework. The lack of any real stake in society –*

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[2] 2011 data refers to the second quarter. These data are provided by Eurostat, downloaded on 7th November 2011 at this web address:
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/images/archive/9/9e/20110930133430%21Table_youth_unemployment_MS.png

the seemingly remote chance of a decent job or a decent home – creates a dangerous dynamic. Young men and women grow up feeling they have little to lose from chancing their arm at criminality. It is no coincidence that crime is the highest in the poorest neighbourhoods.' (Lammy, 2011: 30-1).

Situational factors do not just shape opportunities. They also have a pernicious cultural impact on perceptions of what is possible and desirable. Often it is difficult for 'outsiders' to make sense of the choices people make in different contexts and fail to recognise what they mean or why they are valued. As Lammy comments:

'Take a walk today through the neighbourhoods where much of the looting took place and you will see some of the sacrifices people make to keep up with the competition. The bling on display – the gold rings, the big chains and the expensive watches – is a defensive reaction against the indignity of poverty.' (2011: 125).

But as Lammy makes it clear, few local young people got involved with the riots and looting – and that the majority of those who were prosecuted for acts of criminality in Tottenham did not live in the borough. The long-term consequence for the people of Tottenham, though, is another smear on their copy book – requiring explanation and justification even from those who had nothing to do with it. Situational factors affect opportunities, in short, from within the area and from without when outsiders' attitudes and beliefs affects their judgements on people from the area.

Relational factors refer to the relative strength and weakness of inter-personal ties. Young people can experience relationships in positive and negative ways. Some young people may have supportive parental and sibling relationships and yet suffer poor peer group relationships (through, for example, pressure to engage in risky behaviour or to become the object of ridicule, ostracism or physical bullying). Intimate relationships also affect young people's life choices. Relational factors often produce complex and unpredictable outcomes for young people's life transitions.

Such factors impact heavily when families are under serious economic and social pressure. More affluent families tend to be able to cushion themselves from recurrent financial crises produced by ill-health, unemployment and so on. Furthermore, they are better placed to ensure that their children can attend the best schools and have access to constructive after school activities. Understanding about the education system, knowledge about the opportunities that can be afforded from it, and having the confidence to communicate fully with teachers eases the passage of young people through the system.

There is a wealth of evidence to demonstrate how the affluence of families affects educational outcomes. To illustrate this point, Figure 2.4 shows differences in terms of attainment on Key Stage test scores by ages 7 and 11 and GCSE scores at age 16 across five quintiles of the index of multiple deprivation.

Figure 2.4   **Average test scores by socio economic profile of household[3]**
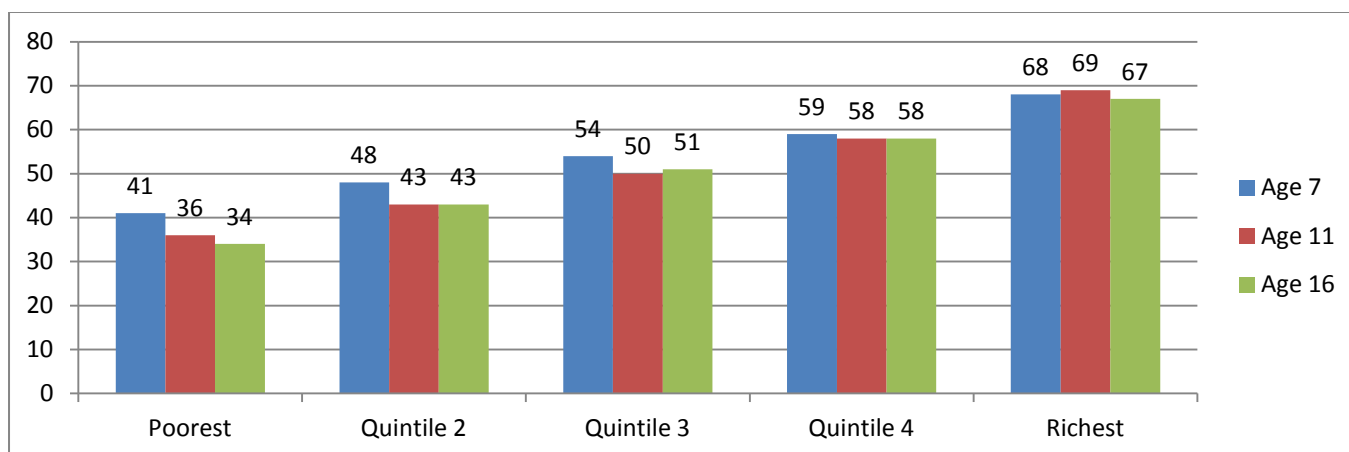
Individual differences such as personality, temperament, skills and attributes all impact on individuals' behaviour. It is not uncommon for professionals and practitioners to make judgements on individual capabilities and thereby close down young people's avenues of opportunity if they appear not to match expectations. While the likelihood of successful life transitions may be estimated statistically in line with some factors, it is not possible to make effective predictions about the impact of deprivation, ill-health, educational underperformance, disability and so on, on an individual's life trajectory.

What is clear, however, is that irrespective of all of the structural, situational, relational and individual factors which can be considered, young people have quite uniform aspirations. There are also some serious concerns that received assumptions about low aspirations amongst less affluent young people may not actually be true. As a Joseph Rowntree Foundation study recently observed:

> '…there is a lack of clarity about whether aspirations are fundamentally too low, especially among people from disadvantaged backgrounds, or are in fact rather high, but cannot be realised because of the various barriers erected by inequality' (Kintrea et al. 2011: 7).

The problem this study refers to is a mismatch between aspirations amongst young people and the positions available in the labour market for them to be achieved. As Figure 2.5 illustrates, at age 15 young people want to get the best jobs, but their chances of realising these aspirations are limited by the number of positions available.

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[3] Adapted from Figures 4.1 and 5.1 (2010:27/33) First two columns refer to Key Stage Test scores and column 3 refers to GCSE attainment age 16. Source: Goodman, A. and Gregg, P. (eds.) *Poor children's educational attainment: how important are attitudes and behaviour*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Figure 2.5   **Aspirations compared to UK labour market at age 15**[4]
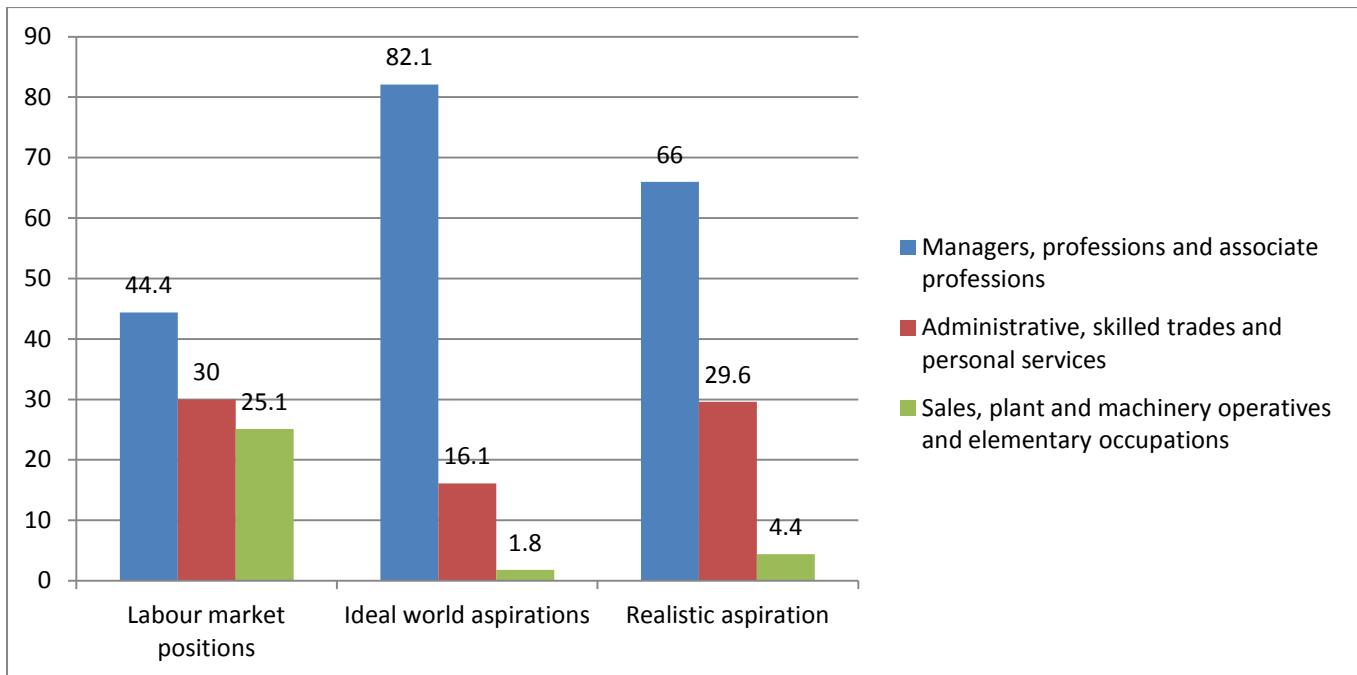
A study by Goodman and Gregg demonstrates that as children get older, relative affluence or deprivation starts to have an impact on, amongst other things, self-belief, locus of control and involvement in risky behaviours (see Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6   **Attitudes and behaviour age 14** (percentages)[5]

	Household socio-economic profile		
	Lowest quintile	Middle quintile	Highest quintile
Wants to stay on in full-time education at 16	79	83	93
Likely to apply for higher education and likely to get in	49	57	77
Ever involved in antisocial behaviour	41	31	21
Ever played truant	24	14	8
Reads for enjoyment weekly	70	75	81
Get a job that leads somewhere is important	70	70	67

2.2   What can be done to help young people realise their aspirations?

There has been much argument about government policy surrounding the issue of supporting young people in recent months. Negative responses have been particularly strong in relation to the abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and the reduction of funding to youth services. Similarly, concerns have been widely expressed about the raising of tuition fees for higher education from £3,000 per annum to a maximum of £9,000. Although it is not yet clear what the long-term impact of this change will have on

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[4] Kintrea, K., St Clair, R. and Houston, M. (2011:38) *The influence of parents, places and poverty on educational attitudes and aspirations*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

[5] Adapted from Figure 5.3, Goodman and Gregg (2010: 39).

student recruitment to universities, early indications suggest a fall back in applications of about 8.7 per cent (Guardian 30th January 2012).

Practical actions by government to create opportunities for young people have also come under the critical spotlight. For example, government investment of £1.4bn in apprenticeships has resulted in 163,000 more places being made available (rising to a total of 442,700 in the last year). However, estimates suggest that only 11,000 (7 per cent) have gone to 16-18 year olds, and the number taken by the under 25s only 16 per cent of this years' allocation. There are also significant concerns that many of the apprenticeships are simply title reallocations for existing jobs.[6]

In response to serious worries about young people's opportunities, a number of initiatives have been launched. For example, the Government published a White Paper in April 2011, *A New Approach to Child Poverty.*[7] The White Paper focused primarily on policies to facilitate and encourage families to work their way out of poverty.

> *We intend to tackle head-on the causes of poverty which underpin low achievement, aspiration and opportunity across generations… Addressing the root causes of poverty and not just the symptoms means recognising the importance of the context in which a child is raised, alongside factors including education and income. That is why we are committed to supporting strong families… This, alongside a drive to achieve higher social mobility for all, and help families out of poverty and onto and up the ladder, is our strategy for eradicating child poverty once and for all'* (2011:8).

The White Paper draws together a wide range of research to demonstrate how pernicious poverty is, and how it impacts on the life chances of children brought up in poor households. The emphasis of the White Paper places a high level of responsibility on individuals and households to break out of cycles of poverty. However, as many critics have observed, this is more easily said than achieved in an economic climate where occupational opportunities are limited due to high levels of unemployment.

Immediate concerns about levels of unemployment are crucially important when considering the potential for improving youth transitions. But it is also necessary to recognise that, even in times of full employment, social mobility is not unfettered. It is a misnomer to advocate '(upward) social mobility for all' because the mathematics simply do not add up – there are too few places in the upper echelons of the labour market for every able and willing person to occupy.

The Panel on Fair Access to the Professions reported in 2009 on the extent to which professions were closed to people from less advantaged backgrounds. At the core of the Panel's work was a belief that deprivation must be tackled in order to give people fair chances of getting on in life. The impact of deprivation on life chances of young people, the Panel's report concludes, are significant:

- Young people in low-income households are more likely to be unemployed in their early 20s than young people from higher-income backgrounds.

- Young people from poor backgrounds are disproportionately observed at the lower end of the earnings distribution if they are in work.

- The labour market penalty associated with growing up in poverty has increased over time. Young adults from low-income backgrounds born in 1970s suffer greater

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[6] Allegra Stratton (2011) 'Jobs rebranded as apprenticeships, government report warns', *The Guardian*, 27th October.

[7] HMGovernment (2011) *A New Approach to Child Poverty: tackling the causes of disadvantage and transforming families' lives',* London: The Stationary Office.

disadvantage in terms of the probability of being in work and the size of the earnings penalty, than do those born in 1958 (2009: 28).

The Panel's analysis of the impact of deprivation on young people led them to make the following bold statement: 'We believe that, unless child poverty is tackled, social mobility will be thwarted. Eradicating child poverty should be a policy priority and requires a new, more holistic approach to tackle the many forms that this disadvantage can take' (2009: 28). The Panel argue that young people who make the most successful life transitions into employment have greater stocks of 'cultural', 'social' and 'economic' capital. It is worthwhile briefly to explain these three terms which originate from the writings of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.[8]

- *Cultural capital*: consists of ideas, education and skills which are underpinned by a set of values, passed down by parents and significant others through socialisation.

- *Economic capital*: refers to control over economic assets (money, shares, commodities, cash).

- *Social capital:* consists of the resources gained by having access to influential social networks or relationships which give access to opportunities.

Social capital benefits individuals in three main ways.[9] Firstly, because it is 'productive' in the sense that it provides people with a resource which facilitates action. Secondly, it is 'self-reinforcing' in that successful relationships in one area of social life are transferable to others. And thirdly, it is 'cumulative' in the sense that once people have a stock of social capital, they can build more of it. Bourdieu argues, therefore, that social capital is used instrumentally by individuals to create, sustain and monopolise their resource.

Non-government initiatives include, for example, the ACEVO Commission on Youth Unemployment chaired by Right Hon David Miliband MP. The Commission's call for evidence resulted in the publication of a comprehensive report in January 2012 which made wide-ranging recommendations to government.[10] Amongst the most important of which was to recognise the need to focus government spend on those young people who were most vulnerable to making unsuccessful transitions to adult life (calculated to be about 9 per cent of the general population)[11] and focused in a relatively narrow range of geographical 'hot spots' in 152 mainly urban local authorities.[12]

A number of charitable foundations are also investing heavily in research on issues surrounding child and young people's poverty, life transitions and employment opportunities. Since 2006, the Private Equity Foundation has invested significant funds in research. Demos was commissioned, for example, to undertake research on factors which inhibited young people's success in the education system.[13] Similarly, IPPR were commissioned to produce 'Youth Tracker' evidence on young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). Private Equity Foundation has also published a *Manifesto*

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[8] Bourdieu: (1988) 'The forms of capital', in J.G. Richardson (ed.) (1988) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. Westport: Greenwood Press.

[9] See: Jochum, V. (2003) *Social Capital: beyond the theory*. National Council for Voluntary Organisation.

[10] The ACEVO Commission on Youth Unemployment (2012) *Youth unemployment: the crisis we cannot afford*, London: Acevo.

[11] See Dorsett, R. and Lucchino, P. (2012) 'Beyond school-leaving age: the first five years', in ACEVO Commission on Youth Unemployment, *Youth unemployment: the crisis we cannot afford*, London: Acevo, pp. 101-110.

[12] Carter, E. (2012) 'Mapping youth unemployment across Britain', in ACEVO Commission on Youth Unemployment, *Youth unemployment: the crisis we cannot afford*, London: Acevo, pp. 94-100.

[13] Birdwell, J., Grist, M. and Margo, J. (2011) *The Forgotten Half*, London: Demos.

for Change[14] for NEET young people, focusing particularly on the provision of better information advice and guidance for young people, coordinating investment programmes, assessing impact of interventions[15], sharing best practice, reforming commissioning and, amongst other things, investing in projects to support NEETs.[16]

The crisis facing young people is focused on poorer young people concentrated in mainly urban areas – and is impacting particularly hard on black young people (and young men in particular), as shown in Figure 2.7.

Figure 2.7   **Unemployment of 16-25 year olds by ethnicity**

	White		Mixed		Asian		Black		All	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
2006	14.1	10.8	39.0	19.4	20.3	24.8	32.8	30.3	15.3	12.0
2007	13.9	10.8	33.3	8.3	21.0	23.6	31.8	24.1	15.0	11.7
2008	17.0	12.8	27.9	15.0	22.7	22.9	28.8	26.8	18.0	13.8
2009	20.6	14.6	26.9	23.3	32.3	27.1	41.4	52.0	21.7	16.1
2010	20.4	16.7	35.2	40.0	28.2	32.7	41.0	42.6	21.5	18.4
2011	23.9	17.2	22.3	22.6	27.1	26.1	55.9	39.1	24.9	18.5

Source: ONS, March 2012

This provides a strong argument to focus attention on those areas where opportunities are the most limited and to devise ways of targeting spend at the most needy.[17]

2.3   Concluding points: enhancing wellbeing and building resilience

> *'I could visualise my family setting the VCR at home in Tottenham after spending most of the week reminding colleagues and neighbours about my appearance. I was overwhelmed by pride. It was not a prize, a record contract or a financial reward, but simply for what I was doing. I experienced, for perhaps the first time, the transcendence of applying myself completely to something.'* (Lammy, 2011: 132, after being broadcast singing on BBCs *Songs of Praise*)

Achieving great things may be reward enough for some young people, but for the majority, I suspect, they want recognition for what they have done. And they should, because social recognition helps to cement the value of success in memory, produces a sense of personal wellbeing and bolsters resilience to handle the inevitable challenges of the future. Before

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[14] Private Equity Foundation (2011) *Young people not in education, employment or training: a manifesto for action*, London, Private Equity Foundation, 2 Bath Place, Rivington St. London EC2A 3DB.

[15] Koh, H. and Giga, A. (2010) *Measuring Social Results: early lessons from our journey*, London: Private Equity Foundation

[16] See: Private Equity Foundation (n.d.) *Wasted Potential: young people not engaged in education, employment or training*, London: PEF, http://www.privateequityfoundation.org.

[17] The Local Government Association's report *Hidden Talents* published in March 2012, puts considerable emphasis on reducing the range of spending pots on young people to maximise the impact on total spend in key areas of priority. This approach resembles the principles developed in *Total Place* or *Place Based Budgeting* initiatives. In principle this makes a lot of sense, but in practice it can be difficult to achieve as it may result in significant losses to particular department budgets and also unstitch existing patterns of work which are contracted to the third sector. Being a difficult proposition, does not mean that it is not a good idea – but it may take time and demand compromise to make it happen.

moving on to see who Think Big is reaching (in Section 3) and what impact it is having (in Section 4) it useful first to clarify the usage and value of the terms wellbeing and resilience.

As noted in last year's European evaluation of Think Big, there has been much debate on the prevalence of happiness and well-being in society. Much of this debate is underpinned by the utilitarian philosophy of the Enlightenment – where the object is to create the highest degree of happiness for the largest number of people in society. By definition, this philosophy focuses on societal benefit, rather than to encourage 'excessive individualism' which many philosophers and sociologists believe is a characteristic of 21st century Western society. Richard Layard is a well known, though controversial exponent of this argument and he believes that challenging widening social inequalities is the key.

> *'If we do want a happier society, the first thing we have to do is to reassert the Enlightenment ideal - to agree that happiness is the objective of our society. But that has to translate into individual behaviour, which means that everybody has to make their personal objective in life. In other words if we ask the question 'how should we live?' the answer is: we should each aim to produce the most happiness we can in the world around us, and the least misery'* (2011:1).

To achieve such an objective requires more people to think and act with the interests of society in mind rather than to succumb always to their personal wants. For Layard, it is a truism that 'you are unlikely to feel compassion for others unless you also have compassion for yourself' (2011:3).

In many affluent countries, governments have become more concerned about social well-being and have attempted to encourage people to become more committed to the building of strong community bonds. In Britain, this is strongly reflected in the Prime Minister's 'Big Society' initiative while in Japan it is known as 'The New Public Commons'. In policies such as these, there is a strong emphasis on building human and social capital to strengthen individual and community bonds.[18]

What is clear is that when individuals respond to surveys on levels of happiness or well-being, they tend not to make personal judgements about relative wellbeing on the basis of wider social or economic criteria.[19] Relative deprivation is something that people in western nations are particularly attuned to – but comparisons are not generally made across nations or even regions. Instead, people compare their situation with their more immediate social counterparts. In other words, levels of wellbeing and happiness are affected by perceptions that proximate individuals are better off or worse off, and on the basis of personal judgements on the fairness of such differences. Consequently, it is not always possible to generalise about notions of wellbeing – rather like beauty – it lies in the eyes of the beholder.

Wellbeing, as a term, has currency in political and academic circles – but it does not tell us everything we need to know when measuring the success of programmes such as Think Big. Other factors also come into play – and particularly the concept of 'resilience'. Like wellbeing, definitions of resilience are contested by academics and practitioners. So it is important to conclude with some discussion on how the term is being used in the context of this research.

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[18] There is a large academic literature on social capital which cannot be reviewed here. For useful analyses, see: Jochum, 2003; Mayer, 2003; Narayan, 1999; Office for National Statistics, 2007; Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 1998, 2001.

[19] It is well known that people living in poorer countries which have a higher prevalence of absolute deprivation often report higher levels of life satisfaction than in wealthier Western nations (Layard, 2010; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009).

Making successful transitions from childhood to adulthood requires young people to make good decisions about how they want to shape their future and act on these decisions in a positive way. Such decisions are made in the context of the opportunity structures that are available (or perceived to be available) to young people. Making such decisions involves choices which may be inherently risky. Risks might include the possibility (or even the probability in some contexts) of failure and disappointment. Not taking risks, by the same token can also have damaging consequences. There are few prospects available for achieving success for those people who are not prepared to take a chance.

Taking risks which may lead to positive outcomes requires young people to have self-belief and confidence. But where does it come from? There is much debate on this issue. From a sociological point of view, the environment within which young people grow up is regarded as being crucially important in shaping self confidence and ambition. Many sociologists argue that life chances are shaped, primarily, by socio-economic status. Affluence, as noted above, produces a higher degree certainty and stability in people's lives – it affords opportunities to plan ahead, build stocks of human and social capital, experiment with alternatives and have a safety net if things do not work out first time around.

Deprivation, by contrast, limits the prospects of planning ahead and increases insecurity, closes down possibilities for building social and human capital, and restricts the range of opportunities available to young people. As shown above in this section, there is a wealth of statistical evidence to show that the more deprived the environment within which young people grow up, the fewer life chances they have and the higher risk that they will not make successful life transitions. Making generalisations about opportunity structures can mask the variety of responses that people might have to adverse circumstances. Research on resilience tends to focus on these responses from a psychological perspective (where environmental factors may not be taken as much into account) or social-psychological perspective (where the interaction of personality and environmental factors are considered).

Resilience researchers often focus on the balance between the 'assets' individuals possess and their chances of taking negative risks. Small and Memmo argue, for example, that:

> *'...the lack of assets is directly related to a person's failure to thrive, but only indirectly related to problem behaviours. As is often the case among children with few assets, a failure to thrive occurs when a child lacks essential growth opportunities needed for normal development. However, these same conditions also may heighten vulnerability, because the positive features that are absent in asset-poor environments tend to be replaced by hazardous or socially toxic conditions that generate risk... We believe that in the presence of risk, rather than a lack of assets, that likely leads to problem behaviours. Therefore, while a youth with many assets may thrive developmentally, he or she may still exhibit problems if risk processes are present'* (2004:4).

Resilience, according to Small and Memmo[20], results from a combination of four main processes that helps young people '*retain those assets* necessary for a person to display competence and thrive developmentally, or avoid the development of problem behaviours despite their experience of risk' (2004:6 my emphasis).

- *Resilience resulting from the operation of protective processes*: this refers to the action of significant others who act to protect or cushion young people from risk factors often in conjunction with efforts to build personal assets.

[20] Small, S. and Memmo, M. (2004) 'Contemporary models of youth development and problem prevention: toward an integration of terms, concepts and models', *Family Relations*, 55:1, 3-11.

- *Resilience resulting from exceptional personal characteristics*: this refers to characteristics such as intelligence or sociability which may be innate personality factors or emerge in response to their developmental history.

- *Resilience gained by recovering from adversity*: successful recovery from stressful situations or crises can result from reducing or eliminating the threat of recurrence or drawing upon other resources to aid coping strategies to make the situation manageable.

- *Resilience gained through the process of steeling*: steeling is the process by which individuals overcome challenges and strengthen their resolve in the face of adversity. It is a process of hardening a person against the impact of difficulties and disappointments.

A critical reading of these four interacting factors would indicate how resilience can work for people in positive and negative ways. Having a strong sense of resilience on its own does not necessarily indicate an inherent likelihood that people will behave in a socially constructive way. A more general assumption is, however, that the wider range of 'assets' an individual has at their disposal – the more likely that a strong sense of resilience will benefit them.

Positive youth development programmes, such as Think Big, which tend to focus on asset-building usually incorporate a mixture of 'protective processes' (such as the encouragement to get involved with positive confidence building activities rather than negative risk taking); provide support, where appropriate, to aid recovery from previous adversity; and, channel efforts in positive directions so that young people capitalise upon their innate or socialised assets such as sociability and intelligence.

When discussing the riots in the summer of 2011, above, it was argued that many young people who had previously not been in trouble with the police or courts became involved. The newspapers expressed a great deal of alarm when telling stories about more affluent young people taking part – because it seemed inexplicable that young people with strong personal assets would take such enormous risks. By contrast, the media and many politicians were eager to point the finger at asset-poor young people, in the expectation that they would be first in line to get involved with criminality.

Irrespective of the statistical likelihood of getting involved in the riots, the point being made here is that many young people responded in unpredictable ways. When young people assessed the risks, some made catastrophically bad choices and others made good ones. In short, less affluent young people do not have a monopoly on negative risk taking – because many have no interest in getting involved in criminality for sound moral or ethical reasons or because they recognise the potentially dire consequences of making such a mistake.

Being positive about young people, all young people, is the key to challenging society's (and often young people's own expectations) about what they can reasonably be expected achieve. Building assets to bolster resilience is a central part of this process so that good choices can be made within the range of opportunities that are open to young people. This report provides an evaluation of an 'open programme' for all young people who choose to take part – but in so doing, it recognises that some of these young people may have strong personal assets at the outset, while others have few. But it is not assumed that these differences will translate into particular outcomes for individuals – on the contrary, the point of the research, as it proceeds over the years, it to assess many different and often unpredictable sources of benefit emerging from participation.

Section Three

Programme review

By the end of December 2011, the Think Big programme had been running for eighteen months. This section reports on the quantitative data which have been collected to monitor the volume and characteristics of projects and young people involved. The section is divided into two parts

Following this analysis, Section 4 will explore the impact of Think Big in terms of young people's experiences and Section 5 will consider the contribution of employee supported volunteers to the programme.

3.1   Characteristics and distribution of Think Big projects

The volume of Think Big project applications and approvals are as follows:

- In 2010 there were 1,037 completed applications, of which 338 were awarded Think Big project grants in 2010.
- In 2011 there were 2,498 completed applications, of which 1,370 had been awarded Think Big grants by the end of December 2011.
- The total number of Think Big completed applications by the end of December 2011is 3,535, of which 1,708 have been awarded grants.

Think Bigger applications and awards are small in number at present – but should rise to about 20 per cent of all applications by then and of 2012.

- In 2011 there were 120 Think Bigger applications, of which 70 were awarded Think Bigger project grants.

As the analysis proceeds, the total number of applications and awards reported may be smaller due to missing data.[21] Nevertheless, the exercise is useful as it provides a more in-depth understanding of the characteristics of projects and their distribution.

Project applications and awards can be categorised in several ways for analysis. In this section, a number of factors are considered, including:

- Project themes of applications and awards
- Open applications and partner sponsored applications
- Regional variations
- Projects from areas of multiple deprivation / affluence

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[21] The term 'missing data' refers to gaps in our knowledge due to non-completion of aspects of the application form (which was more likely to happen in the early days of the programme before data fields were designated as 'mandatory'). Alternatively, missing data may occur due to the absence of data input by youth partner organisations.

Project themes of applications and awards

Figure 3.1 presents data on thematic streams of Think Big. From these data, it is clear that there is a relatively even spread of applications and awards across all six categories with the exception of Think Planet and Think Campaigning where applications are significantly under-represented.

Figure 3.1 **Applications and project awards by theme**

Applications	2010	%	2011	%	Total
Think Campaigning	76	7.3%	86	8.4%	162
Think Expression	224	21.5%	227	22.1%	451
Think Learning	203	19.5%	206	20.1%	409
Think Neighbourhood	290	27.8%	260	25.3%	550
Think Planet	43	4.1%	42	4.1%	85
Think Well Being	206	19.8%	206	20.1%	412
Total	1042	100.0%	1027	100.0%	2069
Awards	**2010**	**%**	**2011**	**%**	**Total**
Think Campaigning	25	7.5%	49	7.2%	74
Think Expression	83	24.8%	166	24.4%	249
Think Learning	72	21.5%	133	19.6%	205
Think Neighbourhood	84	25.1%	160	23.5%	244
Think Planet	11	3.3%	33	4.8%	44
Think Well Being	60	17.9%	139	20.4%	199
Total	335	100.0	680	100.0%	1015

Choice of a project category is affected by biographical factors of applicants. The age of applicants impacts upon their areas of interest. As Figure 3.2 shows, interest in the immediate neighbourhood declines in successive age bands – suggesting a broadening of interests and horizons. Environmental issues do not seem to be affected by the age of applicants, by contrast. Nor is there much evidence of increased interest in campaigning as applicants become older.

Figure 3.2 **Choice of project category by age**
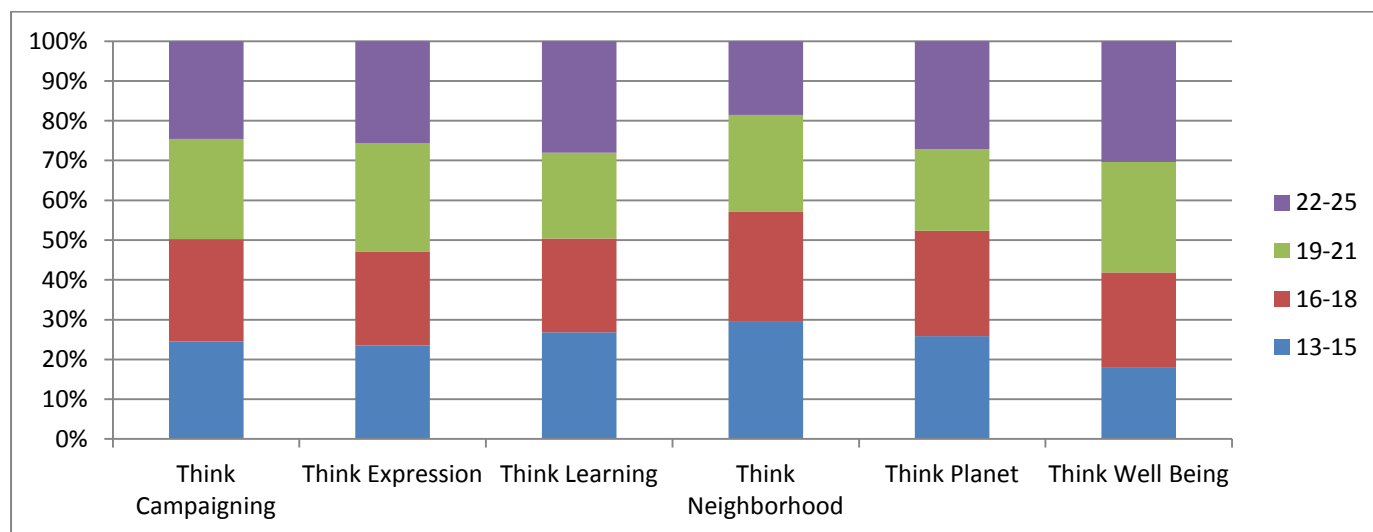
Gender differences in project choice are not particularly strong, as indicated in Figure 3.3. Some interesting differences emerge however. It can be seen that females are more interested in expressive projects, where males tend to be more interested in neighbourhood issues.

Figure 3.3 **Project choice by gender of applicants**
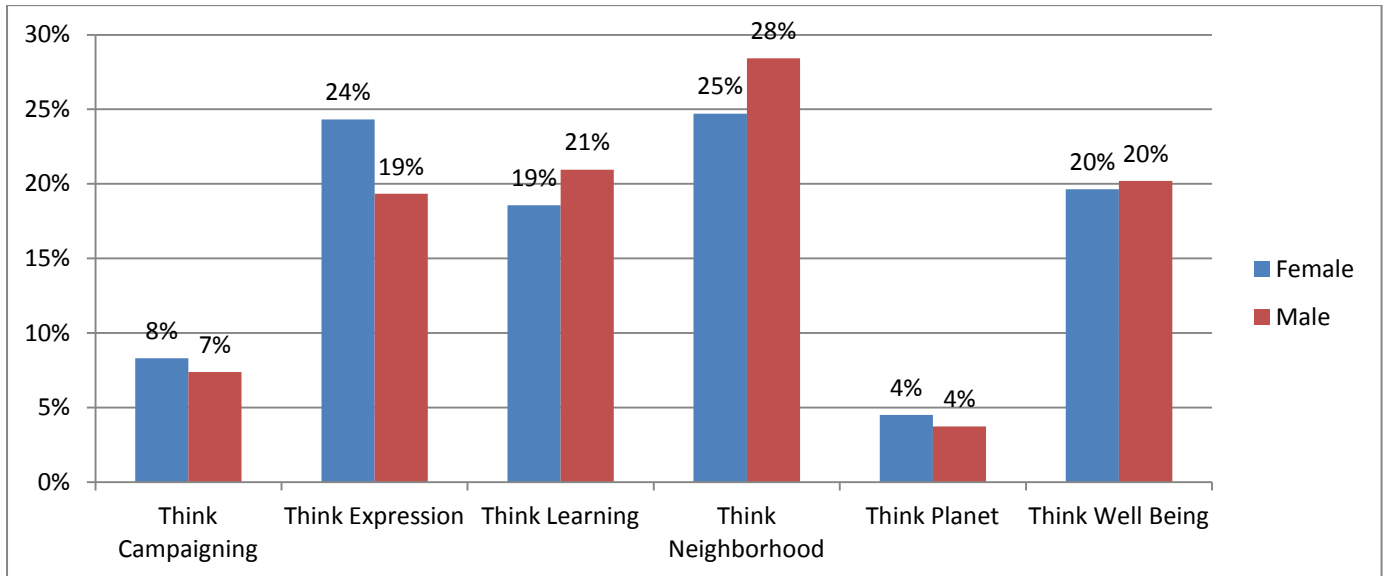
Figure 3.4 indicates that ethnicity has some impact on applicants' interests. Black and Asian minority ethnic (BAME) applicants are more interested in campaigning compared with White applicants, but are less interested in environmental issues. The remainder of the data show a degree of randomness in choice, although the interest of Black applicants in expressive projects is significantly higher than Asian and White applicants.

Figure 3.4 **Project choice by ethnicity**

37
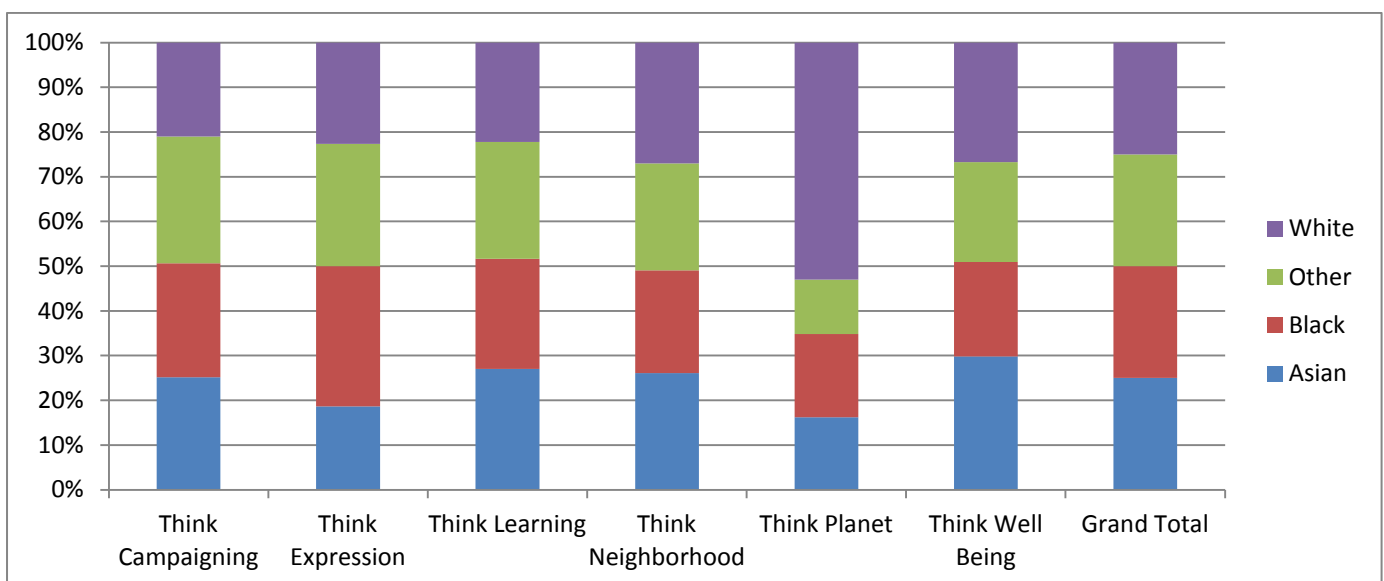
The level of affluence of young people has some impact on project choice, but the differences are not particularly strong, as shown in Figure 3.5. Applicants from poorer areas tend to be more interested in neighbourhood issues than their richer counterparts. Applicants from more affluent areas are more interested in expressive projects and environmental issues. In other categories there are no clear differences.

Figure 3.5   **Project choice by Index of Multiple Deprivation (quintiles)**
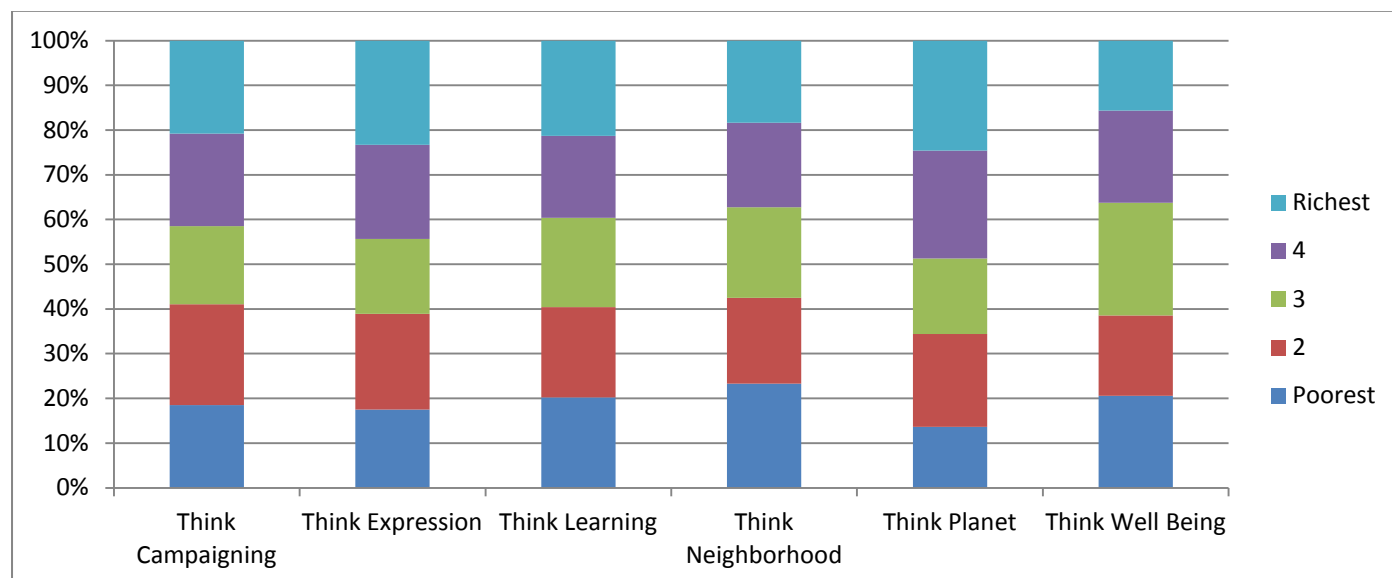
Figure 3.6 shows that level of educational achievement has an impact on project choice. Here it is clear that neighbourhood issues become less important the more educated people are - as would be expected, given that horizons are widened through more advanced education. Similarly, environmental issues and wellbeing become more important to young people the better educated they are.

Figure 3.6   **Educational achievement and project choice**
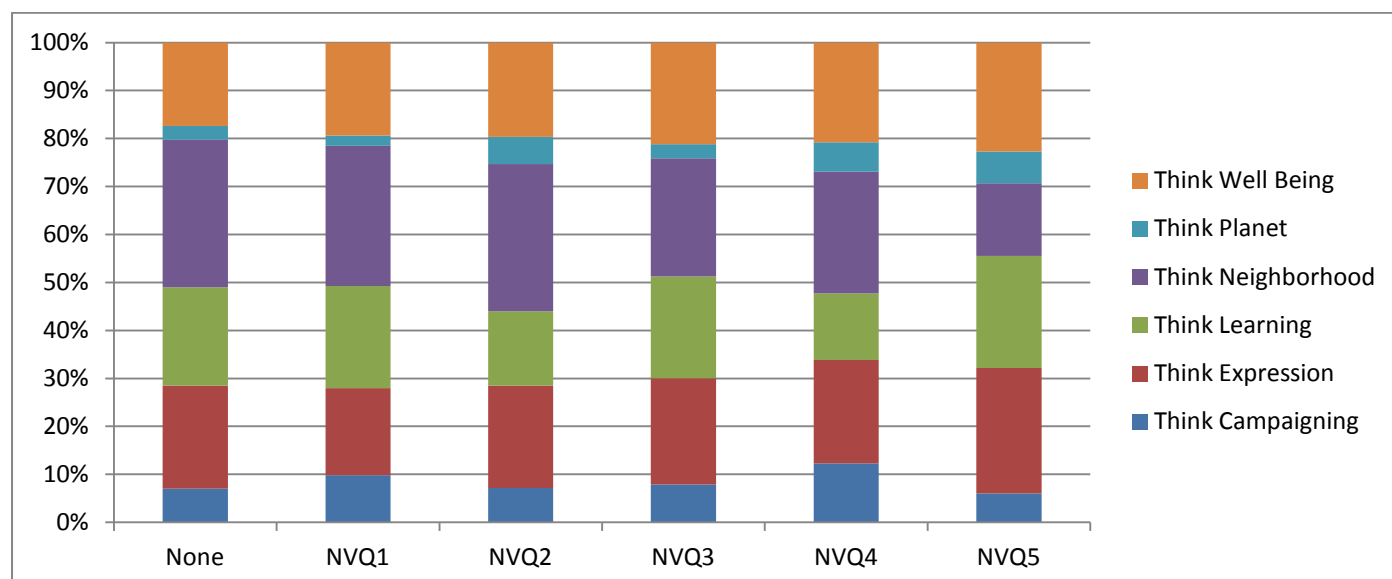
Open applications and partner organisation applications

Figure 3.7 compares how many Think Big grants were awarded in the programme depending upon whether young people made an open application, were sponsored by an organisation (such as a local youth organisation or faith organisation) and those which were sponsored by a Think Big partner organisation. In 2010, almost 70 per cent of applications were open applications by young people; in 2011 this had fallen to 62 per cent as the number of Think Big partner organisation sponsored applications increased. A significant number of applications have been sponsored by other organisations (such as faith groups, local charities and youth groups). In 2010 these comprised about a quarter of all applications, but in 2011 fewer than a tenth.

Figure 3.7   **Think Big awards by open application or sponsoring organisation**

	2010 applications	2010 awards	2011 applications	2011 awards	All applications	All awards
Open application by young people	727	216	1556	539	2283	755
Non-partner organisations	281	94	184	112	465	206
Think Big partner organisations	39	25	760	720	799	745
Total	**1047**	**335**	**2500**	**1371**	**3547**	**1706**

Figure 3.8 shows the success rates of applications depending upon whether they were open applications or sponsored by a partner or other organisation. It is clear from these data that open applications have a good chance of success – rising from about 30 per cent of applications in 2010 to 35 per cent of applications in 2011. Non-partner organisations which are not aligned to Think Big that have sponsored applications enjoyed high levels of success in 2011 – standing at 61 per cent. Think Big partner organisations have the highest success rate because they have an agreed allocation of projects which they can use and their applications are 'fast-tracked'. These applications are monitored however, and about 5 per cent do not meet the required standard and are not approved.

Figure 3.8   **Success rates of sponsored and open applications**

	2010 % of successful awards	2011 % of successful awards
Open application by young people	29.7%	34.6%
Non-partner organisations	33.5%	60.9%
Think Big partner organisations	64.1%	94.7%
Average success rate	**32.0%**	**54.8%**

The programme is successful in drawing more than 40 per cent of applications in the IMD 1 and 2, the poorest socio-economic categories. However, it is also evident from Figure 3.9 that while Think Big partner organisations are achieving the overall programme target of 50% of applications from IMD quintiles 1 and 2, but they appear to be less successful in this respect than non-aligned organisations and those young people who make open

applications. The reasons for this are now being explored in detail and will be addressed in 2012.

Figure 3.9 **Partner and open awards by IMD (quintiles)**
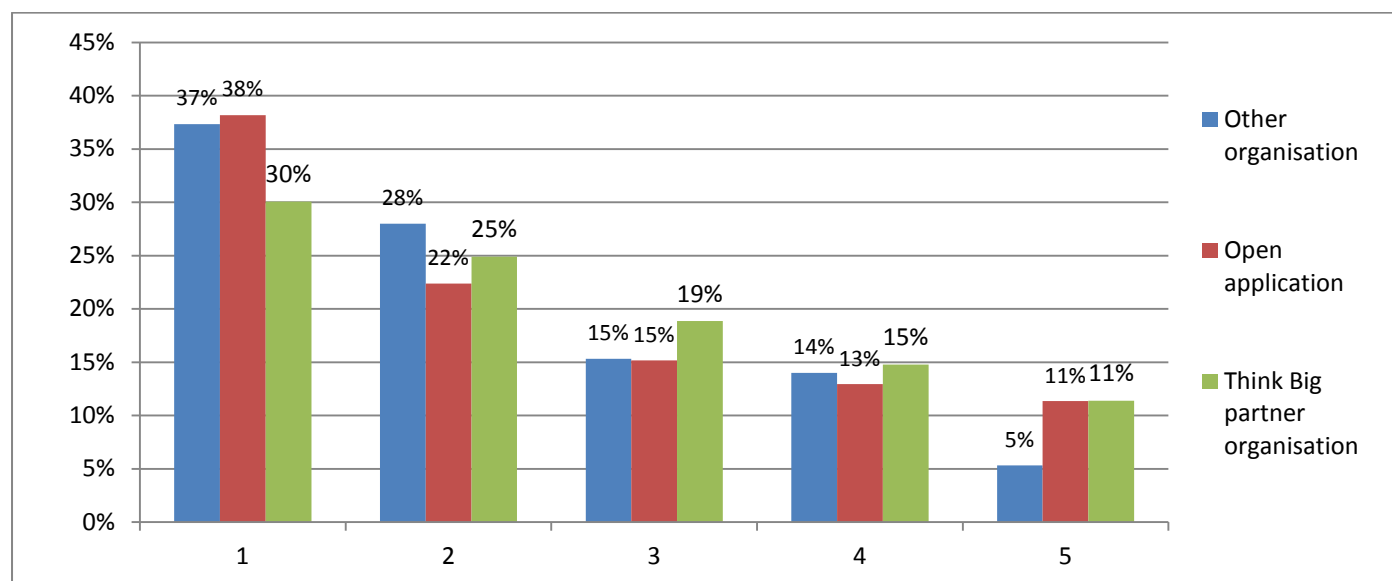
When the ethnicity of young people winning awards is considered, it is clear from Figure 3.10 that Think Big partner organisations are serving Asian young people and other ethnic minorities or young people from mixed ethnicity particularly well. For Black young people, the Think Big partner organisations are doing less well.

Figure 3.10 **Partner and open awards by ethnicity**
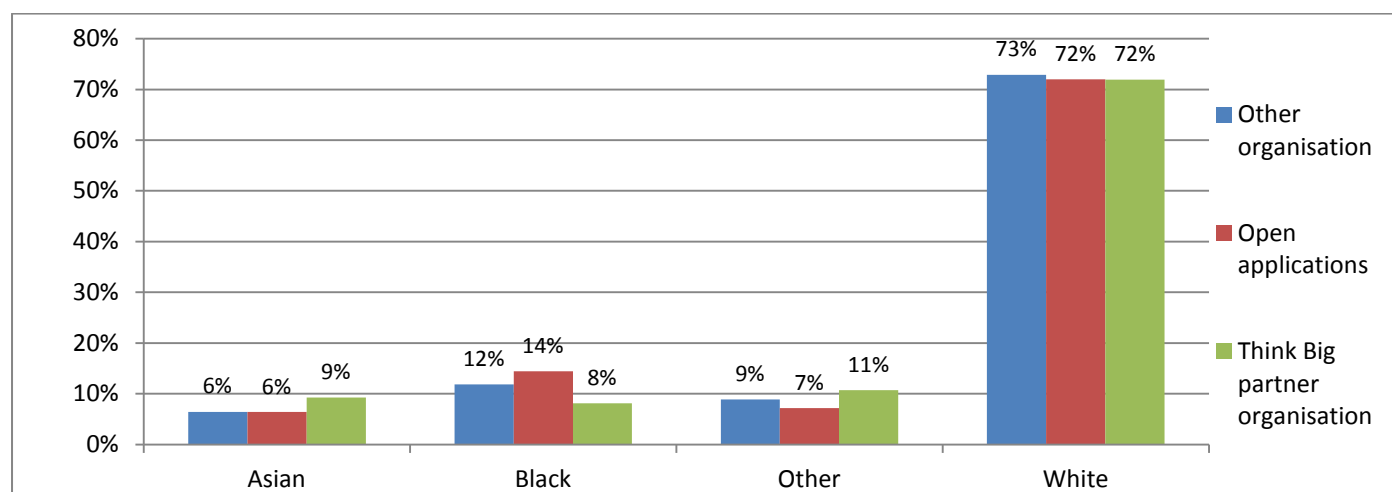
Regional distribution of applications and awards

Figure 3.11 shows the number and percentage of applications in each nation and English region. These data indicate a good spread of applications across the UK but also show that London is currently the dominant source of applications – approaching almost a quarter of all applications. This Figure also shows that there is significant variation in the number of

applications from 2010 to 2011. Of particular note is the fall in applications in North West England and concomitant rise in Northern Ireland.[22]

Figure 3.11 **Applications in each region and country**

	% 2010	N= 2010	% 2011	N=2011	% total	Total
East[23]	*4.5%*	*47*	*3.1%*	*78*	*3.5%*	*125*
East Midlands	*5.6%*	*58*	*5.3%*	*132*	*5.4%*	*190*
London	*20.0%*	*209*	*23.2%*	*580*	*22.3%*	*789*
North East	*4.2%*	*44*	*4.8%*	*121*	*4.7%*	*165*
North West	*17.3%*	*181*	*11.4%*	*284*	*13.1%*	*465*
South East	*12.5%*	*131*	*12.6%*	*315*	*12.6%*	*446*
South West	*5.8%*	*61*	*6.6%*	*166*	*6.4%*	*227*
West Midlands	*7.4%*	*77*	*7.4%*	*185*	*7.4%*	*262*
Yorkshire and the Humber	*7.9%*	*83*	*6.2%*	*156*	*6.7%*	*239*
England	85.0%	891	81.0%	2017	82.0%	2908
Northern Ireland	3.4%	36	10.8%	270	8.6%	306
Scotland	6.6%	69	3.1%	78	4.1%	147
Wales	4.7%	49	5.4%	135	5.2%	184
Total	100.0%	1045	100.0%	2500	100.0%	3545

Figure 3.12 compares the distribution of Think Big applications with the general population of the UK. This Figure shows that in most English regions, the percentage of applications and percentage population are broadly similar. The exception is London where there are almost twice as many applications than would be expected. Across the UK nations, it is clear that the number of project applications are almost three times higher than would be expected in Northern Ireland when compared with the national population. In Scotland, by contrast, only half of the number of applications are received than would be expected.

The number of awards in each UK nation and English region are presented in Figure 3.12 The data indicate a significant rise in the number of awards from just 335 in 2010 to 1,371 in 2011. The distribution of awards is not particularly dissimilar from the number of applications shown in Figure 3.11.

Award success rates are compared across UK nations and English regions in Figure 3.13. Overall, success rates have improved significantly between 2010 and 2011. This is because Think Big partner organisations have about a 95% success rate due to the allocation of quotas of projects as discussed above. National variation in success rate is not particularly marked, although projects are generally more likely to be accepted in Northern Ireland. This is because of the larger number of applications sponsored by partner organisations. In the English regions, success rates are lower in East Midlands and West Midlands.

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[22] The uplift in projects in Northern Ireland is largely due to the activity of a very active youth partner organisation.

[23] Data in the Eastern region may be under populated due to the self selection of region by applicants. In 2012 all self-completed responses to regions will be checked against post codes to ensure that regional allocation is accurate.

Figure 3.12 **Proportion of applications compared with UK population**

	Number of Think Big applications	% of Think Big applications	UK population 2001 Census	Percent of total population 2001 Census	% difference
East	*125*	*3.5%*	*5,388,154*	*9.2%*	*-5.2%*
East Midlands	*190*	*5.4%*	*4,172,179*	*7.1%*	*-1.7%*
London	*789*	*22.3%*	*7,172,036*	*12.2%*	*+10.1%*
North East	*165*	*4.7%*	*2,515,479*	*4.3%*	*+0.4%*
North West	*465*	*13.1%*	*6,729,800*	*11.4%*	*+1.7%*
South East	*446*	*12.6%*	*8,000,550*	*13.6%*	*-1.0%*
South West	*227*	*6.4%*	*4,928,458*	*8.4%*	*-2.0%*
West Midlands	*262*	*7.4%*	*5,267,337*	*9.0%*	*-1.6%*
Yorkshire & the Humber	*239*	*6.7%*	*4,964,838*	*8.45*	*-1.7%*
England	2908	82.1%	51,446,000	83.6%	-1.5%
Northern Ireland	306	8.6%	1,789,000	2.9%	+5.7%
Scotland	147	4.1%	5,222,100	8.6%	-4.5%
Wales	184	5.2%	3,006,400	4.9%	+0.3%
Total	**3545**	**100.00%**	**62,262,000**	100.0%	

Figure 3.12 **Awards in each UK nation and English region**

	Awards 2010 N=	% of all 2010 awards	Awards 2011 N=	% of all 2011 awards	All awards N=	% of all awards
East	*20*	*6.0%*	*42*	*3.1%*	*62*	*3.6%*
East Midlands	*8*	*2.4%*	*48*	*3.5%*	*56*	*3.3%*
London	*51*	*15.2%*	*276*	*20.1%*	*327*	*19.2%*
North East	*10*	*3.0%*	*77*	*5.6%*	*87*	*5.1%*
North West	*68*	*20.1%*	*140*	*10.2%*	*208*	*12.2%*
South East	*46*	*13.7%*	*205*	*15.0%*	*251*	*14.7%*
South West	*20*	*6.0%*	*107*	*7.8%*	*127*	*7.4%*
West Midlands	*31*	*9.3%*	*68*	*5.0%*	*99*	*5.8%*
Yorkshire and the Humber	*28*	*8.4%*	*90*	*6.6%*	*118*	*6.9%*
England	282	84.2%	1053	76.8%	1335	79.4%
Northern Ireland	18	5.4%	186	13.6%	204	11.9%
Scotland	22	6.6%	40	2.9%	62	3.6%
Wales	13	3.9%	92	6.7%	105	6.2%
Total	**335**	100.0%	**1371**	100.0%	**1706**	100.0%

Figure 3.13   **Success rates in UK nations and English regions**

	% success rate in 2010	% success rate in 2011	% success rate in programme
East	*42.6%*	*53.8%*	*49.6%*
East Midlands	*13.8%*	*36.4%*	*29.5%*
London	*24.4%*	*47.6%*	*41.4%*
North East	*22.7%*	*63.6%*	*52.7%*
North West	*37.6%*	*49.3%*	*44.7%*
South East	*35.1%*	*65.1%*	*56.3%*
South West	*32.8%*	*64.5%*	*55.9%*
West Midlands	*40.3%*	*36.8%*	*37.8%*
Yorkshire and the Humber	*33.7%*	*57.7%*	*49.4%*
England	31.6%	52.2%	45.9%
Northern Ireland	50.0%	68.9%	66.7%
Scotland	31.9%	51.3%	42.2%
Wales	26.5%	68.1%	57.1%
Average across programme	**32.1%**	**54.8%**	**48.1%**

Distribution of projects by the Index of Multiple Deprivation

As the aim of the Think Big programme is to be socially inclusive, it is important to explore the extent to which young people from different socio-economic backgrounds enter the programme. For ethical reasons, it was not possible to ask detailed questions about family background. Consequently, a broad indicator of socio-economic status – the Index of Multiple Deprivation has been used.[24]

Figure 3.14 shows the distribution of Think Big project applications according to area of relative affluence or deprivation. It is clear from these data that the applications tend to be from more deprived areas. As Figure 3.15 shows, the pattern is repeated when project awards are numbered.

Figure 3.14   **Distribution of project applications by Index of Multiple Deprivation**

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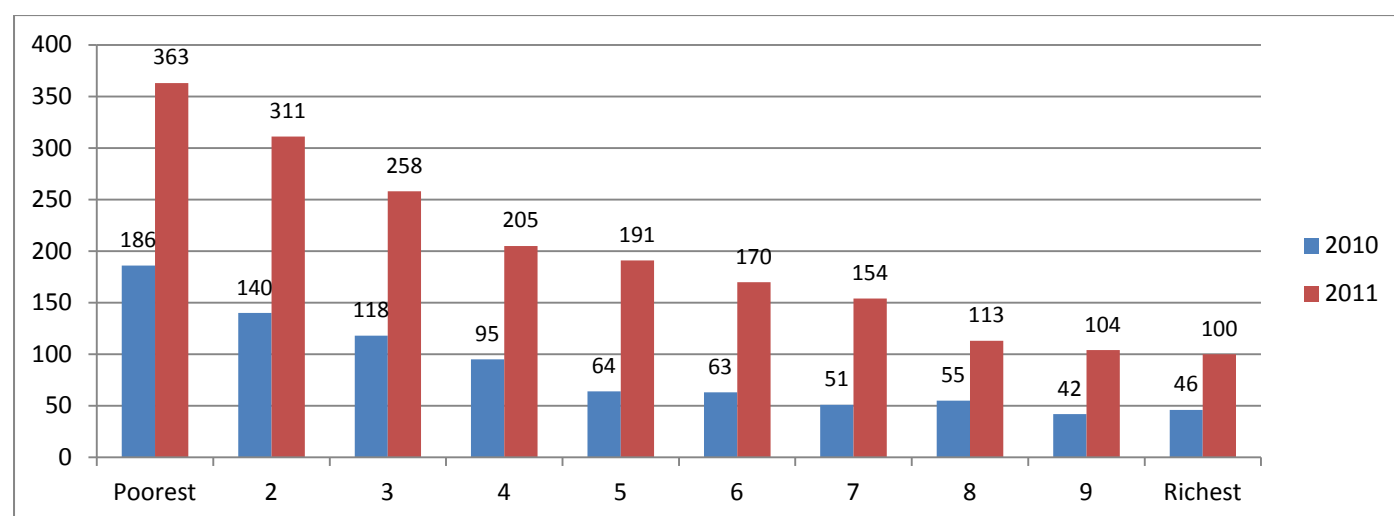
[24] The Index of Multiple Deprivation is a well used 'general' indicator of socio-economic status based on the post-code of applicants to the programme. Technical working papers detailing aspects of methodology are available on request.

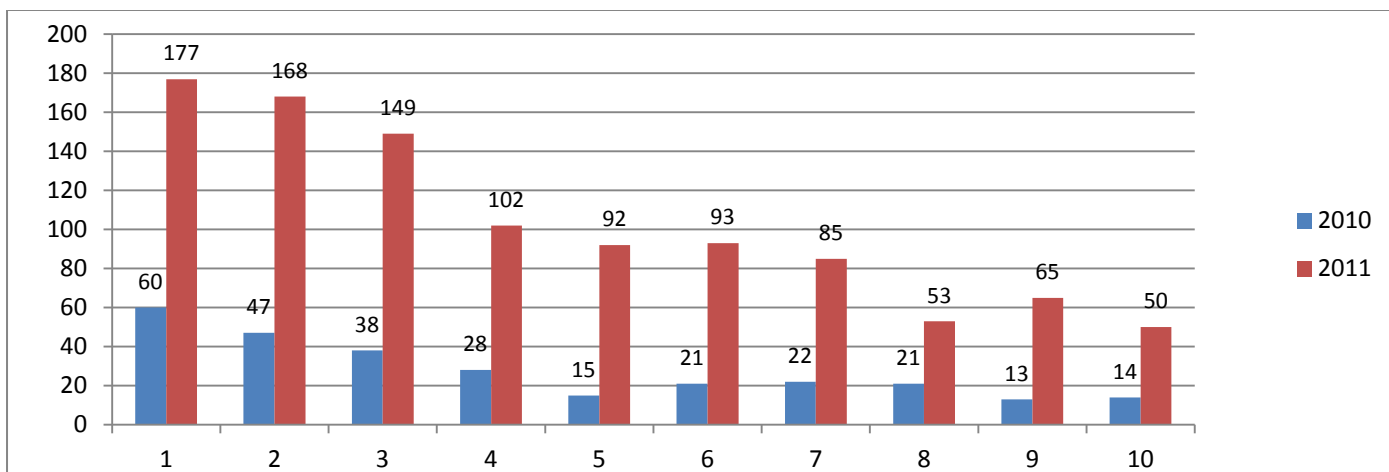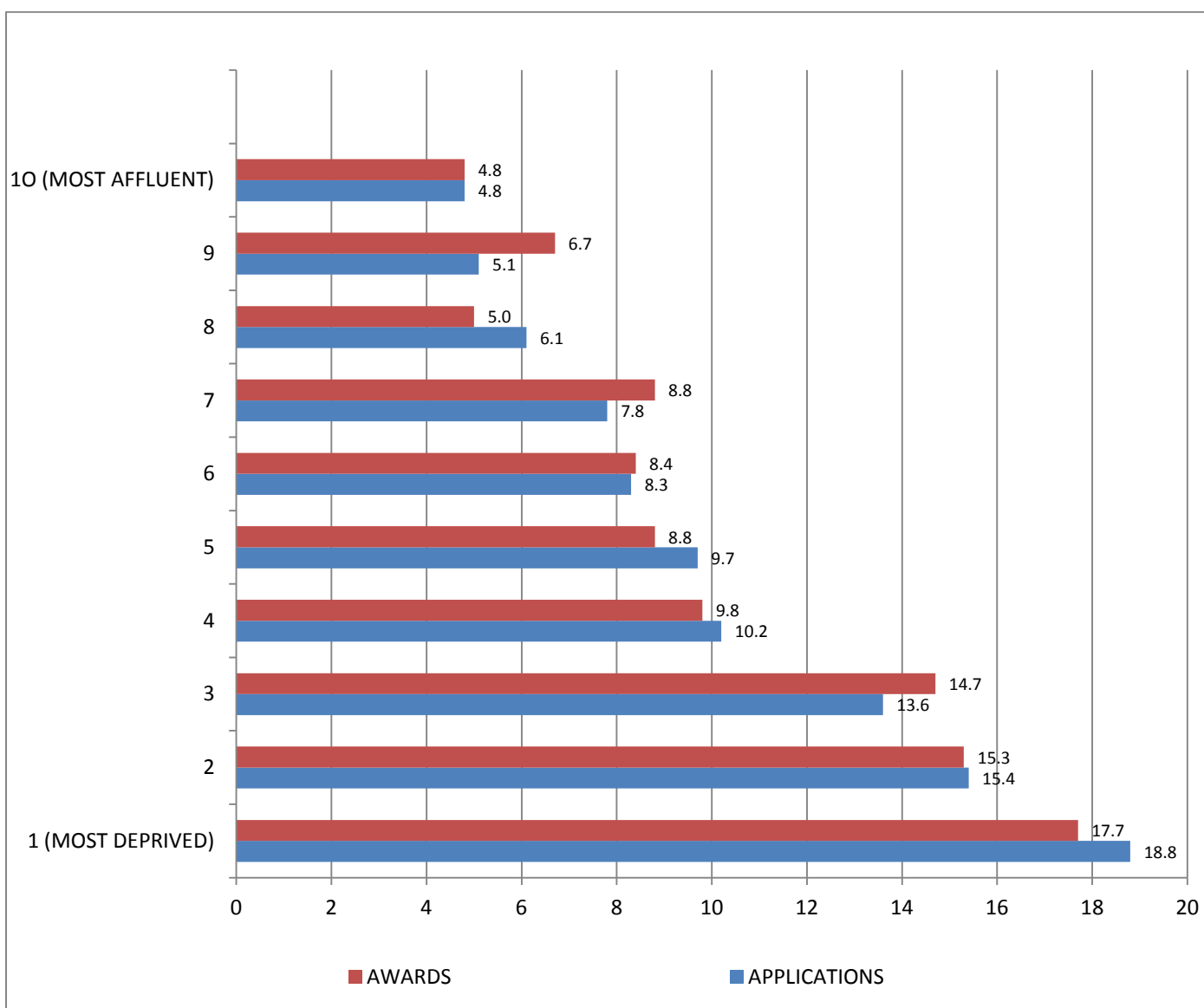Figure 3.15(a) **Numerical distribution of Think Big project awards by deprivation**

Figure 3.15(b) **Percentage distribution of Think Big project awards by deprivation**

The chances of young people winning a Think Big award has increased from 2010 to 2011 (see Figure 3.16). As observed above, this is because more applications are being sponsored by youth partners – which have a higher success rate.

Figure 3.16   **Success rates by Index of Multiple Deprivation**

Index of Multiple Deprivation	Applications 2010	Awards 2010	Success rate	Applications 2011	Awards 2010	Success rate
Poorest	186	60	32.3	363	177	48.8
2	140	47	33.6	311	168	54.0
3	118	37	31.4	258	149	57.8
4	95	28	29.5	205	102	49.8
5	64	15	23.4	191	92	48.2
6	63	21	33.3	170	93	54.7
7	51	22	43.1	154	85	55.2
8	55	20	36.4	113	53	46.9
9	42	13	31.0	104	65	62.5
Richest	46	14	30.4	100	50	50.0

More detailed analysis of IMD in relation to biographical characteristics of applicants is provided in the next section.

3.2   Characteristics of young people involved with Think Big

Think Big aims to be an inclusive programme, attracting applications from young people from all backgrounds (see Section 1 for a fuller discussion of social impact aspirations for the programme). This section explores the extent to which inclusivity is achieved whilst the programme maintains its credential as an 'open' programme. A range of factors are considered in the analysis including: gender, age, disability, deprivation, ethnicity and educational qualifications.

Gender differences

Figure 3.17 shows that the distribution of projects by gender is broadly equal in 2010 and equal in 2011. Gender differences in applications by ethnicity are not pronounced – the only area where there is a clear difference is amongst Asian applicants where males outnumber females by a margin of over 25 per cent. Amongst black applicants, the difference is less pronounced, but in this case, females outnumber males by about 6 per cent.

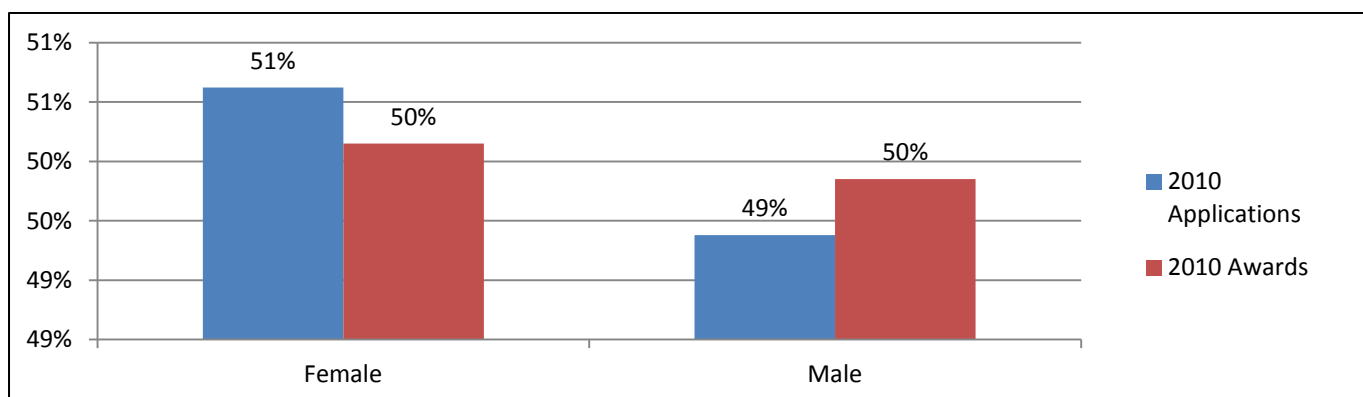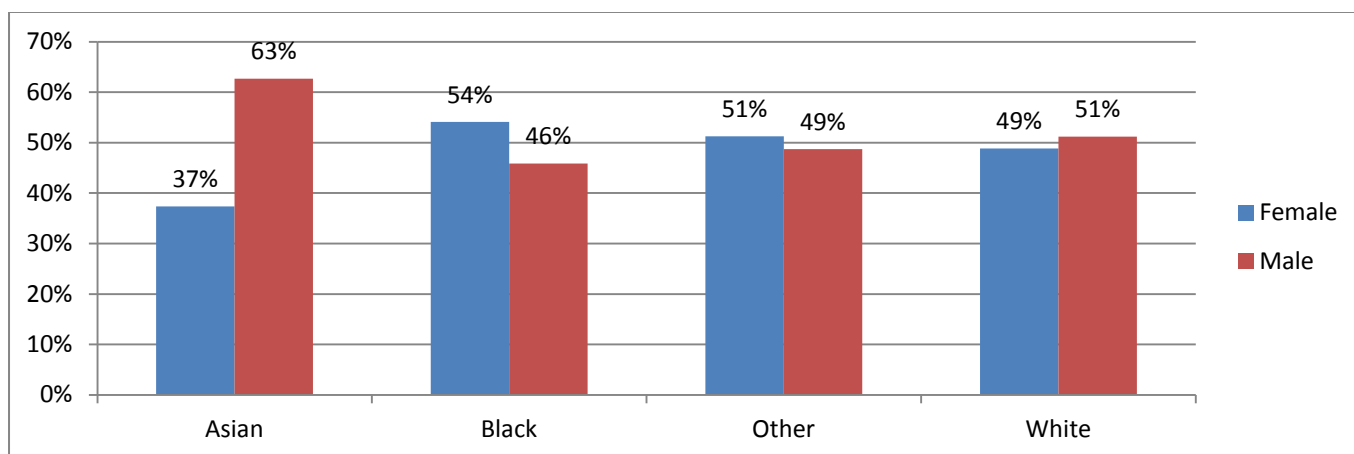Figure 3.17   **Gender distribution of Think Big applications and awards**

Figure 3.18   **Applications by gender and ethnicity**

As Figure 3.19 indicates, success rates by gender and ethnicity are not particularly pronounced with the exception of Asian applicants where the success rate of females is much higher than for males. It will be interesting to explore further, as the research proceeds in 2012, why fewer Asian men are successful in winning awards and why fewer women apply in the first place.

Figure 3.19   **Success rates of applicants by gender and ethnicity**

	Female			*Male*		
	Applications	Awards	Success rate	Applications	Awards	Success rates
Asian	87	56	64.4	146	71	48.6
Black	237	102	43.0	201	90	44.8
Mixed / other	162	73	45.1	154	75	48.7
White	1232	604	49.0	1292	602	46.6

Age distribution

Figure 3.20 indicates that the number of applicants from younger age groups have increased in 2011, primarily due to the involvement of Think Big partner organisations. Changes in the percentage of awards, shown in Figure 3.13 indicate a similar pattern.

Figure 3.20   **Percentage of applicants by age of participants in 2011**
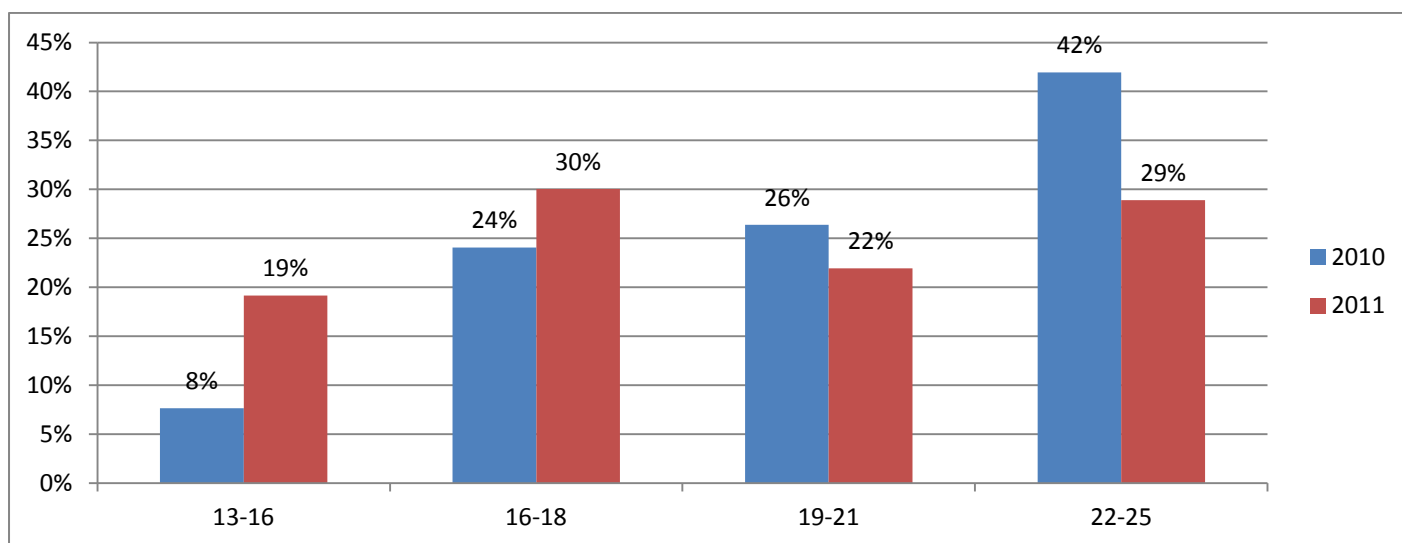
Figure 3.21   **Percentage of awards by age of participants in 2010 and 2011**
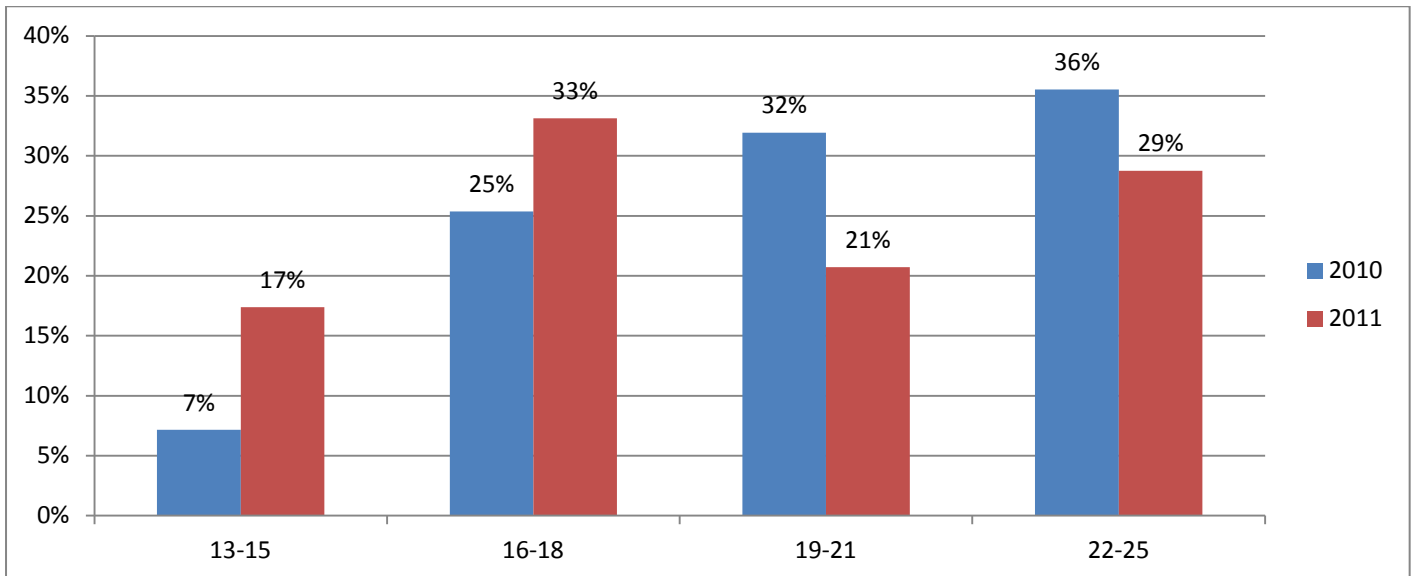
Younger applicants to Think Big are more likely to be sponsored by Think Big partner organisations or other organisations, as shown in Figure 3.22. The older applicants are more likely to offer open applications. The number of approvals of applications are shown in Figure 3.23. This chart is divided into individual years to explore variations. It is clear that the number of awards rises steeply between ages 13 and 17 and tails off for older applicants.

Figure 3.22 **Percentage of sponsored and open applications by age of young person**
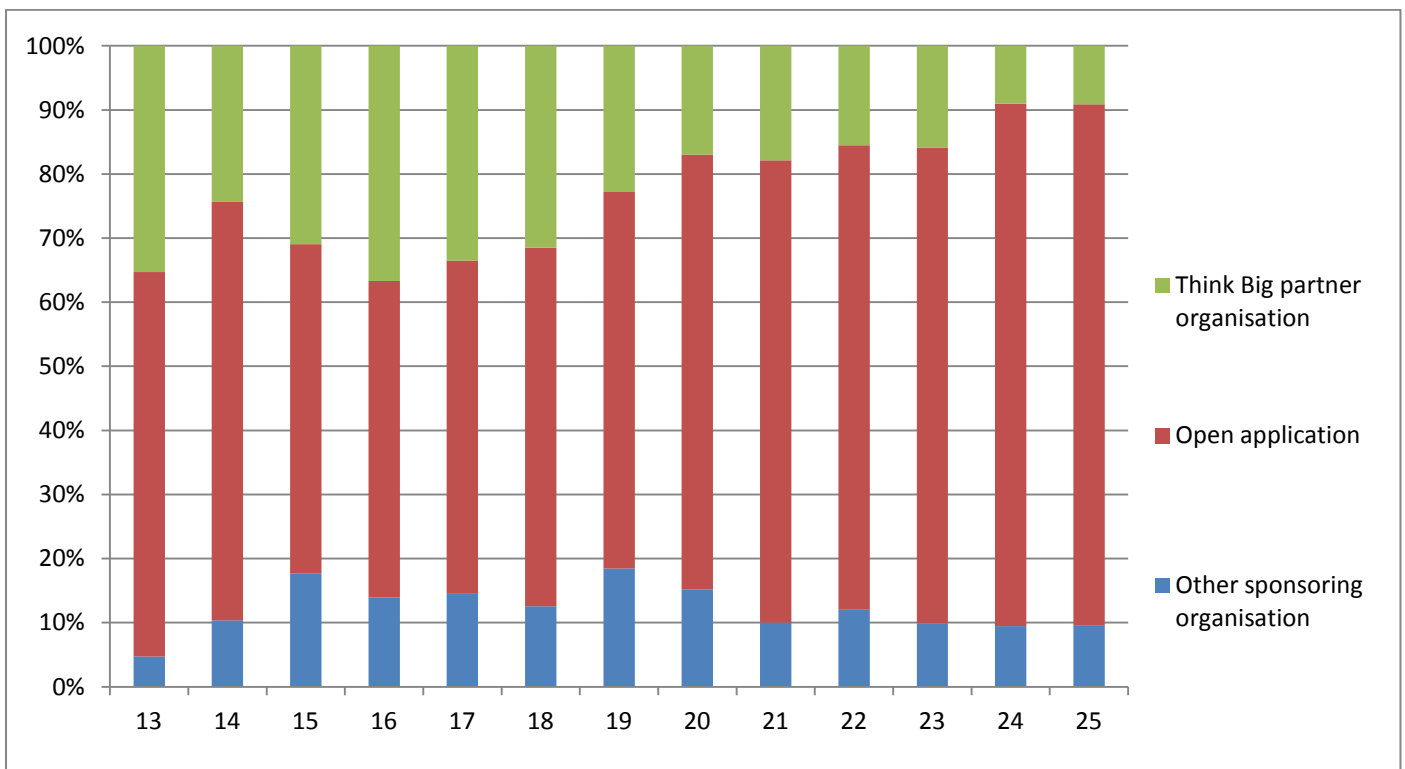
Figure 3.23 **Approvals by age**

47
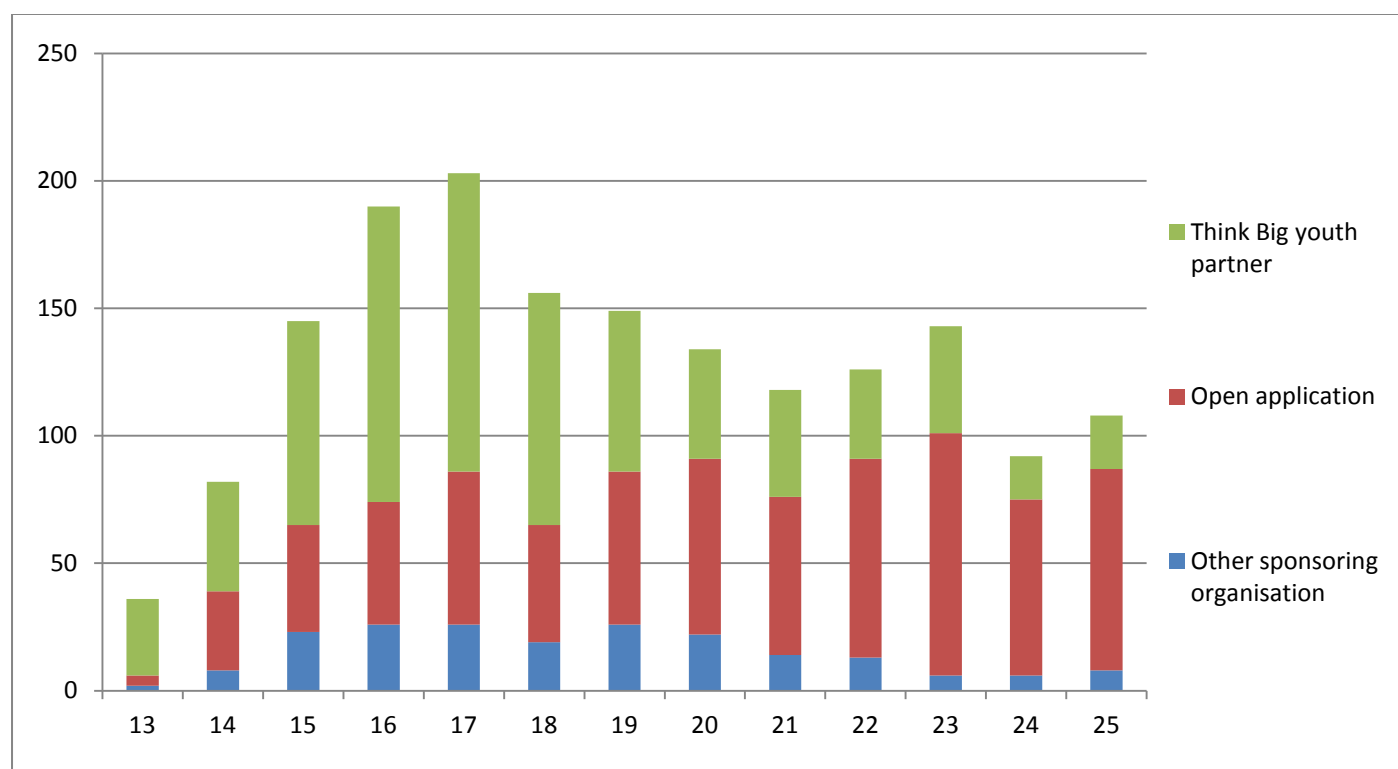
Figure 3.24 shows the distribution of applications across Index of Multiple Deprivation quintiles. These data indicate that awards tend to be higher in the poorest quintile when compared with application levels in 2010, but less so in 2011. In 2011 there seems to be some evidence of a drift towards higher socio-economic group application and award amongst the 16-18s group. This may be due to the involvement of some partner organisations which purposefully tend to work with more highly educated young people.

Figure 3.24 **Applications and awards by age by Index of Multiple Deprivation**

| | Index of Multiple Deprivation (Quintiles) | | | | | |
	1	2	3	4	5	
Applicants 2010						
13-15	32.3%	22.6%	22.6%	11.3%	11.3%	100.1%
16-18	34.0%	26.0%	15.5%	12.5%	12.0%	100.0%
19-21	43.3%	18.6%	15.2%	11.7%	11.3%	100.1%
22-25	37.6%	28.3%	12.8%	12.8%	8.4%	99.9%
Awards 2010						
13-15	40.0%	10.0%	20.0%	15.0%	15.0%	100.0%
16-18	36.9%	26.2%	15.4%	15.4%	6.2%	100.0%
19-21	40.2%	23.0%	14.9%	10.3%	11.5%	100.0%
22-25	37.4%	25.2%	8.4%	19.6%	9.3%	100.0%
Applicants 2011						
13-15	31.5%	19.9%	23.9%	15.0%	9.7%	100.0%
16-18	32.0%	22.5%	17.7%	15.8%	12.0%	100.0%
19-21	36.9%	26.7%	15.5%	11.4%	9.5%	100.0%
22-25	36.4%	24.6%	17.4%	11.8%	9.7%	99.9%
Awards 2011						
13-15	32.0%	20.8%	22.5%	15.2%	9.6%	100.0%
16-18	30.5%	21.6%	16.1%	17.9%	13.8%	100.0%
19-21	35.0%	29.9%	16.8%	7.5%	10.7%	100.0%
22-25	36.3%	25.4%	18.0%	11.2%	9.2%	100.0%

Figure 3.25 is difficult to read due to the high volume of data presented. However, it is worthwhile to make the effort because this figure shows which constituencies of young people are being targeted. At the base of the figure, each of the five quintiles of IMD are listed, each with four bands of ages above. For the most deprived young people (IMD quintile 1) the 13-15s are less likely to be supported by a partner organisation than their counterparts in IMD2, suggesting that the poorest and youngest people are not being targeted as successfully as they might. It is also worth noting that amongst the more affluent quintiles, IMD 4 and 5, partner organisations are more likely to be supporting the 13-15s and 16-18s. Indeed, the 16-18s in IMD 5 are better represented than in any other socio-economic range. These findings may need to be discussed with some partner organisations to ensure that they target less affluent young people – in line with the aims of the programme.[25]

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[25] Background analysis shows that amongst partner organisations the spread of awards by IMD varies very significantly. Some organisations target all or the vast majority of young people in the most deprived areas, others focus on a range of young people. In a small number of organisations, more affluent young people are favoured.

Figure 3.25 **Partner and open applications by age and IMD**
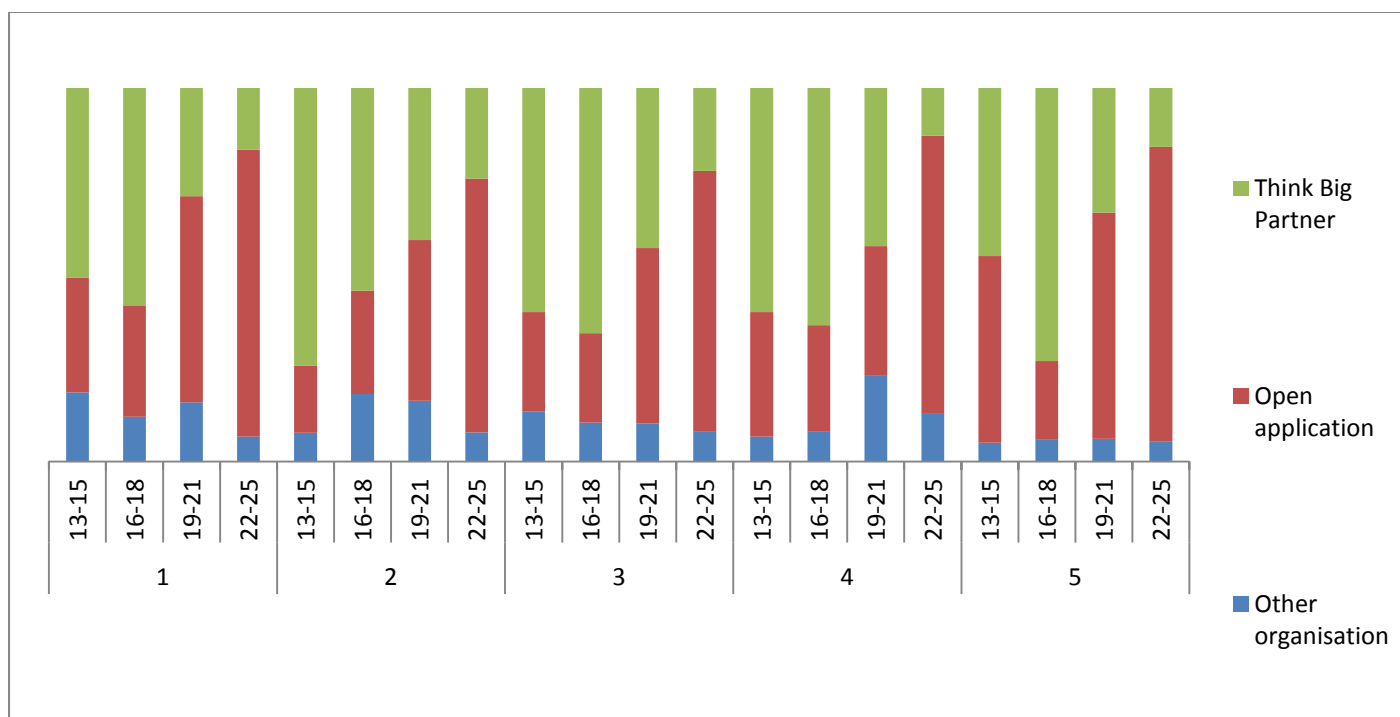
Disability

There are only a small number of disabled applicants and awards at present which makes it difficult to undertake detailed statistical analysis. However, it is intended that some qualitative work should be undertaken on this aspect of the programme in 2012. Figure 3.26 shows that about 3-5 per cent of applications come from disabled young people with a similar number achieving success to the general population of applicants.

Figure 3.26 **Applications and awards by disabled young people**
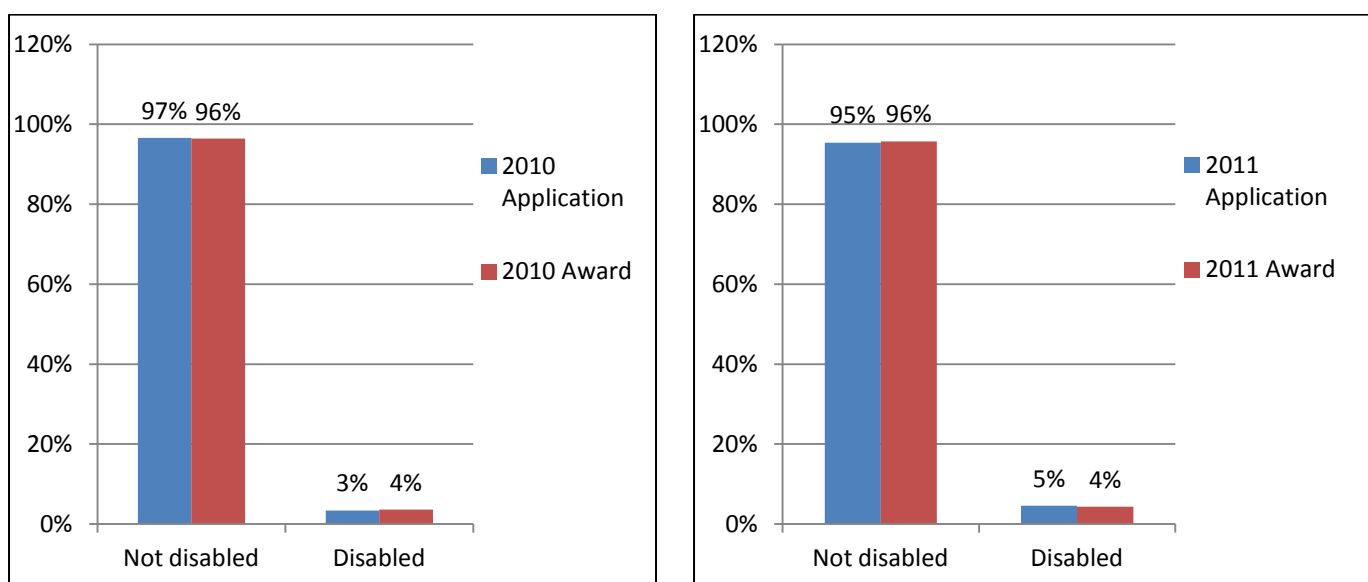
As Figure 3.27 shows, there are no clear differences in the application rates of disabled young people whether they offer open applications, or are sponsored by another organisation.

Figure 3.27 **Open and partner organisation applications by disabled young people**
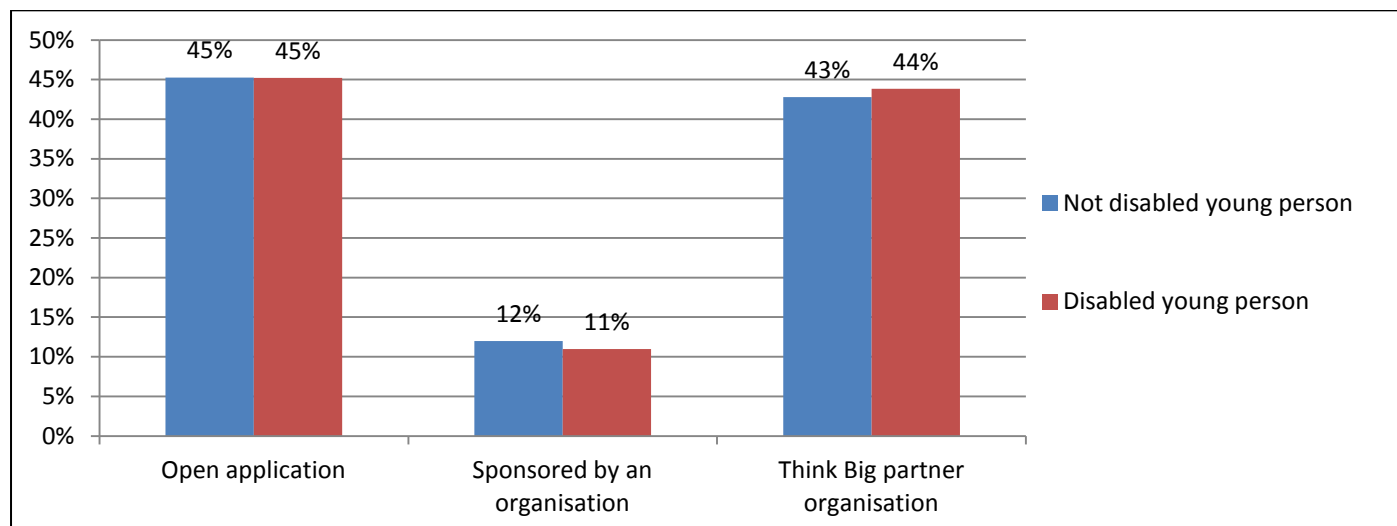
Finally, Figure 3.28 shows the percentages of applications and awards for disabled young people across different socio-economic groups. While differences are not pronounced, it is indicated that disabled applicants from poorer areas (quintiles 1 and 2) are more likely to gain an award.

Figure 3.28 **Disabled applications and awards**

	Index of Multiple Deprivation (Quintiles)					
	Poorest	2	3	4	Richest	
Applicants 2010						
Disabled	33.3%	16.7%	23.3%	16.7%	10.0%	100.0%
Not disabled	37.9%	25.3%	14.3%	12.2%	10.2%	100.0%
Awards 2010						
Disabled	37.90%	23.90%	13.30%	15.20%	9.80%	100.00%
Not disabled	33.30%	25.00%	8.30%	25.00%	8.30%	100.00%
Applicants 2011						
Disabled	38.4%	31.3%	14.0%	9.3%	7.0%	100.0%
Not disabled	34.3%	22.8%	18.6%	13.8%	10.5%	100.0%
Awards 2011						
Disabled	32.80%	24.20%	18.20%	13.40%	11.40%	100.00%
Not disabled	42.90%	28.60%	11.90%	11.90%	4.80%	100.00%

Educational achievement of applicants

The level of educational achievement of applicants, as shown above, affects choice of project theme to some extent. This section looks in more detail at the distribution of applications and awards. Figures 3.29 and 3.30 show that in 2010 most applications come from young people who currently have relatively low levels of educational achievement. In 2011, these differences had narrowed to some extent.

Figure 3.29 **Educational achievement of applicants and awardees 2010**
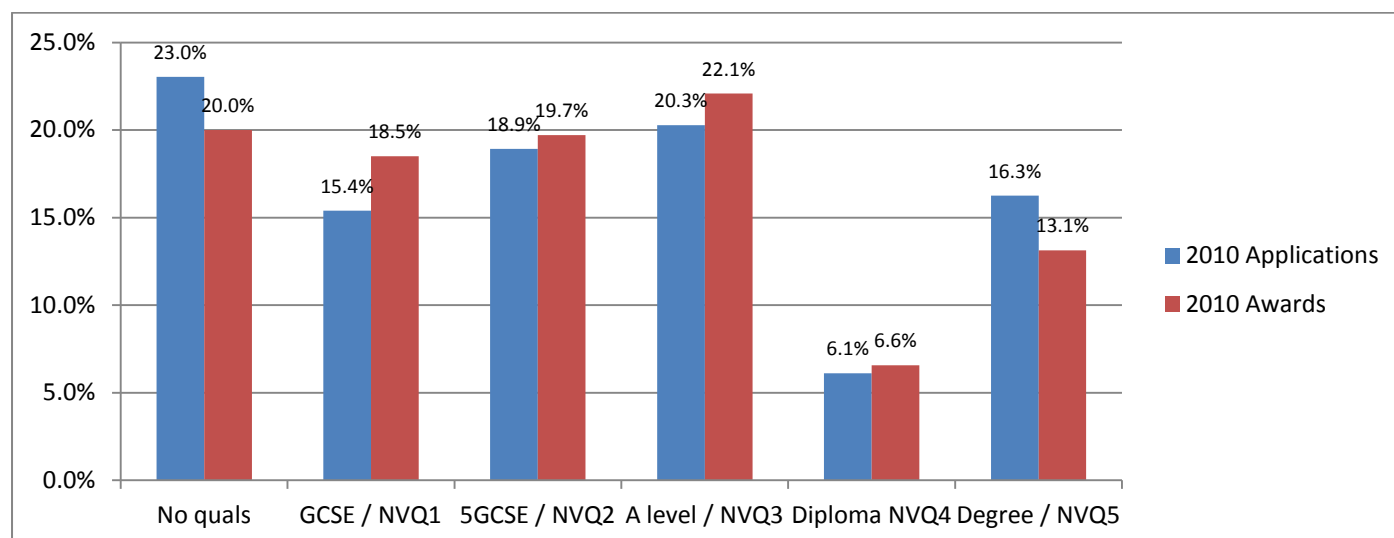
Figure 3.30 **Educational achievement of applicants and awardees 2011**
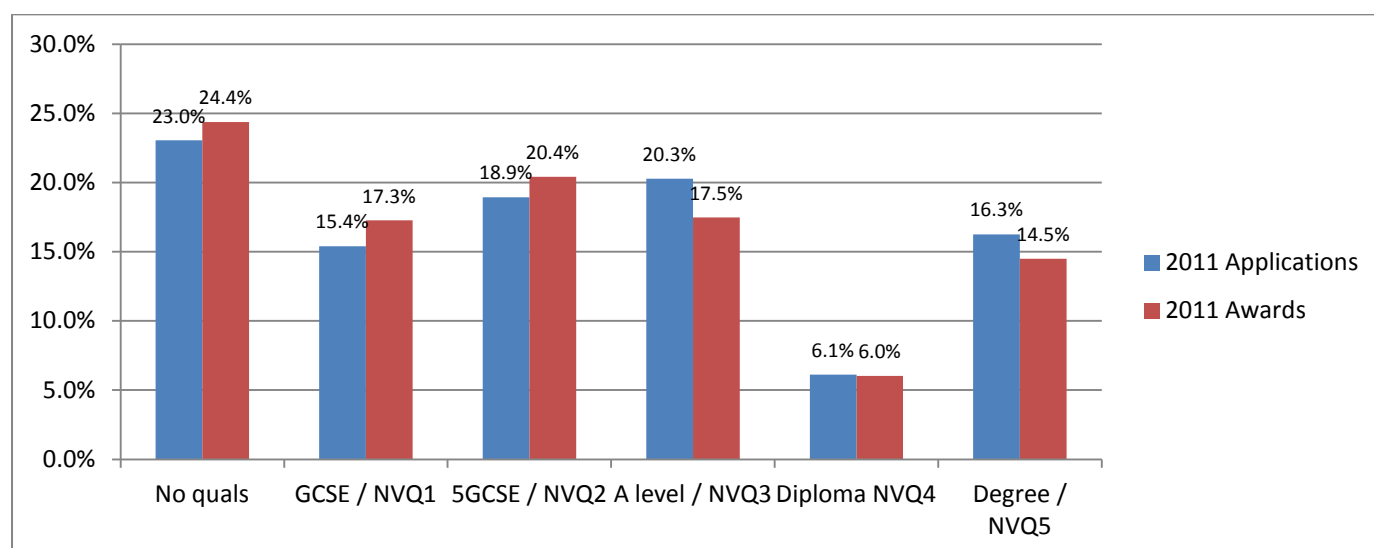
Figure 3.31 compares the educational achievement of applicants and awardees by IMD quintiles. For those young people who have no qualifications or qualifications below NVQ3, the data make reasonable sense – as they reflect expectations about the link between affluence/deprivation and educational achievement (as discussed in Section 2). However, for the higher educational achievers that data are clearly less reliable. This is, it is presumed, due to the fact that students or recent graduates are less likely to live in affluent areas – perhaps considerably less affluent than the areas within which they were born.

Figure 3.31 **Educational achievement by socio economic indicator**

	Index of Multiple Deprivation (quintiles)					
	Poorest	2	3	4	Richest	
Applicants 2010						
No qualifications	37.4%	27.2%	16.4%	10.8%	8.2%	100.0%
GCSE/NVQ1	47.3%	26.7%	13.0%	8.4%	4.6%	100.0%
5GCSE/NVQ2	38.3%	23.4%	13.2%	12.0%	13.2%	100.1%
A Level/NVQ3	37.7%	17.7%	17.1%	13.1%	14.3%	99.9%
Diploma/NVQ4	46.0%	18.0%	16.0%	10.0%	10.0%	100.0%
Degree/NVQ5	26.8%	32.4%	12.7%	18.3%	9.9%	100.1%
Awards 2010						
No qualifications	41.5%	18.9%	17.0%	11.3%	11.3%	100.0%
GCSE/NVQ1	40.0%	34.0%	14.0%	10.0%	2.0%	100.0%
5GCSE/NVQ2	37.5%	19.6%	10.7%	25.0%	7.1%	100.0%
A Level/NVQ3	35.5%	22.6%	16.1%	12.9%	12.9%	100.0%
Diploma/NVQ4	42.1%	15.8%	5.3%	21.1%	15.8%	100.0%
Degree/NVQ5	35.9%	28.2%	7.7%	15.4%	12.8%	100.0%
Applicants 2011						
No qualifications	35.1%	22.1%	18.9%	14.2%	9.7%	100.0%
GCSE/NVQ1	35.7%	22.9%	20.8%	12.2%	8.3%	100.0%
5GCSE/NVQ2	33.7%	23.4%	17.7%	14.7%	10.5%	100.0%
A Level/NVQ3	32.6%	24.2%	17.5%	13.9%	11.8%	100.0%
Diploma/NVQ4	36.8%	27.2%	11.4%	14.0%	10.5%	100.0%
Degree/NVQ5	34.9%	21.7%	19.2%	12.5%	11.7%	100.0%
Awards 2011						
No qualifications	36.7%	21.9%	17.3%	13.9%	10.1%	100.0%
GCSE/NVQ1	31.5%	23.8%	18.8%	13.8%	12.2%	100.0%
5GCSE/NVQ2	32.9%	25.0%	15.8%	15.8%	10.5%	100.0%
A Level/NVQ3	32.4%	26.4%	17.0%	11.0%	13.2%	100.0%
Diploma/NVQ4	28.6%	30.6%	20.4%	10.2%	10.2%	100.0%
Degree/NVQ5	33.3%	23.1%	21.2%	12.2%	10.3%	100.0%

To take the analysis further, Figures 3.32 and 3.23 report on evidence where data on the age of applicants has been recategorised to remove those applicants who could not reasonably be expected yet to have achieved specific qualifications. For example, if the applicants' age was under 17, it is presumed that they could not yet have sat their A Level examinations. The results of this process show that for the first four sets of bars which refer to lower level of qualifications, there is a close association between IMD and educational achievement – as expected – based on the discussion in Section 2.

For the better educated young people, the reverse is the case. In other words, there are far too many applicants reported as graduates for the lower IMD categories. While it cannot be assumed that all graduates are misplaced in IMD categories. It is likely that many are – so

caution needs to be taken in interpreting IMD data in relation to educational achievement in particular, but for IMD data in general.

Figure 3.32   **Percentage of applications by Index of Multiple Deprivation (quintiles)**
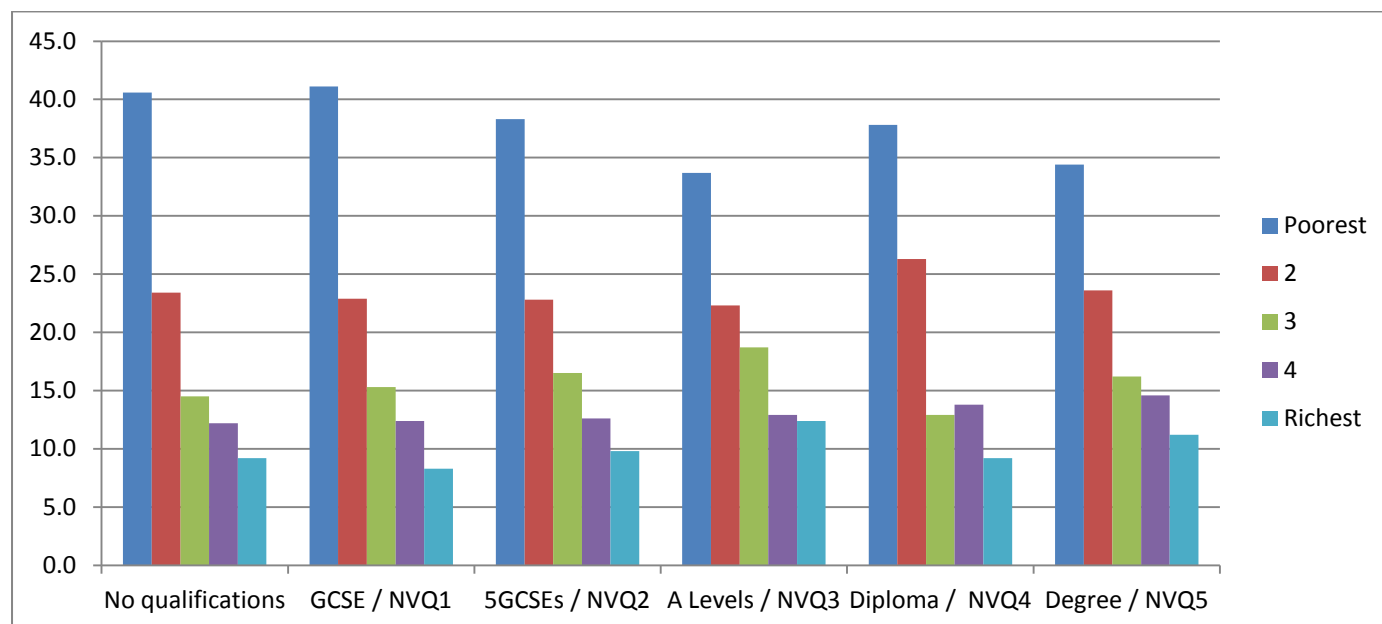
Figure 3.33   **Number of applications by Index of Multiple Deprivation (quintiles)**
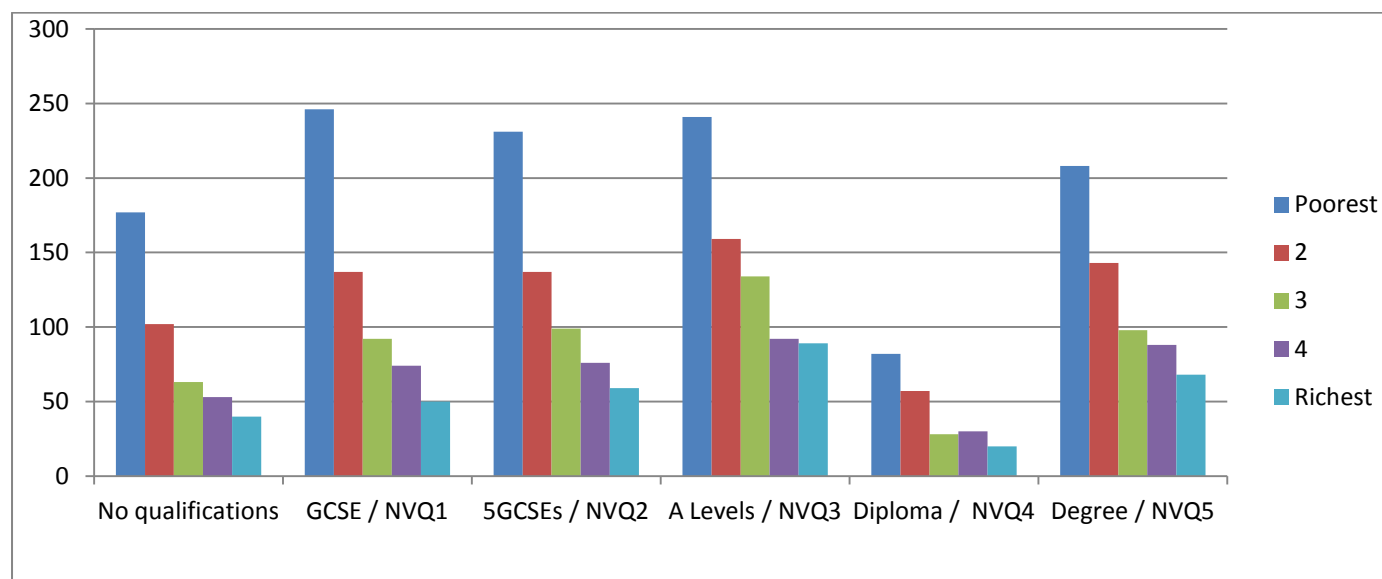
Ethnicity of applicants

In the analysis above, it has been shown that Think Big is effective at reaching young people from ethnic minorities. This section takes the analysis further by considering patterns of applications and awards by the regional distribution of projects and by IMD.

Figure 3.34 shows the proportion of applicants from across the whole programme (to the end of December 2011) who are from different ethnic groups. These data show that the programme is successfully reaching all parts of society. When compared with national

statistics on ethnicity, it is clear that Think Big is attracting more young people from minority ethnic groups than might be expected. In most cases, there are about twice the number of ethnic minorities on the programme than the national average. This may be due partly to the demographic makeup of ethnic minority groups where there tend to be fewer older people. It is also worth noting that Census statistics are a decade old now which may reflect significant changes in the demographic distribution of ethnic minorities. It is possible that differences are associated with the way that young people enter the programme via youth organisations. The proportion of white young people entering the programme is considerably lower than would be expected – with 22% shortfall in participation against national statistics.

Figure 3.34 **Ethnicity of Think Big applicants compared with national averages**

Ethnicity	Total Think Big applications	% of all applications	National population Census 2001	% of national population	% difference
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	59	1.7%	283,063	0.5%	1.2%
Asian or Asian British - Indian	117	3.3%	1,053,411	1.8%	1.5%
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	125	3.5%	977,285	1.6%	1.9%
Asian or Asian British - Other	47	1.3%	247,644	0.4%	0.9%
Black or Black British - African	217	6.1%	485,277	0.8%	5.3%
Black or Black British - Caribbean	160	4.5%	565,876	1.0%	3.5%
Black or Black British - Other	46	1.3%	97,585	0.2%	1.1%
Chinese	21	0.6%	247,403	0.4%	0.2%
Mixed race	207	5.8%	677,117	1.2%	4.6%
Other	77	2.2%	230,615	0.4%	1.8%
White - British	2,229	62.8%	50,366,497	85.7%	-22.8%
White - Irish	152	4.3%	691,232	1.2%	3.1%
White - Other	90	2.5%	3,096,169	5.3%	-2.7%
Grand Total	**3,547**	**100.0%**	**59,019,174**	**100.4%**	

Figure 3.35 shows that Asian and Black applicants and awardees are more likely to live in poorer areas – although the proportions reduced for the 2011 intake of Think Big. Award rates are shown to fall significantly for Black applicants in the poorest areas in 2011. White applicants and awardees are more numerous in the richer IMD categories. This is probably less to do with the preferences of applicants, however, and more to do with the more even distribution of the white population across IMD quintiles.

Figure 3.35 **Ethnicity of Think Big applicants and awardees by IMD**

	Index of Multiple Deprivation (Quintiles)					
	Poorest	2	3	4	Richest	
Applicants 2010						
Asian	65.3%	18.4%	12.2%	4.1%	0.0%	100.0%
Black	60.8%	25.0%	10.8%	2.5%	0.8%	99.9%
Mixed and other	46.3%	26.8%	15.9%	6.1%	4.9%	100.0%
White	27.9%	25.5%	16.2%	16.4%	14.0%	100.0%
Awards 2010						
Asian	56.3%	31.3%	6.3%	6.3%	0.0%	100.0%
Black	68.1%	27.7%	2.1%	2.1%	0.0%	100.0%
Mixed and other	31.0%	34.5%	17.2%	10.3%	6.9%	100.0%
White	28.0%	20.6%	16.0%	21.1%	14.3%	100.0%
Applicants 2011						
Asian	60.3%	19.5%	12.1%	6.3%	1.7%	99.9%
Black	51.6%	30.0%	10.8%	5.9%	1.7%	100.0%
Mixed and other	33.7%	26.1%	19.6%	10.1%	10.6%	100.1%
White	27.0%	21.7%	20.7%	17.3%	13.3%	100.0%
Awards 2011						
Asian	58.7%	21.2%	10.6%	7.7%	1.9%	100.0%
Black	42.2%	34.8%	13.3%	5.9%	3.7%	100.0%
Mixed and other	31.5%	28.7%	21.3%	9.3%	9.3%	100.0%
White	28.0%	21.2%	19.2%	17.0%	14.6%	100.0%

The success rates of White and BAME applicants is shown in Figure 3.36. This Figure provides something of a mixed picture – largely because the numbers of young people in several of the ethnicity categories are relatively small. For the most part BAME success rates are above average – significantly so for mixed ethnicity applicants and Chinese applicants. Amongst Asian applicants, Bangladeshis are the least successful. Amongst Black applicants, those of Caribbean origin are the least successful. As more data become available in 2012, it will be possible to identify if these are simple statistical anomalies, or whether there are significant differences in modes of application or award.

It is worthwhile exploring in more depth the distribution of young people to get a clearer indication of the dynamics of the programme. Figure 3.37 indicates that in some areas, the proportion of applicant from ethnic minorities is low – particularly Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, North East England and East of England. These may be accounted for by the low numbers of ethnic minority groups in these regions. However, it is more likely that it is related to the high levels of applications from larger urban areas such as London and Birmingham. In the West Midlands nearly 40% of applicants are from ethnic minorities. In London, the statistics are even more striking – with fewer than one third of white applicants. It is a good thing that ethnic minorities are well represented in the capital, especially so given the high levels of unemployment among black young people (and young men in particular, as shown in Section 2). It is evident that more work needs to be done to bring in white young people in London – especially so, those from poorer communities.

Figure 3.36 **Award success rates by ethnicity**

|	Applications 2010	Awards 2010	% success rate	Applications in 2011	Awards in 2012	Award % success rate	All applications	All awards	All awards % success rate
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	17	2	11.8	42	18	42.9	59	20	33.9
Asian or Asian British - Indian	29	12	41.4	88	55	62.5	117	67	57.3
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	29	11	37.9	96	66	68.8	125	77	61.6
Asian or Asian British - Other	6	3	50.0	41	22	53.7	47	25	53.2
Black or Black British - African	57	17	29.8	160	88	55.0	217	105	48.4
Black or Black British - Caribbean	50	24	48.0	110	45	40.9	160	69	43.1
Black or Black British - Other	18	6	33.3	28	7	25.0	46	13	28.3
Chinese	8	3	37.5	13	10	76.9	21	13	61.9
Mixed - White and Asian	6	3	50.0	15	8	53.3	21	11	52.4
Mixed - White and Black African	5		0.0	21	14	66.7	26	14	53.8
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	42	16	38.1	79	40	50.6	121	56	46.3
Mixed - Other	9	1	11.1	30	15	50.0	39	16	41.0
Other	22	6	27.3	55	29	52.7	77	35	45.5
White - British	694	212	30.5	1535	842	54.9	2229	1054	47.3
White - Irish	30	12	40.0	122	78	63.9	152	90	59.2
White - Other	25	7	28.0	65	34	52.3	90	41	45.6
All participants	1047	335	32.0	2500	1371	54.8	3547	1706	48.1

Figure 3.37   **Distribution of Think Big applicants by ethnicity**

Ethnicity	East Midlands	East	London	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire and the Humber	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales	All applicants
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	1.5%	0.0%	4.8%	3.0%	1.1%	0.2%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	1.6%
Asian or Asian British - Indian	7.2%	0.8%	5.3%	0.0%	3.8%	3.3%	0.9%	6.4%	1.6%	0.3%	0.7%	1.1%	3.3%
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1.5%	0.0%	2.6%	0.0%	6.3%	5.0%	2.6%	5.6%	10.5%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%
Asian or Asian British - Other	0.5%	0.0%	4.2%	1.2%	0.8%	0.2%	0.4%	0.7%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%
Black or Black British - African	8.7%	1.6%	18.9%	1.2%	2.3%	5.0%	1.7%	2.2%	2.0%	0.0%	1.4%	0.5%	6.3%
Black or Black British - Caribbean	3.6%	0.0%	12.1%	0.0%	2.5%	3.3%	2.2%	9.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	4.5%
Black or Black British - Other	1.0%	0.0%	3.7%	0.6%	1.1%	0.7%	0.4%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%
Chinese	0.5%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.4%	1.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.7%	0.5%	0.6%
Mixed - White and Asian	0.0%	2.3%	0.4%	0.0%	0.4%	1.1%	0.4%	1.9%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
Mixed - White and Black African	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%	1.9%	0.7%	0.0%	1.1%	0.4%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.7%
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	5.6%	3.1%	5.6%	1.8%	2.5%	3.7%	4.3%	5.2%	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	3.5%
Mixed - Other	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%	1.1%	1.5%	1.3%	0.7%	1.2%	0.0%	2.0%	0.5%	1.1%
Other	1.5%	2.3%	5.4%	0.0%	1.3%	1.5%	2.6%	1.5%	0.8%	0.3%	0.7%	0.5%	2.1%
White - British	67.2%	82.0%	28.6%	92.3%	72.6%	69.5%	77.0%	59.2%	76.6%	53.5%	89.9%	91.0%	62.8%
White - Irish	0.0%	1.6%	0.7%	0.0%	0.6%	0.4%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	42.9%	2.0%	0.5%	4.2%
White - Other	1.0%	6.3%	3.8%	0.0%	1.3%	2.4%	4.8%	2.2%	0.8%	2.3%	1.4%	3.2%	2.5%

Figure 3.38 shows how many applications have been received in London from young people from different ethnic groups. Applications are sub-divided by the level of affluence or deprivation. These data show that white young people are spread more evenly across the ten deciles, compared with ethnic minority groups – but they are still more likely to be from less affluent backgrounds (IMD 2-4). There is a clear under-representation of white young people from the poorest areas however (IMD1).

Figure 3.38 **London applications by ethnicity and level of affluence**
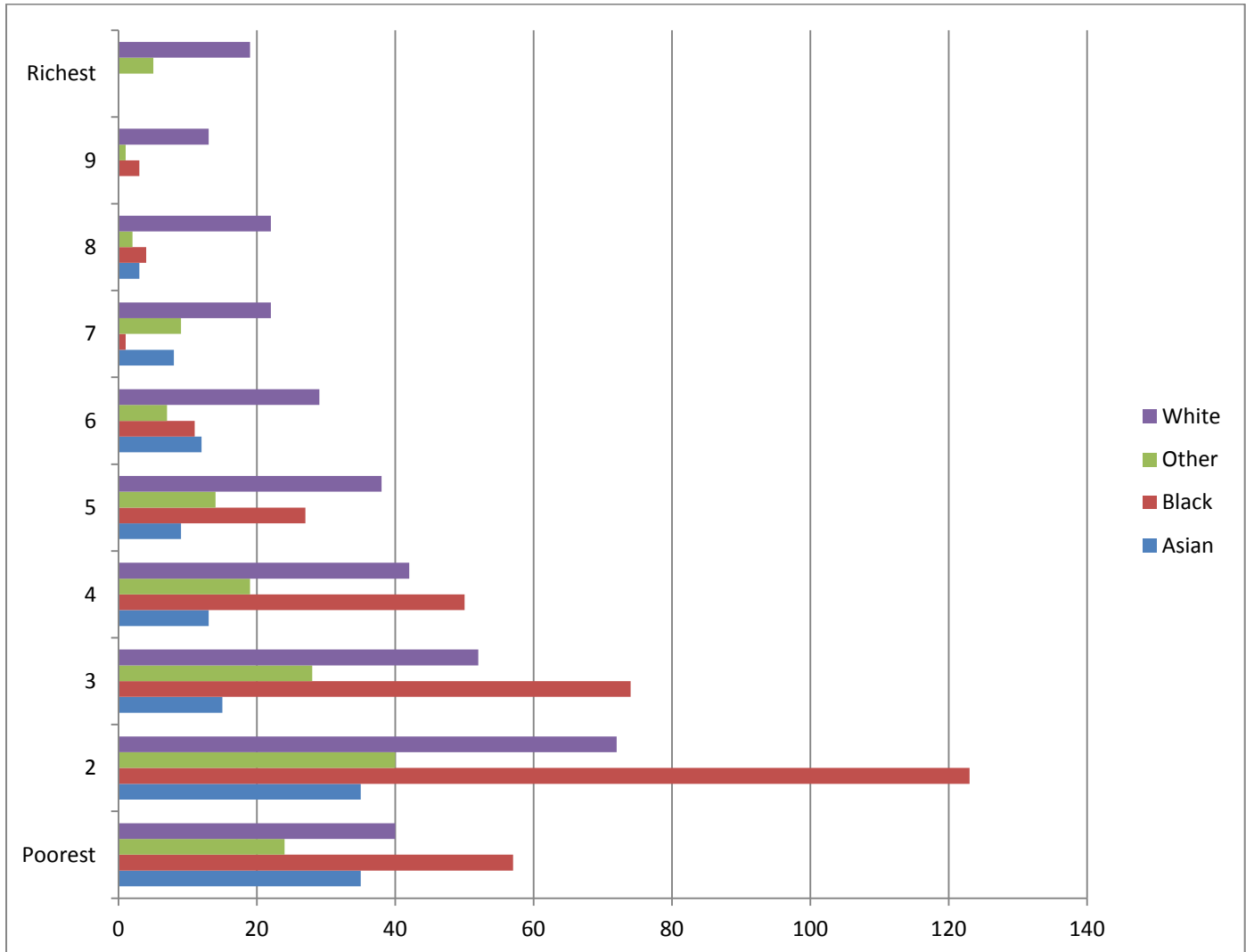
3.3 Think Bigger

Think bigger is currently in its early stages of development. In 2011, residential training was introduced to give more intensive support to young people (discussed in detail in Section 5). As yet, few projects have completed, so it is not possible to do statistical analysis of changes in attitudes – however, there is a wealth of qualitative data – which, again, is reported in Section 5.

This section provides information on the biographical characteristics of applicants to Think Bigger. Its purpose is to get early indications about project reach. Figure 3.39 presents data on gender, age, educational qualifications and disability. It is apparent from these data that at the point of application, males are more prevalent. Awards are made to men and women on an equal footing and success rate of applications is therefore similar, at about 50 per cent for males and females.

Considering the age of applicants to Think Bigger provides a clear indication that older young people are most likely to seek to enter the programme. As residential training is generally only available to the over 18s, this is to be expected. But also the scale of the programme is more demanding – which may deter young applicants. The success rate of applications is uneven across the age bands. Older applicants are much more likely to be successful than younger applicants – which is appropriate given the level of responsibility attached to the projects.

Educational qualification of applicants provides a useful way of estimating the confidence and capability of young people seeking to enter the programme. The picture is quite mixed, however, and clearly the programme does not just attract well educated young people – although applicants with A Levels (25.9%) are numerous, and presumably, many of them will be undergraduates. Graduates comprise nearly 28 per cent of applications. The success rate of graduates and A Level students is higher than other applications. Only six disabled applicants have entered the programme so far.[26]

Figure 3.40 continues the analysis by considering the regional breakdown and ethnicity of applicants and awardees. It is evident from these data that there is significant over-representation of applicants from London and the South East: comprising about 40 per cent of applications and 44 per cent of awards. Given the small numbers involved, it is not easy to compare success rates across so many categories – so this analysis will have to be deferred until next year.

The evidence on ethnicity of applicants suggests that a broad range of young people are attracted to Think Bigger. Just short of 40 per cent of applicants are from ethnic minorities, suggesting that the programme is successful in reaching this part of the population. Awards are clearly being made in a fair minded way as there is no evidence of big differences in success rates. White applicants are a little more successful. There are too few data available, at this stage, to explore what lies behind these differences – although it could be related to several factors such as age and education.

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[26] The recorded numbers of disabled young people, and those with limiting illnesses suggest a higher level of application and award, but most applicants were both disabled and stated that they had a limiting illness.

Figure 3.39   Biographical characteristics of applicants and awardees

All Think Bigger Projects 2011	All applications N=	All awards N=	% applications in each category	% awards in each category	Success rate of applications
Gender					
Female	56	29	40.3	41.4	51.8
Male	83	41	59.7	58.6	49.4
N=	139	70	100.0	100.0	50.4
Age					
13-15	6	1	4.3	1.4	16.7
16-18	22	9	15.8	12.9	40.9
19-21	33	15	23.7	21.4	45.5
22-25	78	45	56.1	64.3	57.7
N=	139	70	100.0	100.0	
Educational qualifications					
None	12	5	8.6	7.1	41.7
GCSE NVQ1	19	10	13.7	14.3	52.6
5GCSE NVQ2	20	8	14.4	11.4	40.0
A Level NVQ3	36	22	25.9	31.4	61.1
Diploma NVQ4/5	13	3	9.4	4.3	23.1
Degree	39	22	28.1	31.4	56.4
N=	139	70	100.0	100.0	
Disability					
Registered disabled	10	6	7.2	8.6	60.0
Limiting illness	8	5	6.3	7.2	62.5
No limiting illness/disability	119	64	93.7	92.8	53.8
N=	127	69	100.0	100.0	

Figure 3.40 **Biographical characteristics of applicants and awardees**

All Think Bigger Projects 2011	All applications N=	All awards N=	% applications in each category	% awards in each category	Success rate of applications
English Regions					
East	9	3	6.5	4.3	33.3
East Midlands	3	0	2.2	0.0	0.0
London	33	17	23.7	24.3	51.5
North East	3	1	2.2	1.4	33.3
North West	19	8	13.7	11.4	42.1
South East	22	14	15.8	20.0	63.6
South West	8	4	5.8	5.7	50.0
West Midlands	13	6	9.4	8.6	46.2
Yorkshire and the Humber	12	5	8.6	7.1	41.7
Scotland	5	4	3.6	5.7	80.0
Northern Ireland	8	5	5.8	7.1	62.5
Wales	4	3	2.9	4.3	75.0
N=	139	70	100.0	100.0	
Ethnicity					
Asian	13	6	9.4	8.6	46.2
Black	27	13	19.4	18.6	48.1
Mixed/other	15	7	10.8	10.0	46.7
White	84	44	60.4	62.9	52.4
N=	139	70	100.0	100.0	

Figure 3.41 compares open applications with youth partner sponsored applications. Given the small numbers involved, the analysis is purely indicative – however, one or two interesting similarities and differences can be observed. In terms of gender, there is no apparent difference in level of application or award between open and youth partner applications, *except* in the success rates in youth partner applications: here it is shown that men do rather less well than women.

Open applications are skewed towards older young people than in partner organisations – suggesting that partner organisations are successful in widening the range of applications. Older applicants are generally more successful which ever route they take into the programme.

Similarly, youth partner sponsored applications come from a wider range of young people in terms of educational qualifications when compared with open applications. Young people with degrees, sponsored by youth organisations, were much more likely to be successful in winning an award than other youth partner applicants – and quite a bit more likely than well qualified young people who entered via open applications. Interestingly, the success rate of open applications hardly varies at all by educational achievement.

Figure 3.42, finally, compares applications and awards by region and ethnicity. As numbers are small in the multi-category regional variables, it is hard to draw clear conclusions at this stage. It is clear, however, that the large number of London applications are coming mainly within the open programme. Youth partner sponsored applications are quite evenly distributed except for the over-representation in the south east.

Partner organisations are slightly more likely to encourage black young people into the programme, but differences are small. Discerning patterns of awards is difficult to achieve at present – it is a mixed picture. Interestingly, white young people are doing rather less well in winning awards if they come through youth partner organisations (40% success rate) compared with open applications (58% success rate).

3.4 Summary of findings

The volume of Think Big project applications and approvals are as follows:

- In 2010 there were 1,037 completed applications, of which 338 were awarded Think Big project grants in 2010.

- In 2011 there were 2,498 completed applications, of which 1,370 had been awarded Think Big grants by the end of December 2011.

- The total number of Think Big completed applications by the end of December 2011is 3,535, of which 1,708 have been awarded grants.

- In 2011 there were 120 Think Bigger applications, of which 70 were awarded Think Bigger project grants.

It is estimated that for the programme as a whole:

- About 3,400 young people have been involved in the project in leadership roles.

- About 29,890 young people have benefitted as participants in the programme.

The programme is socially inclusive:

- Applications are being received from each UK Nation and English region broadly in proportion to population. The exceptions are London where applications are about twice as high than would be expected by population estimates, and Scotland where only half as many projects are received as would be expected.

- Applications and awards by gender are equal. Applications from ethnic minority groups are also broadly similar by gender, except amongst Asians where male applications are about 25% higher. The success rate of female Asians is about 15% higher than for males.

- In 2011 the age distribution of applications was relatively balanced with 19% from 13-16 years, 30% for 16-18 years, 22% for 19-21years and 29% for the over 22 years. Awards of projects were not significantly dissimilar. Partner organisations tended to introduce young people aged 15-18 years into the programme. For the over 18s, most Awards were made to young people who made open applications

- Disabled young people, or young people with limiting illnesses currently make up about 5% of applications and awards. Similar numbers of applications come through open applications or via youth partner organisations.

- About 33% of participants in Think Big have achieved A Level qualifications or degrees. By contrast 24% have no qualifications and 17% have fewer than 5 GCSEs at A-C.

- The programme reaches all ethnic minority groups successfully. The programme is particularly successful at making awards to Asian and Black young people – especially from the most deprived quintile of the Index of Multiple Deprivation. White young people, and young men in particular, are less well represented in the more deprived communities.

- The distribution of projects by the Index of Multiple Deprivation indicate that the programme is successful in meeting its ambitions. 34% of awards come from the two most deprived deciles in the Index of Multiple Deprivation, and 57% from the four most deprived deciles (7% above target for the programme.

Figure 3.41 **Open and youth partner awards and applications**

	Youth partner applications and awards					**Open applications and awards**				
	All applications N=	All awards N=	% applications in each category	% awards in each category	Success rate of applications	All applications N=	All awards N=	% applications in each category	% awards in each category	Success rate of applications
Gender										
Female	16	8	40.0	50.0	50.0	40	21	40.4	38.9	52.5
Male	24	8	60.0	50.0	33.3	59	33	59.6	61.1	55.9
N=	40	16	100.0	100.0		99	54	100.0	100.0	
Age										
13-15	3	1	7.5	6.3	33.3	3	0	3.0	0.0	0.0
16-18	8	2	20.0	12.5	25.0	14	7	14.1	13.0	50.0
19-21	14	5	35.0	31.3	35.7	19	10	19.2	18.5	52.6
22-25	15	8	37.5	50.0	53.3	63	37	63.6	68.5	58.7
N=	40	16	100.0	100.0		99	54	100.0	100.0	
Educational qualifications										
None	7	2	17.5	12.5	28.6	5	3	5.1	5.6	60.0
GCSE NVQ1	8	3	20.0	18.8	37.5	11	7	11.1	13.0	63.6
5GCSE NVQ2	6	1	15.0	6.3	16.7	14	7	14.1	13.0	50.0
A Level NVQ3	12	8	30.0	50.0	66.7	24	14	24.2	25.9	58.3
Diploma NVQ4/5	4	0	10.0	0.0	0.0	9	3	9.1	5.6	33.3
Degree	3	2	7.5	12.5	66.7	36	20	36.4	37.0	55.6
N=	40	16	100.0	100.0		99	54	100.0	100.0	54.5

Figure 3.42 **Open and youth partner awards and applications**

	Youth partner applications and awards					Open applications and awards				
	All applications N=	All awards N=	% applications in each category	% awards in each category	Success rate of applications	All applications N=	All awards N=	% applications in each category	% awards in each category	Success rate of applications
English Regions										
East	6	1	15.0	6.3	16.7	3	2	3.0	3.7	66.7
East Midlands	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3	0	3.0	0.0	0.0
London	4	1	10.0	6.3	25.0	29	16	29.3	29.6	55.2
North East	1		2.5	0.0	0.0	2	1	2.0	1.9	50.0
North West	6	1	15.0	6.3	16.7	13	7	13.1	13.0	53.8
South East	10	5	25.0	31.3	50.0	12	9	12.1	16.7	75.0
South West	2	1	5.0	6.3	50.0	6	3	6.1	5.6	50.0
West Midlands	4	2	10.0	12.5	50.0	9	4	9.1	7.4	44.4
Yorkshire & Humber	1	1	2.5	6.3	100.0	11	4	11.1	7.4	36.4
Scotland	1	1	2.5	6.3	100.0	4	3	4.0	5.6	75.0
Northern Ireland	3	1	7.5	6.3	33.3	5	4	5.1	7.4	80.0
Wales	2	2	5.0	12.5	100.0	2	1	2.0	1.9	50.0
			100.0	100.0				100.0	100.0	
Ethnicity										
Asian	2	1	5.0	6.3	50.0	11	5	11.1	9.3	45.5
Black	9	3	22.5	18.8	33.3	18	10	18.2	18.5	55.6
Mixed/other	4	2	10.0	12.5	50.0	11	5	11.1	9.3	45.5
White	25	10	62.5	62.5	40.0	59	34	59.6	63.0	57.6
N=	40	16	100.0	100.0		99	54	100.0	100.0	

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Section Four

Programme impact

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This section of the report has three objectives. First, to discuss the underlying principles behind social impact analysis. This is followed by a first attempt at measuring the social return on investment in the programme. The third section explores the impact of the programme on young people's perceptions of change having completed the programme. Following this section, the report draws on qualitative interview data and case studies on the experiences of young people on the programme.

4.1 Approaches to the measurement of economic and social value

The following discussion of how value can be measured provides a critical backdrop against which the approach to impact assessment should be viewed. The arguments presented make the point that quantitative measures, even when associated with money, are always underpinned by value judgements. Rather than assuming that this is an intractable problem that cannot be overcome, however, it is better to accept the limits of quantitative measurement. Once this step is taken, then it is possible to use such methods, whilst taking care to ensure that the judgements made on the formulation of data are plausible and that reasonable interpretations are drawn from statistical findings.

There is significant disagreement amongst academics and social auditors on how best to measure social benefit in quantitative terms. Such disagreements partly derive from the fact that many social science disciplines have become embroiled in the debate, including: anthropologists, demographers, statisticians, philosophers, sociologists, classical and radical economists and political scientists, together with academics who study social and public policy and social science researchers in think tanks, private sector research companies and government.

Why is measurement valued?

Getting down to fundamentals, it is useful ask why measurement is value in order to get a better understanding of the context within which quantitative and/or monetised impact assessments are desired. This question is rarely asked because 'measurement' is usually regarded as a relatively un-contentious process as it is associated with rigorous scientific practice. In the social sciences, this is rarely the case. The idea of measurement assumes that the objects of measurement are consistent in some way (in science this is often contentious too). Some factors can be measured (or recorded) – such as the age or participants in a project, their sex, ethnicity, educational achievement, and so on. But even in this short list, the units of measurement become more contentious as the list goes on.

<div align="center">67</div>

Educational achievement, for example, may be measured by the propensity of individuals successfully to pass examinations. But as noted in Section 2 of this report, students do not all have the same start in life – so interpretation of the measurement can be flawed unless used with caution.

In this project, the factor which is to be measured is 'social value', but there is much argument within and across societies about what is socially valuable and what is not. Three types of value, crudely speaking, can be defined:

- ***Economic value*** – is measured in monetary terms. It is often thought that monetary value is relatively easy to use, but complications can arise when the difference between 'exchange value' and 'use values' are introduced.

- ***Social value*** – is measured in many ways, but usually is associated with utilitarian philosophical notions of increasing the public good.

- ***Environmental value*** – is associated with the idea that action is valued because it improves or protects the environment – however that is defined.

There are many approaches to impact assessment which attempt to harness all three aspects. These are sometimes referred to as 'triple bottom line' forms of accounting or sometimes 'blended value accounting'[27]. It is easy to be seduced by the apparent simplicity of this, but all three measures are enormously complex – even the monetary measures.

The different values attached to money

While a dollar is a dollar in anybody's pocket or purse, it does not necessarily have the same value for every person who has a dollar. Its value can depend upon:

- *The local economic circumstances – a dollar in a poor country is worth much more (in terms of exchange value) than it is in a rich one.*

- *In countries with a weak currency, the dollar is valued as a 'safe' currency because it is not as subject to loss of exchange value through local inflation.*

These are the more obvious difficulties of consistent measurement, but there are others too. As anthropologists have explained, the value of money can differ depending upon its 'special purpose'.[28] Here are some examples:

- *Gift money* is valued differently from '*earned money*', because strings can be attached (i.e. the giver may want to know what has been bought and so the recipient has to think about questions which may be asked about the appropriateness of the item). Gifts often come with expectations of approval, so the recipient is not free to do what they want with the money, and if they do, they face potential consequences.

- *Charitable gifts and grants* can be valued greatly, especially in terms of their 'use values' such as a gift of an MRI scanner to a local hospital. But the giving of money by charities can produce feelings of 'shame' for the recipient, or 'resistance' especially so if the recipient is required to make behavioural alterations as part of the deal.

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[27] There is a very large literature on social measurement on social impact. In the bibliography see, for example: Alexander (2010), Burns and MacKeith (2006), Cabinet Office (2008), Davies (2004), Holden (2004), Lim (2010), Morris (2003), Nicholls (2009), New Economics Foundation (2009a, 2009b), Sinclair and Taylor (2008).
[28] See Zelitzer (1989) 'The social meaning of money: 'special moneys'', *American Journal of Sociology*, 95:2, 342-77.

- *State benefits* often carry negative connotations and recipients who are deemed fit to take paid employment are often openly criticised in the media for accepting such 'illegitimate' forms of income. People who receive benefits are aware that the way they spend this money is scrutinised by tax payers – and openly showing signs of enjoyment of spending, especially on 'luxury' items are socially discouraged .

Money can also have different values due to the power relationships between individuals in families and households.

- *Generational values:* pocket money is of quite limited value to parents in economic terms in relatively affluent households but is of enormous value to young people and children – parents can exploit the power they hold over the inequitable value attached to the money. Children can reverse this power relationship too, by making their parents bear the burden of their disappointment.

- *Gendered values* can be attached to money too, for example, conventional housewives may have access to a 'joint account' but if it is not 'earned' by one of them it restricts attitudes on how that money can be spent and the experience of spending. In about 18-20 per cent of households, women now earn more money than men – this too affects how money can be valued in gender terms. Men who earn less than their wife or partner are less likely to do as many household chores, for example – which tells us something about feelings of emasculation – although such attitudes are changing amongst younger men).

The point of raising these issues is to explain that the person or organisation which wants to measure the economic value of something is usually doing it for an important reason – that is often to do with power relationships. Government wants to ensure, for example, the value of the tax payers' money it spends can be justified by demonstrating that the impact of that spend is for the public good. But government makes politically motivated decisions on which aspects of its spending are monitored closely and which ones are not.

Government agendas have, for the last twenty years or so, become more concerned to demonstrate the social and economic worth of its interventions which has led to a rise in the use of cost-benefit analyses and concomitant preoccupations with evident based practice. It has increasingly been assumed that such an approach to measurement has 'inherent value' which has opened the door to a veritable industry for the development of measurement tools which, in turn, inform approaches to management philosophy and professional practice.[29]

Third sector organisations have become accustomed to the dominant discourse surrounding the marketisation of value and seek to show the 'worth' of their work by measuring their outcomes and impact in similar ways to government. The advantage of this is generally associated with their ability to increase their visibility and influence on funders' decisions about grant giving. While this is laudable, from the perspective of the organisation in terms of their sustainability, it can sometimes produce quite damaging statements on what constitutes valuable work.

Youth organisations which seek to impress government on the value of their work may be tempted to make claims about causality which actually reinforce negative stereotypes about

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[29] In some approaches to cost-benefit analysis, for example, evaluators have made claims that $1 of philanthropic investment produced as much as $400 impact. Indeed, it is possible to produce as much value as is 'required' if appropriate variables are selected and significant monetary value is attached to them. Such approaches have been shown by critical observers to be more or less spurious and have, as a consequence, invalidated the energy invested in the exercise.

young people. For example, it is not uncommon for organisations to argue that the cost of providing support to young people who are known to be at higher risk of involvement in crime saves the government money down the line in the criminal justice system. The danger is that this makes a false assumption that one set of social circumstances *necessarily* leads to particular life trajectories – i.e. criminality – when this is self evidently not true. The result can be, for example, that *all* cared-for children and care leavers (who do, statistically, have lower levels of educational achievement and are more likely to become involved in criminality) are considered negatively. And further, that those who do become involved in criminality do not receive the same level of understanding and support compared with children from conventional families – as if criminality was a pathological condition for cared for children.[30]

Using one set of measures on social value can, in short, reproduce and reinforce stereotypes and encourage the assimilation of deficit models of certain categories of young people. As soon as a social group is thought of as being inherently prone to risky behaviour, the likelihood is increased that they are viewed as a 'hopeless case' and in turn, it is assumed that they are *unworthy* of positive investment.

Westall (2009) has cast a critical eye on such interpretations of value and has reintroduced two other ways of defining value which are important for this project.

- *Values as belief:* refers to different ways of thinking about the world (in opposition to the idea of a social market) can be inherently valuable. In the case of Third Sector youth organisations, for example, this might be employed as a way of thinking about and understanding what helps to produce professional judgement on what is the best course of action for young people with different situational, relational and personal circumstances. Such values are known to be 'incommensurable' and therefore metrics cannot be generated to compare them. This is a more old-fashioned notion of professional judgement which is not process driven as in the case of evidence based practice.[31]

- *Existence value:* this means the value of a place, space, opportunity or artefact existing. For example, a valued space for young people to hang out can rarely be measured economically, just as it is hard to measure the value of a public sculpture such as the *Angel of the North*, in North East England, but which may raise the public's spirits and pride locally.[32] Again, this is 'incommensurable' value because it

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[30] For a recent review of this topic, see Blades, R., Hart, Di., Lead, J. And Willmott, N. (2012) *Care - a stepping stone to custody? The views of children in care on the links between care, offending and custody*, London: National Children's Bureau.

[31] Evidence based practice (EBP), which originates from the 1970s primarily in the health professions, is an attractive and popular idea because it carries with it the commonsense assumption that there <u>is</u> a 'best way' of doing something. In medical practice, it would appear to make more sense to use 'expert systems' than using conventional professional judgement because this can alleviate the risk of a doctor making a mistake because they have not heard of the risks associated with particular medicines or are not aware of new procedural innovations. There are two main problems with this. The first is that the 'person' is not considered in a holistic sense, but rather they are defined more narrowly by their 'complaint'. There is an inherent risk, therefore, that the wrong complaint has been identified or that the interaction between different factors is overlooked. Secondly, the drive to adopt EBP is partly driven by economic appraisal of the value of one intervention which is set against another. This can involve decisions being made on which drug is 'worth' using for particular categories of patient, in order to maximise the efficiency of using a finite financial resource – rather than making a professional judgement on an individual patient's need. There is a wide ranging literature on this topic, in the bibliography see, for example: Anderson and Dees (2006), Black (2007), Davies (1999), Grayson, (2002), Laforest and Orsini (2005), Nutley and Davies (2002), Packwood (2002) and Tenbensel (2004).

[32] Arts, heritage, archive and museum organisations find it hard to justify the value of their existence, and as a consequence, they generally try to adopt the language of marketised value by counting the number of people they get

is not possible to produce a metric to estimate people's response to such stimulus. For example, in *environmental, cultural* or *emotional* terms the value of a 'beautiful view' cannot easily be measured. In *monetary* terms, by contrast, it can: as a tourist trap where tickets and trinkets can be sold, or as prime real estate for people who want to buy access to that view.[33]

Similarly, companies which want to demonstrate that they are behaving in a responsible way towards the economy, society and the environment want to measure their impact in order to improve their market position in their core business. They do this because they hope that their employees and customers will value their concern and will continue to give their custom, or new customers will come enthusiastically on stream. In reality most companies generally make a much bigger financial investment to the public good through the payment to the state Exchequer through taxation – which ultimately flows back towards the achievement of the public good by government. The problem for companies, though, is that these contributions to the public good are mediated by government and direct credit for its impact can neither be claimed nor identified.

Defining social value

If the 'economic value' of interventions is so difficult to measure, it is obvious that 'social value' will be much more difficult because there are few areas where people in general agree that this or that investment is equally worthwhile for them.

When measuring the social value of an intervention, academics, social auditors and politicians use a number of terms to explain where the value is gained. Often a distinction is drawn between three types of value:

- *The value of outputs* – this is usually a measure of the value of the productivity of the intervention. Often it is possible to enumerate this value, i.e. the number of people who are employed, or were given guidance, or received a particular service. In the Think Big programme there is a raft of 'output' measures which are reasonably easy to enumerate – such as the number of young people involved, the number or projects started, and so on. Such measures indicate the level of *productivity* of a project, but do not necessarily indicate its *social value*.

- *The value of outcomes* – outcomes can be defined as the 'changes in people's lives that have been achieved as a <u>direct</u> result of their participation in an activity associated with the project.' What can be measured numerically in this area are factors such as the young people's participation in activities within which they previously had not been involved, their propensity to become involved in a wider circle of social contacts, their (actual and feelings of) achievement of success in making a project work effectively, and so on. Think Big has an evaluation methodology that can measure these outcomes, but it is more difficult to make sense of these data than output measures because young people join the project with different levels of prior experience, knowledge and expectations.

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through the door rather than focusing on how an arts performance can impact on the life of an individual. See Holden (2004). The same often applies to sports projects, see Davies (2004).

[33] Interestingly, the definition of 'a beautiful view' can change radically in different social, cultural and economic conditions. In 1132, Serlo, one of a band of dissenting monks sent to establish a monastery, described the site of Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire as 'a place remote and uninhabited, set with thorns, amongst the hollows of the mountains and rocks, more fit, it seemed, for the lair of wild beasts than fit for human use' (Drabble 1979:18). This is not how the National Trust describes it in their promotional brochures!

- *The value of impact* – this is the more difficult area because it is concerned with changes in the achievement, attitudes and behaviour of young people as a direct result of the project *in the context of* many other indirect influences. It is tempting for organisations which are involved with social interventions to exaggerate their impact by cherry picking results which, in reality, are the consequence of a much wider range of factors (such as other interventions, changed structural, situational, relational and personal circumstances and so on). It is also about the impact on people not directly involved in the project, such as older adults who witness young people achieving good things.

4.2 Assessing social impact of Think Big

As shown in Section 3 of this report a wide range of quantitative data are being collected to evaluate the impact of Think Big. These data can be divided into four broad categories:

- *Data on programme volumes* – including the numbers of: projects started, young people trained and supported, project leaders, active participants and benefitting participants. Data are also available on routes into the programme by open application and supported by partner organisations (including the extent to which they reach young people from less advantaged communities).[34]

- *Biographical information on young people in the programme* – including age, gender, ethnicity, disability, employment and education status, educational achievement, and socio economic status as indicated by the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

- *Attitudinal data on young people in the programme* – data are collected on: pro-sociality; expectations and experiences of the programme; perceptions of person skills and attributes; and, confidence about the future.

- *Data on the involvement of employee supported volunteers*, including information on the impact of the programme on their changed attitudes towards young people.

From analysis of these data, supplemented by qualitative data to enrich the analysis, it is possible to make statements on impact in the following areas:

- *Social capital*: at the societal level this is the extent to which social ties are strengthened; at the individual level it is the extent to which individuals build networks and knowledge that increases their personal social capital – thereby opening doors of opportunity.

- Economic capital: we can make reasonable estimates on the amount of time people invest in projects to give a financial indication of the 'voluntary' contribution to society. .

- *Human capital*: this is about young people's changed perceptions about the skills and attributes of individuals and gives an indication about potential in terms of employability or social investment.

Before discussing the approach to measuring social impact, it is important to state the limits of what Think Big can be expected to achieve. It is equally important to be realistic, even for a multi-million pound long-term programme, about the limits on achievement. These limits are summarised below.

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[34] From 2012, evidence will also be gathered on the extent to which partner organisations 'add value' to the programme though additional activities and support.

- Think Big cannot be expected to compensate for problems in education systems: instead, the programme offers small scale opportunities for young people to have new positive experiences and develop aspects of skills – but it is not an alternative to structured or unstructured education.

- Think Big cannot tackle macro-economic issues such as structural unemployment: the programme is not in the business of creating jobs, although it may help young a small number of young people get some work experience, internships and provide a limited number of job opportunities; it may, however, improve individual's employability and also positively influence the attitudes of employers towards young people.

- Think Big is not a political movement; it is not trying to change the direction of social and public policy – although its ambitions and successes should be of real interest to those who do make policy and could influence them in a positive way.

What Think Big *can* expect to achieve, by contrast, is indicated below:

- Think Big can help to make young people feel more hopeful and confident (which may help them tackle problems/opportunities in a positive way).

- Think Big can help young people to become more resilient (so that they have the emotional strength to get through difficult times and make good choices).

- Think Big can help to challenge negative stereotypes about young people (by showing that they can make a positive difference to community).

- Think Big can help young people in the programme develop employability skills which may help them get a job or spur them on to complete or start education and training.[35]

- Think Big can help to challenge negative stereotypes about young people's potential.

Given the scale of the programme, these amount to bold ambitions. To put flesh on the bones of the above bullet points, the importance of improving young people's confidence and resilience and challenging stereotypes are discussed further below

Confidence

Evidence suggests that during recessions, young people are more likely to trust in luck/fate and become more suspicious of institutional structures.[36] They are less likely to believe that their own efforts (hard work, application, etc.) will make a difference. If young people feel like this, they are more likely to get 'stuck' between the worlds of childhood (dependence, weak locus of control) and independent adulthood (self-determination, economic independence, and emotional autonomy).

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[35] Increasing employability does not increase employment – so claims cannot be made that the number of employed young people will increase as a consequence of Think Big.
[36] This point was discussed at length, together with analysis of international data on young people's wellbeing, in the evaluation of Think Big in Europe in 2011. See Chapman, et al. (2011) *Thinking Big for young people across Europe: an evaluation of Telefónica CSR programmes in Germany, Ireland, Slovakia and the UK*, Middlesbrough, Social Futures Institute.

If they get stuck in a 'liminal'[37] world they have lost sight of the pathways they can take to move on and make successful transition. They may choose pathways that reinforce their liminal position (using 'categorical fate', they may say, 'I am really capable of achieving this objective (whether it is realistic or otherwise) but nobody recognises it, the system is against me so there is no point in trying)'.

Think Big needs to help build confidence so that good choices are identified ('I <u>could</u> do that') then good choices are made and realised ('I <u>did</u> do it'). Such positive attitudes may influence subsequent action in many different ways – leading to longer-term commitment to voluntary action, education and training, employment or enterprising activity.

Resilience and wellbeing

Emotional resilience is important at every stage in people's lives. It is particularly important for young people because they face many more uncertainties. They must decide 'who they are' and build a sense of identity. They must decide what they want to do in terms of job, family, leisure etc. They have to make these choices with many things in mind – such as the opportunity structure they believe is open to them.

Resilience is not the same thing as having 'attitude' – that is, putting on a surface impression of strength. Resilience is underpinned by confidence. Often that confidence, in turn, is reinforced by positive and consistent support from family members and significant others where strong and deep emotional attachment is embedded.

Resilience is not the same as just managing to 'survive' in difficult circumstances (having strong surface 'attitude' is a way of surviving). It is about being able to take control of a situation – even if the situation is difficult – rather than being badly damaged by it.

Think Big aims to help young people from less advantaged backgrounds. It can help to compensate for lack of financial, emotional and practical support (compared with more affluent young people) by giving young people to show that they can make a positive difference to their own and others' lives. It cannot resolve the issues about limited opportunities – but it might help young people manage their lives more successfully and help them to 'get on' with their lives rather than just 'get by'.

Resilience should not be confused with wellbeing (although the two factors are closely inter-related). Wellbeing is a complex issue to measure (see a full discussion in the 2010 report). People often report strong feelings of wellbeing in difficult situations, while some people who apparently have everything they need can often report low levels of wellbeing. This means that it is often not possible to compare data in a straightforward or literal way – it is all open to interpretation.

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[37] Liminality is a term used by anthropologists to describe how people get 'caught' between worlds. It is a state of feeling neither 'here' nor 'there'. Common examples include the situation of unemployed people who cannot come to terms with their identity without a job. Liminality is not generally considered to be permanent, although people can get 'stuck' between worlds and never accommodate to their new position. For a useful discussion, see Newman, K. (1988) *Falling from Grace: the experience of downward mobility in the American Middle Class*, New York: Free Press; Turner, V. (1974) *Drama, Fields and Metaphors: symbolic action in human society*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Negative stereotypes and prejudice

It is not uncommon for older adults to be suspicious of 'young people in general', whilst being positive about the young people they know.[38] Young people in general can be stereotyped negatively in a number of ways. Once such stereotypes are established, they tend to reinforce prejudices about what young people can and cannot, should or should not do.

Prejudice is easily reproduced because people are (often unconsciously) 'looking for' examples to reinforce their views. They mistake this prejudicial collection of examples for evidence. Equally, prejudice often encourages people to 'ignore' examples that show their views are unfair, unbalanced or wrong. Because prejudicial ideas are so easily reinforced, those who want to challenge them have a difficult job on their hands. Think Big has set out its stall to tackle negative stereotypes (and by definition the prejudices that underpin them) and try to change people's attitudes. Research findings in this report shows that positive results for the programme in this respect: young people are more aware of the situation of other young people; people in the community are recognising the strong commitment young people can make to their communities; and, employee supported volunteers report that their attitudes about young people are changing too.

What can Think Big achieve in terms of change?

Qualitative analysis has already produced strong indications that Think Big can make a significant difference to young people's lives.

- Trusting and investing in young people pays dividends in terms of their commitment and their productivity and personal benefit.

- Small steps forward for many young people can represent 'giant leaps' in terms of confidence and resilience. Using 'exceptional' stories about change might undermine messages about the benefit gained by young people who only take small steps.

- Think Big provides young people the opportunity to tackle issues that they think are important, and/or tackle projects in ways that interests and energises them. Think Big is avoiding the 'we know what's best for young people' argument.

- Even small projects can provide young people with the resilience and confidence to make good choices in future – the 'ephemeral event' gives them a positive set of emotional reserves which they can draw upon when they face difficult decisions on their future path.

- Young people involved with Think Big are tackling problems in innovative and creative ways with limited resources – many young people have to be socially and financially enterprising to succeed in their projects – which may affect their attitudes and aspirations for the future.

- By witnessing the successes of young people on Think Big, other young people and older adults may challenge taken-for-granted understanding of the limits of what most young people can, will and want to do.

Providing quantitative indicators of the above findings will take time to produce because the volume of data required to undertake analysis is large. At this stage it is useful to consider

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[38] See Section 2 for a fuller discussion of this point.

at a conceptual level what transitions might be explored through quantitative analysis as the programme matures.

Figure 4.1 indicates pathways of change. These are presented as 'binary opposites'. This necessarily polarises the issues in an exaggerated way. But they help to identify in broad terms the issues that Think Big is attempting to tackle.

Figure 4.1 **Measuring pathways of change**

Before joining the programme		After finishing the programme
Surface confidence or 'attitude' to survive in difficult situations, but lack of underlying confidence and emotional resilience	▷	Stronger sense of personal worth, strengthened emotional resilience and confidence to take positive risks and tackle new challenges
Socially, emotionally and economically dependent on others to solve problems, producing passivity and undermining confidence to take control	▷	Able to identify what needs to be done, find a way to do it (with support), take charge of the situation and make things happen through leadership
Socially withdrawn, isolated or excluded, short horizons and limited experience or understanding/tolerance of the 'unknown'.	▷	More socially participant, more knowledgeable about alternative situations, willing to become involved in situations which are different or challenging
Perceived in stereotypical terms as a social burden or threat, positioned socially as a potential 'problem' even without behaving or wanting to behave in a problematic way	▷	Higher level of awareness of the potential of young people whose behaviour is read as a sign of being troublesome. Recognition of young people as a 'social asset'
Fearfulness or suspicion of 'other' young people, producing social isolation or combative behaviour	▷	Recognition that other young people are not so 'different', increasing social cohesion and building social trust
Perceptions of position in the world as 'unchangeable'. Dampens expectations and limits scope for thinking about doing things differently	▷	Stronger sense of confidence and hopefulness to effect change. Increasing feelings of personal ability and see the point in enterprising attitudes and behaviours
Older adults perceive young people as an 'other' category to themselves. Beyond their understanding and doubtful of their potential.	▷	Older adults see young people as positive assets to society – repositioning them as 'ours', not 'other'
Prejudicial and stereotypical ideas about young people produce widespread suspicion, calls for 'control' and 'retribution' for young people in general, not just those who behave badly	▷	Increasing awareness of the contribution and worthiness of the vast majority of young people. Increasing trust and respect – producing a virtuous circle (investing produces benefit)

As the programme progresses and more data become available it will be necessary to explore the viability of weighting data to indicate the 'added value' and 'distance travelled' for young people from different backgrounds. This may involve the allocation of weighted scores to young people who share similar biographical characteristics. At the present time, judgements on weights can merely be guessed at by drawing upon examples from other studies on the impact of social investment.

The justification for weighting arises from points made above and in Section 2 on the different 'value' of investments to young people who are more or less affluent, or are more or less personally resilient. This is expressed quite simply in the chart below:

Figure 4.2 **The potential for using weights**

Biographical characteristics of participants	Example of project objective: *'to provide young people with an opportunity to organise an event in a local community centre to raise awareness of mental health issues'*	Impact on young people in experiential terms
Resilient young people from relatively advantaged backgrounds	▷	Lower impact because young people already have/had access to such opportunities
Less resilient young people from relatively advantaged backgrounds	▷	Medium impact because the event helps raise confidence and facilitates new social contacts through collective participation
Resilient young people from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds	▷	High impact because the project challenges confrontational behaviours (negative manifestations of resilience)
Less resilient young people from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds	▷	High impact because the project builds confidence and resilience through new experience and new social contacts

The aim of attaching weighted values to projects to indicate benefits to participants is to produce a quantifiable measure of social impact for:

- 'Distance travelled' or 'added value' to categories of young people

- Scale (volume) and depth (impact) of different categories of project

- Areas of provision (by national regions and across markets)

It cannot be predicted at this stage whether each category will actually have different levels of impact, but it is important to find out if they do or not so that the programme can have a progressively stronger social impact. Producing quantitative scores for the impact of individual projects is not possible due to resource constraints and the likelihood that this would be too onerous a task for young people and their supporters. Consequently, estimates will be made for the programme as a whole through the production of generalised statistics.

The approach echoes, but does not attempt to replicate, several methods increasingly adopted to calculate social return on investment (SROI).[39] SROI researchers have produced a wide range of multipliers on economic value on case studies that they have undertaken, producing both positive and negative assessments of social benefit.

The New Economics Foundation (2009) for example, undertook a study on the SROI for different professions, finding that some professions produced negative value to society in monetised terms, whilst others produced high levels of value. It is possible that we may also produce results that suggest that some of the activity produces none or only a limited level of social value, whilst others create a great deal. An individual project in the Think Big programme could, for example, produce negative social value if, for example, it dramatically

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[39] For a useful review of different approaches to SROI see Lim (2010) and Cabinet Office (2008).

increased fear of crime amongst young people and had the consequence of leading them to avoid activities which may benefit them.

Attaching monetary values to show the benefit of a programme is possible, providing that due caution is taken in ensuring that this does not involve making exaggerated claims. Such exaggeration can come about by 'leaving out' factors which clearly would have reduced the relative impact of the assessment. An example is the process of 'claiming' credit for the impact from a project as if nothing else was going on in their lives which positively affected the experiences and opportunities of young people.

- SROI researchers sometimes refer to this as '**deadweight**'; that is, counting the impact of factors which would have achieved change if nothing had been done at all. Examples might include ignoring the impact of good parenting, of good schooling, existing support to young people which is effective, and so on.

- Commentators also alert researchers to the importance of recognising the possible negative social impact of **'displacement'**. Displacement might include, in the context of a project which offers experiential learning for young people, the impact (in terms of opportunities or social confidence) upon those who are not allowed to take part and feel excluded and as a consequence engage in negative actions (see Cabinet Office, 2008:56).

As noted in the introduction to this document, it is necessary to be careful not to produce exaggerated claims about the negative social impact of *not* funding a project on the basis of what young people *might* do otherwise. Such cost-benefit claims usually hinge on the expense to the police, criminal justice system or the health service of rectifying the situation if young people get involved drugs or criminality. This is a common strategy adopted by organisations which want to show their potential benefits – but their claims may be more or less plausible depending on how, precisely, the impact of their work actually makes a difference.

Analysis of the impact of Think Big

To produce financial indicators of the investment value of Think Big it is necessary to work estimates based on more detailed case studies of individual projects. It was not feasible to get young people involved in the programme to record their actual time investment. Researchers made estimates of average time investment based on in-depth interviews and case studies in 2010 and 2011. The averages provide a broad indication of time investment – differences between projects can be substantial. To estimate time invested in voluntary action by young people, the following distinctions are made:

- Time the project leaders spent 'learning their craft' – not counted as voluntary action as such – is estimated as being within the range of 10-20 hours. This is the process of building 'human capital'.

- Time project leaders spent planning and organising – counted as voluntary action – is estimated in the range of 15-30 hours.

- Time they spent impacting on the lives of others – i.e. time in face-to-face or 'visible' activity which brought benefit – is cautiously estimated at between 3-5 hours per project – although some would achieve a great deal more than this
    - The benefit could be by providing a service – such as the homework club (many hours of activity with high impact)

- By providing an experience which challenged and changed attitudes – i.e. an event (but only involved a few hours of activity with high impact)

- 'Active participants' generally put in between 3-5 hours of time in visible activity but rather less in planning – if any at all.

- The hours of benefit that were 'received' by 'benefitting participants' cannot be counted as voluntary action – but can be counted as a gain in terms of social capital (challenging stereotypes/changing behaviour) or human capital (in the case of, say, a homework club where they get to study and benefit in real terms).

- The investment of time by employee supported volunteers is also added into the equation based on the actual average cost to the company of deploying staff to voluntary work within the working day. Qualitative research suggests that a minority of ESVs invest considerable amounts of their own time to Think Big, an estimate value is factored in at 0.25 added time across the whole programme.[40]

- The 'added value' contributed to the programme by its 51 partner organisations also needs to be factored into the equation. At present, data are too limited on the impact of partner organisations in statistical terms due to limited production of data on pro-sociality. What is known is that partner organisations invest significant time from their own resources in the management and administration of the programme and invest significant time in support, training and mentoring.[41] Some organisations also stage celebration events which cement the importance of young people's contribution in the minds of participants and significant others.

Giving a monetary value to the time invested in voluntary social action is difficult for the reasons noted earlier in this section. Consequently, there is little point in making the process too complex. The view has been taken that the best approach is to use the minimum wage as a consistent benchmark. In research on adult voluntary action, average income is the usual measure – however young people do not generally earn the average income.

At this stage, weights on added value are provided based on the simple premise that the more socially disadvantaged young people are likely to gain greater benefit. A simple judgement is made: that the most socially advantaged young people gain 5% added value, at each decile, this is multiplied by 1.5 to indicate progressive benefit. SROI judgements on added value can be arrived at in many different ways and are always contentious. However, there are some indications from qualitative research on Think Big, shown later in this section, that some of the more socially advantaged young people may well have done their project by other means had Think Big not been available to them – drawing upon resources from different funders. For the least advantaged, by contrast (often brought into the programme by youth partner organisations) the impact could be much greater in terms of added value. The sum of the weighted values in Figure 4.3, divided by ten, equals 56.67%. And for the present, this is the added value score added to the return on investment calculation presented below.

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[40] In 2012, an attempt will be made to quantify the added time invested by participants in Think Big using the annual ESV questionnaire to gather this information.
[41] This time allocation is estimated at 2 hours of time per project by paid employees at youth organisations and 6 hours by volunteers (time taken can be significantly more in the case of organisations which have to invest a lot of time – such as is the case with disabled young people and those who are 'hardest to reach, hear and help').

Figure 4.3 **Progressively weighted added value by index of multiple deprivation**
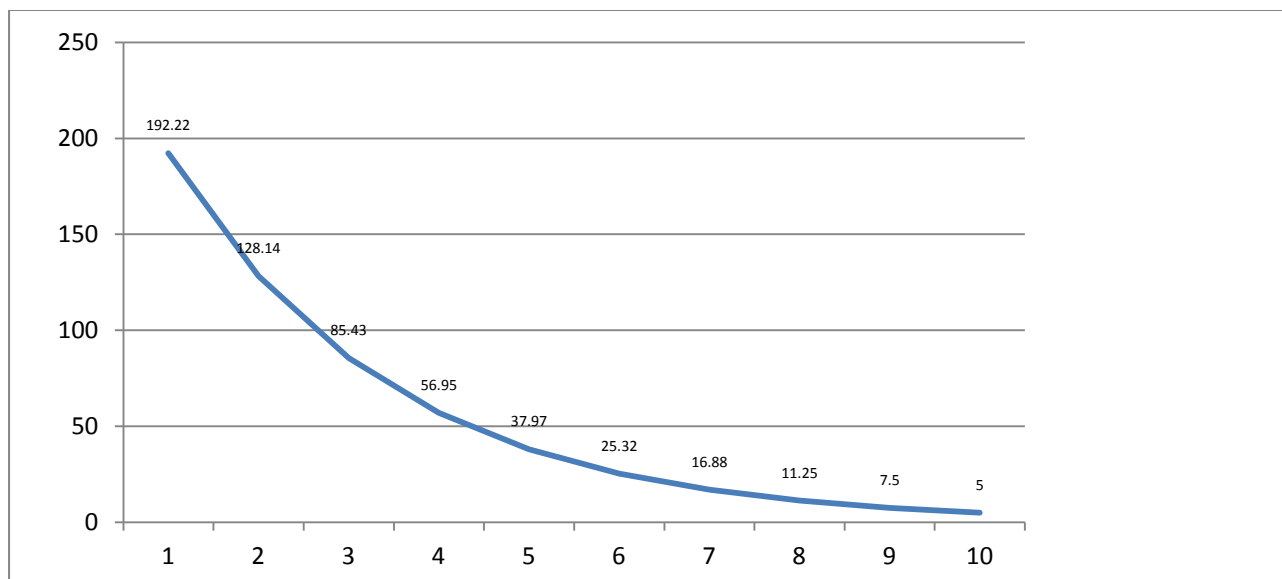
As the research proceeds and more data become available, it will be possible to do more sophisticated analysis, drawing upon variables such as age, deprivation, ethnicity, gender, disability and educational achievement. At that stage, the plausibility of weighting data will be increased.

Figure 4.4   **Estimated economic value of the programme in 2011**

Estimates of time invested by young people[42]	Value of time invested by young people[43]	Value of time invested by ESVs[44]	Value of time invested by partner 0rganisations[45]	Total value of investment	Average added value weight of 56.67% for reaching more deprived/marginalised young people[46]	Total value of investment	% added value against initial investment in the programme[47]
Lower	£3,233,411.81	£1,175,360.00	£80,318.88	£4,408,771.81	£2,498,450.98	£6,907,222.79	230.24%
Medium	£4,420,486.80	£1,175,360.00	£80,318.88	£5,595,846.80	£3,171,166.38	£8,767,013.18	292.23%
Higher	£5,522,198.42	£1,175,360.00	£80,318.88	£6,697,558.42	£3,795,506.36	£10,493,064.78	349.77%

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[42] Estimated for human capital in range 10-20 hours for project leaders, and 18-35 hours for voluntary action multiplied by 2 leaders; for active participants, estimated at 3 hours per young person for voluntary action;

[43] These estimates are based on minimum wages for young people by age (as defined on October 1st 2011): for participants aged 21 and over = £6.08; for 18-20 year olds = £4.98; for 16-17 year olds = £3.68; for younger participants the apprentice rate is used = £2.60.

[44] Estimated value of ESV engagement by Telefõnica staff is standardised at £20 per hour x 58,768 hours = £1,175,60 using the London Benchmarking Group methodology.

[45] Estimated by average income (plus employers' NI and Pension on-costs) at £31,215 per annum. Assuming 125 working days at 8 hours per day = £17.34 per hour for 2 hours per project (£34.68 per project). Estimates of 2 hours per paid employee and 6 hours of voluntary/employee time in support/training/mentoring for 6 hours per project (£104.40 per project). 579 projects were supported by partner organisations which equals a total monetary value of time invested at £80,318.88.

[46] Producing a multiplier to assess the added benefit gained by reaching young people from less affluent backgrounds cannot be monetised in a formulaic way. Similarly, it is not easy to assess benefit against other forms of social marginalisation or exclusion. A rough estimate it therefore taken which assumes that the average additional value to the programme is enhanced by 56.67 - representing the progressive value of reaching more seriously disadvantaged young people.

[47] These percentages offset the total estimated value of the project against £3,000,000 running costs of the programme in 2011 minus initial set up costs (including development of the Think Big website, initial programme development costs, etc. At the end of the programme, these costs will be reintroduced, divided by the number of years the programme runs).

4.3 Assessment of impact of the programme on young people attitudes and beliefs

The impact of the programme on young people's confidence, attitudes and beliefs is discussed in this section. As discussed in the first annual report of Think Big in 2011, assessing the impact of a programme on issues such as confidence, pro-sociality and employability is a complex process. This is because self-reportage of attitudes on such issues reflect the feelings of individuals at a particular point in time where their notions of capability may not yet have been fully challenged. For example, young people may state at the start of the programme that they care a great deal about their community, but might not have actually done anything practical in its support.

Consequently, after involvement in Think Big, their feelings about community might not have been shown to change all that much – but in reality – their attitudes could have been fundamentally transformed. To overcome this problem, analysis of quantitative data must be strengthened with analysis of qualitative data which demonstrates the degree of transformation. This analysis with follow the discussion of quantitative data in this section.

There are several ways of tackling this problem through the analysis of quantitative data. Figures 4.5 and 4.6 compare the attitudes of young people who 'changed their minds' on a range of factors from the start to end of their involvement in Think Big. This is achieved by cross-tabulating data and removing the cells along the diagonal – that is, the young people who expressed no change of mind. The results show the percentage of young people who changed their mind in a positive or negative way. The factors are placed in order of strength of feeling rather than in thematic terms. The results present a positive picture on the impact of involvement in Think Big.

Nearly 90 per cent of young people stated that they felt more strongly about their community at the end of the project – suggesting a significant gain in terms of pro-sociality. In terms of skills and competencies, it is evident that young people felt much more confident about themselves: almost 80 per cent felt that they were better at taking responsibility and making decisions. Three quarters felt more able to stick at a task until it was completed. More than two thirds felt that they were better at team work, organising their time and working independently. Over 60 per cent felt that they were better at motivating people.

The reliability of these findings is indicated by the 50-50 response to worries about the future – indicating that whatever they may have gained from Think Big, this does not undermine their wider appreciation of the problems young people face just now.

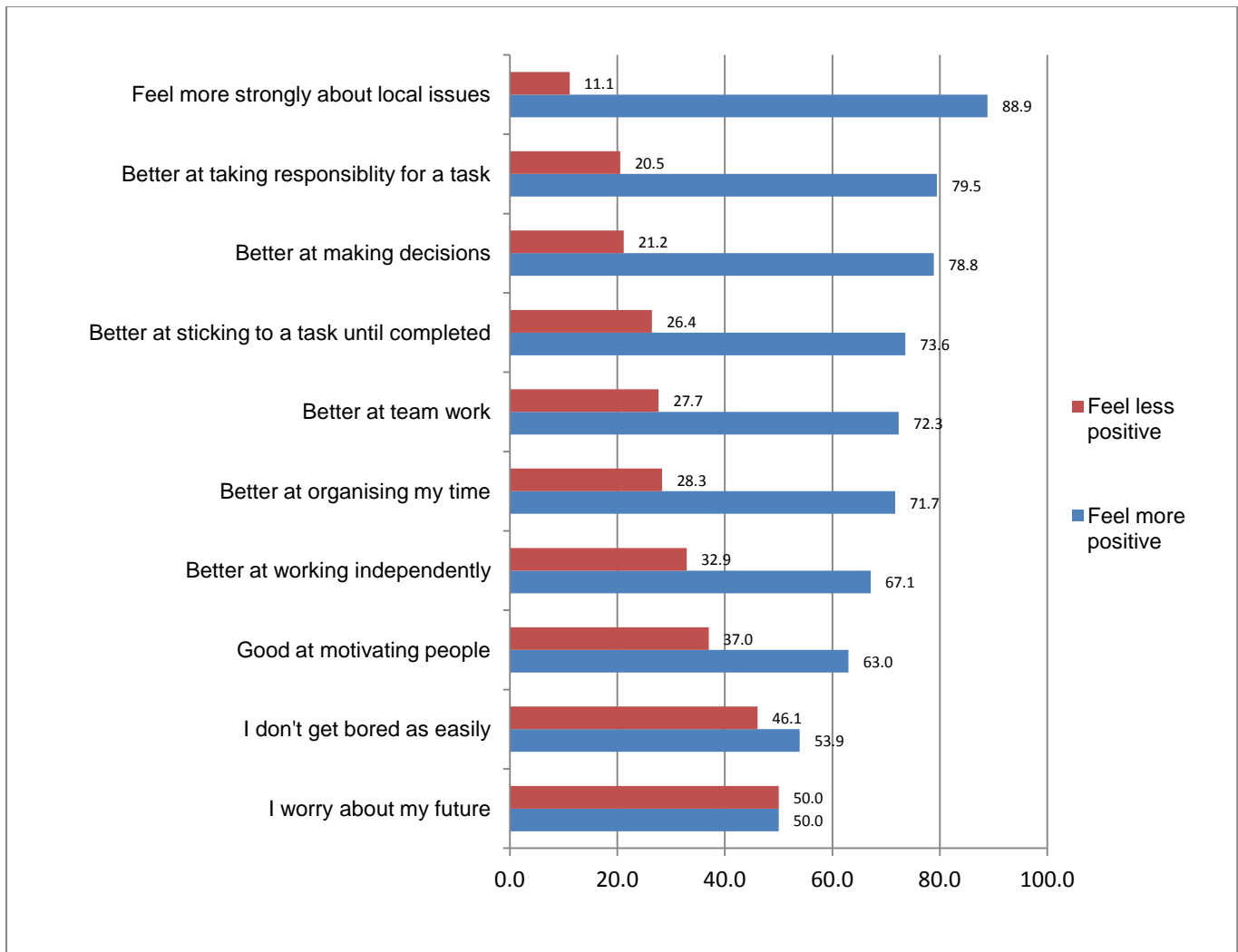Figure 4.5   **Changed attitudes on completion of Think Big**

Figure 4.6 charts the extent of change in relation to a set of factors surrounding pro-sociality and widening horizons. It is evident from this chart that nearly 85 per cent of young people cared more about their community by the end of the project – approaching the same level as 'feeling strongly' about local issues and indicating continuity and comparability in the data. Nearly 75 per cent have widening horizons – indicated by their willingness to state that they look at the world in a different way. Similarly, well over two thirds state that they are now willing to try to do new things and that they have learned new skills. Just short of two thirds of young people say that they have met other young people from different social backgrounds – which, in turn, helps to explain why they may now state that they look at the world in a different way.

In Figure 4.5 the extent to which young people get bored was assessed – just over a half felt that they were less likely to become bored than before they did their project. But in this chart, a second indicator on interest and hobbies suggests that about 60 per cent of young people are more engaged in productive activity than before. While young people understandably feel worried about their future, as shown in Chart 4.5, these data show that after taking part in Think Big, they feel more confident about their future – presumably as a consequence of their rising perception of confidence, gaining new skills and widening horizons.

Figure 4.6   **Impact on wellbeing and pro-sociality**
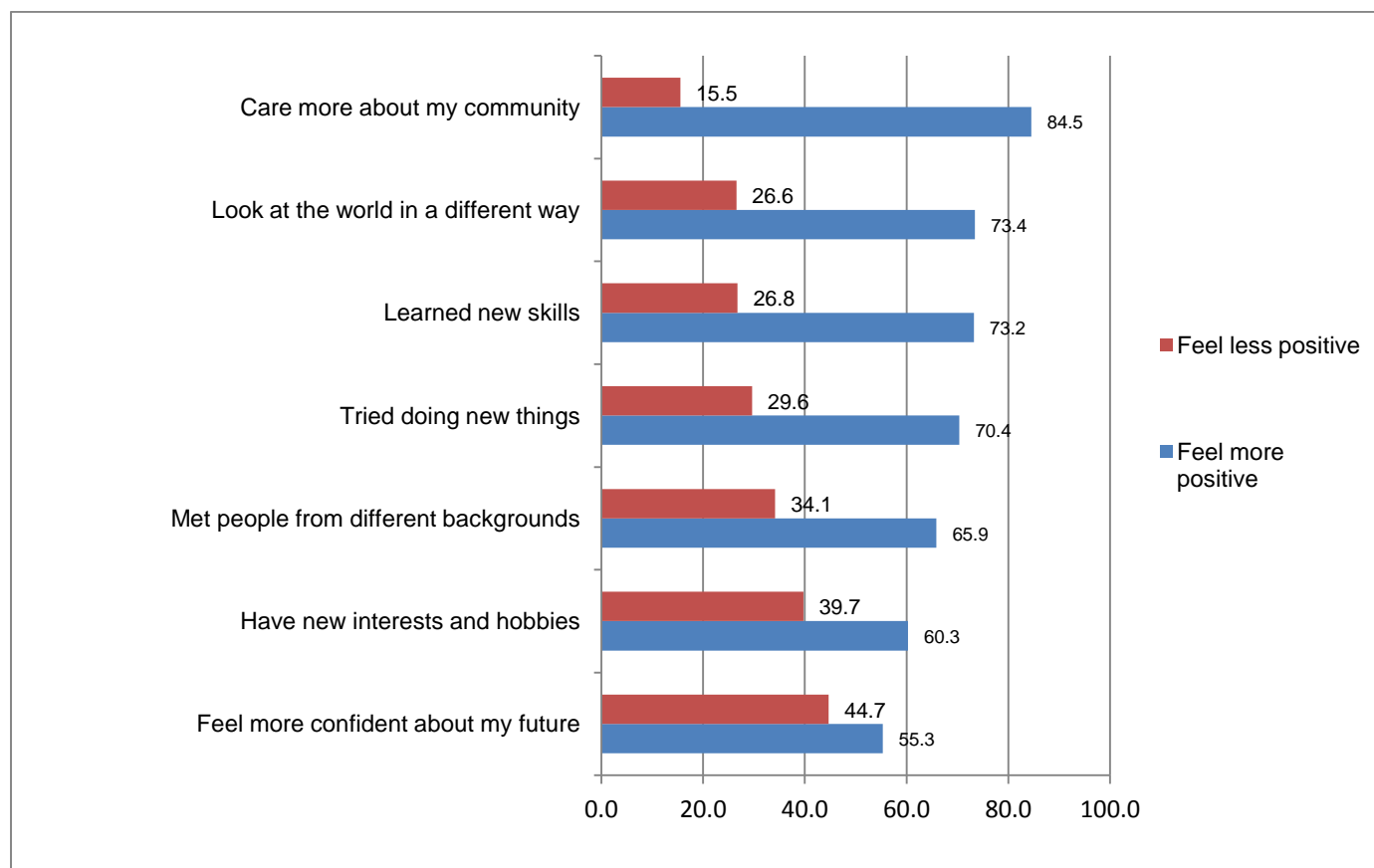
Many of the young people in the programme did not indicate a change in attitudes from start to the end of the programme. This accounted for by a strong sense of pro-sociality or self-confidence before they started – whether these attitudes had been fully tested or not is not known – although qualitative data suggest strongly that attitudes and beliefs do change.

Figure 4.7 indicates that nearly 95 per cent of young people had consistently strong feelings about their communities – contradicting stereotypical views on how young people think and behave – as indicated in Section 2 of the report. In terms of their personal skill sets, young people often reported consistent views on their confidence to take responsibility for a task (90%), sticking to a task (85%), team work (83%), making decisions (82%), organising their time (78%), working independently (74%).

Figure 4.7   **Young people with consistent attitudes about well being and pro-sociality**
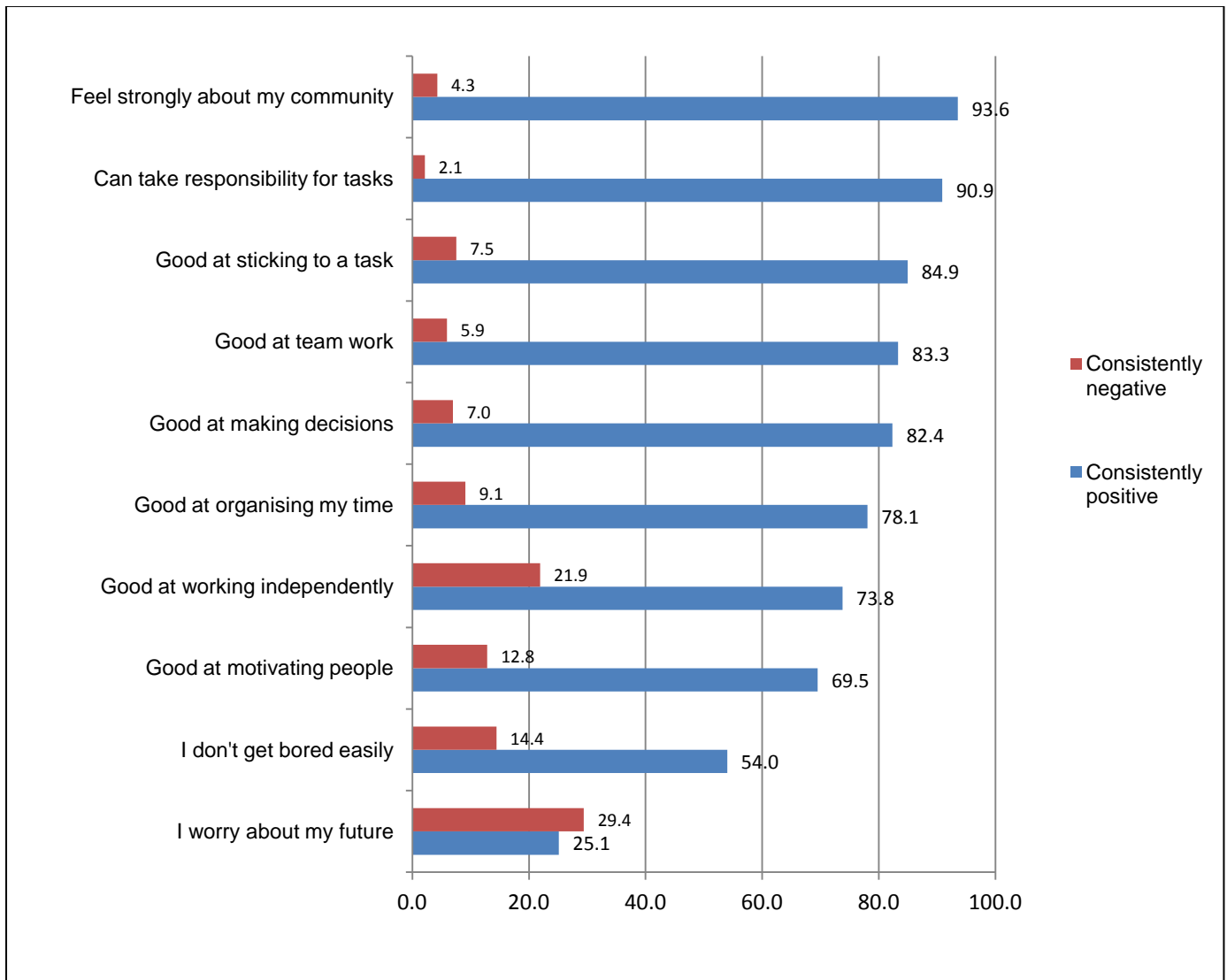
Figure 4.8 **Tabulation of consistent and changed attitudes**

	All young people completing Think Big				Young people who did not change their opinions		
	Attitude remained the same	Became more positive	Became less positive	total	Percentage who were consistently positive	Percentage who were consistently negative	total
I feel pretty strongly about issues in my local community	80.7	17.1	2.1	187	93.6	0.0	175
I am not so good at team-work	74.7	18.3	7.0	186	83.3	0.5	156
I am pretty good at taking responsibility for a task	79.1	16.6	4.3	187	90.9	0.5	171
I am not very good at motivating people	61.0	24.6	14.4	187	69.5	1.6	133
I am pretty good at making decisions	72.2	21.9	5.9	187	82.4	0.5	155
I tend to get bored pretty easily	52.4	25.7	21.9	187	54.0	5.9	112
I am pretty good at organising my time	67.9	23.0	9.1	187	78.1	3.7	153
I am not so good at working independently	61.0	26.2	12.8	187	73.8	1.1	140
I am pretty good at sticking at a task until it is finished	71.5	21.0	7.5	186	84.9	0.0	158
Quite often, I worry about my future	41.2	29.4	29.4	187	25.1	21.9	88

The above analysis shows the extent to which young people benefit from the programme. To ensure the validity of the findings, it is useful to compare attitudes of a wider spectrum of young people. This is done in Figure 4.9 where the initial views of young people who apply the programme, are accepted and complete are compared. The comparison provides reassurance that the young people who complete are not fundamentally different, in attitudinal terms, from applicants in general.

The data suggest that differences in attitudes at the point of application across all categories of young people are minimal. Those who go on to complete the programme, are awarded a project grant or just apply are all shown to be similar in terms of levels of confidence. The only real difference is that those young people who complete the programme are twice as likely to disagree that they don't want to change things in their life – suggesting that they are, in attitudinal terms, 'movers and shakers' - but the differences are *very* marginal.

Overall, this table shows that young people who have applied to the Think Big programme are a confident group of young people who feel comfortable in social situations, think that there are many things they can do well and that they can help others do things. As change agents, young people feel confident too – with about two thirds of them being eager to change things in their lives.

4.4   Summary

The value of the programme has been assessed using methods broadly in line with those adopted by Social Return on Investment (SROI) practitioners. This aspect of the analysis is still in its early stages and estimates given may rise or fall once more is understood about the impact of the programme.

It is recognised that measuring the 'economic value' and 'social value' of interventions is difficult. But a range of quantitative indicators are used, and judgements on value are informed by intensive qualitative research. Data used include:

- *Data on programme volumes* – including the numbers of: projects started, young people trained and supported, project leaders, active participants and benefitting participants.

- *Biographical information on young people in the programme* – including age, gender, ethnicity, disability, employment and education status, educational achievement, and socio economic status as indicated by the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

- *Attitudinal data on young people in the programme* – data are collected on: pro-sociality; expectations and experiences of the programme; perceptions of person skills and attributes; and, confidence about the future.

- *Data on the involvement of employee supported volunteers*, including information on the impact of the programme on their changed attitudes towards young people.

The assessment is made on the basis of impact against the following assumptions that Think Big can help:

- young people feel more hopeful and confident (which may help them tackle problems/opportunities in a positive way).

- young people to become more resilient (so that they have the emotional strength to get through difficult times and make good choices).

- challenge negative stereotypes about young people (by showing that they can make a positive difference to community).

- young people in the programme develop employability skills which may help them get a job or spur them on to complete or start education and training.

It is estimated that the value of time invested by young people can be valued at £4.4m; that the pro-bono support by partner organisations is valued at £80,000; the value of time invested by employee supported volunteers is £1.175m.

On the basis of weighting data to account for the added value to the programme by reaching young people with fewer opportunities (measured by their position in the Index of Multiple Deprivation), it is estimated that this adds over 56% additional value to the programme.

When the value of the impact is set against the cost of programme delivery by O₂ Telefónica, it is estimated that the value of the investment is increased by about 290%, about three times the cost of the programme

The impact of the programme on young people's confidence, attitudes and beliefs is significant as indicated by Figure

- 85 per cent of young people cared more about their community by the end of the project

- 75 per cent have widening horizons – indicated by their willingness to state that they look at the world in a different way.

- Over two thirds state that they are now willing to try to do new things and that they have learned new skills.

- Just short of two thirds of young people say that they have met other young people from different social backgrounds

- While young people understandably feel worried about their future, after taking part in Think Big, 55% feel more confident about their future.

Figure 4.9   **Attitudes about self and well-being**

	All applicants to the Think Big programme	Applicants who won a Think Big grant	Applicants who completed their Think Big project
In most social situations I talk and behave in the right way			
Strongly	65.6%	66.8%	64.3%
Agree	22.3%	22.2%	24.8%
Neutral	7.2%	7.2%	4.5%
Disagree	2.6%	2.2%	3.2%
Strongly	2.3%	1.6%	3.2%
There are lots of things I can do well			
Strongly	45.6%	44.5%	46.2%
Agree	38.9%	40.8%	37.8%
Neutral	10.3%	9.8%	7.7%
Disagree	3.2%	3.1%	4.5%
Strongly	2.0%	1.8%	3.8%
In a group I help others to get things done			
Strongly	64.6%	65.4%	66.24%
Agree	25.0%	25.7%	26.11%
Neutral	5.9%	5.5%	1.27%
Disagree	1.8%	1.1%	1.91%
Strongly	2.7%	2.4%	4.46%
I would like to change things in my life			
Strongly	38.9%	36.0%	37.58%
Agree	27.4%	30.1%	29.30%
Neutral	22.7%	25.0%	26.11%
Disagree	7.4%	7.0%	5.10%
Strongly	3.6%	1.8%	1.91%
	3180	1042	157

Section Five
Programme experiences

In Section 3, a detailed appraisal of the distribution of Think Big projects was presented together with analysis of the biographical characteristics of individual participants. From that analysis, it was apparent that the programme is successful in reaching all constituencies of young people – and that it was doing particularly well with young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds as measured by area deprivation, ethnicity, disability, age or gender. Following the analysis of pro-social and wellbeing data in Section 4, presented above, it is now useful to explore young people's experiences of their involvement in the programme, what they gained in terms of skills and confidence, and what the impact they feel their work had on communities. This section is divided into three parts: first, a discussion of the experience of Think Big; second on the early experiences of Think Bigger, and finally, a series of case studies on both levels of the programme.

5.1   Experiences on Think Big

Getting involved and being supported

The analysis of biographical data demonstrated that many entrants to Think Big are well qualified young people who have already benefitted from higher education as current undergraduates or graduates. This relatively confident and capable group of people, it would be expected that they would be more likely to have project plans in mind and be more confident about managing projects. What Think Big did for these young people was to help them to realise ambitions they already had.

As one young person stated: 'Well we just thought it was a great opportunity to do one of the things we've wanted to do for a long time.' There are others who were actively seeking funding for a project idea they had and considered the benefits of Think Big in comparison with other schemes. In some cases young people mix and match funding – drawing on as many pots as they could.

> '*I was trying to think of what to do and then saw that there was a small pot of money from O₂ which would be ideal for paying for workshops.*'

> '*It's hard to get funding and schools haven't got any money at the moment to buy the projects so we have to look for funding elsewhere outside, which is how we came to approach O₂.*'

> '*I think that it provides, it's funding which you don't have to do huge amounts of forms and stuff to go through, it's quite an easy small pot of funding to get for a short-term project like [our project]...which means you don't end up spending more time filling out and trying to find funding than you do actually doing the project.*'

Those young people who know that they have a contribution to make and understand that they have a voice, can benefit from Think Big. Indeed, many young people on the programme explicitly stated that they entered the programme to help them achieve this. Many others, however, enter the programme without recognising the value of their opinions to others, and so it can come a surprise when they discover that they have something valuable to say and that by doing so, they can make a difference to theirs and other young people's lives.

For young people who have already achieved a lot in their lives by getting to University, Think Big still opens up new opportunities which they might not otherwise be able to take advantage of. In terms of confidence, Think Big seems to make a significant contribution too – as it provides the impetus to do things that might otherwise not be done.

> *'I got involved with the university even more because of this project I even joined three different community groups within the university and talked to people doing similar things to what I was doing, so even just running the project you talk to more people that are doing similar things, you get ideas off them, you get help from them, you help them out, you get involved in so many different projects, just because you set up your own one.'*

For many other participants, whose awareness of such opportunities was more limited, Think Big helped them to recognise their own potential and think up original ideas for a project. Gaining confidence comes at the start of Think Big for many, when they are first accepted onto the programme. As one young person said: 'I think it's quite a confidence boost, filling in the application and then finding out that you've got it, it increases your confidence quite a bit.'

For many young people, the prospect of running their own project would have been particularly daunting had they not had encouragement, support and funding from Think Big. Indeed, many wanted to communicate its benefits so that others could follow in their footsteps.

> *'Being able to run a project such as I'm doing at the moment, seems to be a lot more possible. Before, these types of things seemed like, oh, it's something that other people would do and I can't manage, or I don't have the support. But things like this I could recommend to anybody. If you wanted to get a project up and running, that it is definitely possible. There is the support out there, financial support as well as just encouraging you to actually get it up and running.'*

Younger participants were grateful for the opportunity to get involved in a programme where they decided what they wanted to do, rather than having to work to others' agendas.

> *'Well, it's good that young people are having the opportunity to do something in their area because most projects I've applied for - they've been like you have to be 18 or over - but this project has been really good.'*

Other younger participants felt that they may not even have considered the possibility of leading a project themselves had it not been for Think Big.

In the case of many young people, they needed encouragement to get involved. The youth partner organisations, and other youth organisations, faith groups and so on, played a significant role in engaging young people, especially those from less affluent or socially marginalised communities, to actively engage with Think Big.

Training and support for Think Big and Think Bigger participants

The Think Big programme differs from many other approaches to conventional youth work because it invests money directly in young people so that they can take control of their projects. While many public sector youth services and third sector youth work organisations are keen to encourage 'youth led' activities – it is relatively uncommon to invest this level of trust in young people. Putting cash in the hands of young people provides a strong signal of trust – which as last year's evaluation report demonstrated – was strongly valued and respected by young people. But it is also recognised that the programme needs to provide support too. By the end of 2010, it was recognised from the evaluation research, that levels of support needed by young people varied considerably. It was therefore recommended that the training requirements should be reduced for those young people who could demonstrated, through the application process, that they were equipped to do their projects successfully.

For those who did need support to get to the stage where their award was given, further support was given. This, it was anticipated, could be quite intensive for those who had particular needs – such as disabled young people, or those who came from backgrounds that led to them needing confidence building. Others could be brought to the right level of competency with less intensive help, through the provision of web-based information and training and telephone support. Often, such support and training was provided by the youth organisations or faith organisations with which young people were associated – or with formal quality marked Think Big youth partner organisations.

The transition from formal training for all applicants to a more streamlined system took some time to put in place. Some aspects had yet to be completed by the end of 2012 – such as web-accessible video guides to various aspects of the training. Consequently, much of the qualitative data which has been collected covers the experiences of young people during this transitional period.

The qualitative data which have been collected[48] show that young people who led Think Big projects knew where to get support and were generally happy about the help they got in the programme: *'If I needed support, I could email or call in and somebody would always be able to help if I had any questions about anything.'* Or as another project leaders said*: 'the staff are very dependable and easy to reach via email.'* The approach to supporting them was also welcomed, for not being too formal or intrusive.

> *'They're there to support you and [they're] not over-bearing with it. They let you get on with it, which I really need that as an artist and I don't like people clouding my inspirations with too many rules and regulations.'*

Some young people did feel that they needed more support and guidance through the programme from the core partner organisations – beyond routine checks by phone call on whether they had achieved the steps they were required to report on the Think Big website.

> *'There could be more interaction with the staff at Think Big along the way to see how you're getting on, if you need help or advice. or if there is any way in which they could promote your project on their social networking sites/websites etc.'*

> *'I think more support after the training day…Maybe just like a follow up phone call but we didn't have nothing after the training.'*

> '*Maybe there could be more support in the future, maybe have a mentor or something that you can email, I think that would be helpful.'*

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[48] Technical working papers on detailed aspects of methodology are available on request.

As the new approach to supporting young people is fully embedded in the programme in 2012, research will be undertaken to assess the extent to which these issues have been rectified.

The benefits gained from more formal training, which was still running in the first half of 2011, were reported by many young people on the programme. The strength of the events was to open up new ideas for participants by meeting others.

> *'I think [it is important] to have the opportunities for young people. When I went on the training day, all the projects were so different, there was lots of different young people all different ages. And it was good advice - about applying for funding.'*

> *'The workshop we had to get us to think about the best ways to manage the funding that we would have, the best way to get the message across, to promote our project, I found fantastic. It was very stimulating and I got fantastic ideas and a lot of support, just even hearing about other projects just to get some ideas, I thought that was fantastic.'*

Providing training and support to young people with a wide range of abilities and interests is a challenge. Many participants, who at that stage of the programme were still required to attend, felt that they gained limited benefit personally – but recognised that for others, it was a useful element of the programme.

> *'It was quite good, but it wasn't really anything new that we needed to learn. But I'm sure other groups got stuff out of it because you know we are part of [a large national youth organisation] so we have a lot of youth work support so maybe that's why we didn't find it as useful.'*

In some cases, as noted in last year's evaluation report, the logistics of travelling some distance to training was a challenge for them. And their dissatisfaction could be amplified if they felt the organisation of the training session was not up to scratch.

> *'Our workshop, we were going to go to Leicester which is much more close to us rather than Leeds which is where we had to go in the end, but our workshop was cancelled and we weren't really told about it until quite late and so we had to travel all the way to Leeds and it was quite poorly organised. I don't think the workshop started for about 3 hours after it was meant to and it was kind of a bit last minute…I think it was about half one [when it got started].'*

Such comments about the initial approach to training at centres some distance from participants homes were relatively common and provided the impetus to change the approach.

Think bigger is the second level of the programme to which young people who have been successful at Think Big can progress. Think Bigger provides young people with £2,500 of funding – released in stages – so that they can do larger projects. The planning, organisation and execution of Think Bigger projects is more demanding on young people. Consequently, Think Bigger training is more intensive and continues to involve compulsory attendance at a residential and provides continuing support to young people via their O$_2$ Helper.[49]

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[49] The role of O2 Helpers is discussed in more detail in Section 5 of this report.

Assessing the impact of Think Big on participants

The above analysis of pro-social and well-being data shows that a majority young people reported relatively high levels of self-belief in their own abilities even before they began the Think Big programme. As noted in last year's evaluation report – making strong positive statements about personal attributes does not necessarily indicate that young people have fully developed their skills. Indeed, it was demonstrated that many young people over-estimated their skills initially which led some to report lower levels of confidence in their abilities having completed their projects. This does not mean that the project actually decreased confidence for the majority, but rather that they became more self aware of their limitations on the basis of their experiences of trying to put ideas into practice.

This year, more data are available on young people's changed attitudes from start to end of the project. And as shown, it is possible to determine the benefits of the programme - especially for those who started out lacking confidence in their skills. In the discussion that follows, the impact of the programme on young people's skills, confidence and self-belief is assessed through analysis of qualitative data collected throughout 2011.

Think Big is an open programme and as such attracts a diverse range of young people. Many participants are clearly on pathways that can help them make positive life transitions. These young people were most able to associate their increasing confidence, gained from Think Big, with tangible future outcomes. Sometimes this was related to applying for a Think Bigger projects, sometimes with doing voluntary or paid work, or in the following case with their ambition to go to university:

> *'Confidence, organisational skills, learning how to communicate better with people and work in a team - all the things I'll need for when I go to university so I did learn a lot and responsibility as well a lot more responsibility.'*

> *'[it has provided me with] a credit on my CV as it looks good doing unpaid projects such as this, as it shows you have passion and enthusiasm along with your other work.'*

Young people often voiced the personal benefits they gained, but also recognised that the impact of their own work was not just beneficial to themselves. This suggests a positive association with the 'instrumental' gains they personally achieve and indicates an awareness of wider benefit through 'altruistic' social action.

> *'[I gained] a lot of experience in project running. But also in media, because I am looking to apply for university, not next year but the year after and this project has given me the chance to add something that is CV-able and also a portfolio piece and it's also given the people who participated something for their CV or portfolio.'*

Articulating the impact of Think Big projects on the wider community was, nevertheless, difficult for many young people as they had little experience of other projects with which to compare. However, there was clearly a sense that Think Big could play a significant role in challenging local people to rethink negative stereotypes about young people.

> *'it's educated them [the local community] that actually there is an issue with gangs but it's young people who need to take the lead and we need to get them to say why they are involved, it had a good impact in creating more people interested in talking about the subject and organisations now want to do work around it so it's definitely had an impact.'*

Young people on the programme were acutely aware of the negative stereotypes that many people in society held against them. This was undoubtedly strengthened by the events in the summer of 2011 which are discussed in more depth in Section 2. Knowing that society

holds young people in disregard is upsetting for those who want to achieve a great deal in life.

The best ways most people were able to explain the impact of their work was to show, firstly, that their project had heightened awareness of the positive contribution young people can and do make. And secondly, that Think Big brought people together who would not normally come into contact – and in so doing – challenge taken-for-granted, stereotypical or prejudicial assumptions, about one another.

Bringing people together and building a sense of community cohesion was regarded as a key indicator of impact for many young people, as the following quotations suggest:

> *'It gave people a chance to meet new people, to socialise with their friends and family and to celebrate the talents of our local youth.'*

> *'I got involved in meeting local people through promoting the event, through sourcing the venue and hiring equipment etc. Also since the event I've had young people asking me when the next one is!'*

> *'It helped bring everyone from different walks of life together and everything.'*

> *'I think it has given the young people a sense of belonging and equality, and feel they can do what everybody else can.'*

Creating projects to have these impacts required young people to develop their communication skills. Qualitative evidence shows that this can be an area of their development where they often lack confidence. Often this can be because they rarely have much opportunity to talk to people with particular areas of responsibility or interest. Put simply, they get no practice.

> *'It's made me speak with a range of different people really you know from school teachers, schools principals, youth club leaders, right down to the actual young people themselves.'*

Often the 'reach' of projects is far beyond young people or those people who work with them. This helps to produce pathways for positive interaction between generations.

> *'We've had more opportunities to meet with our residents, we've done resident meetings we've also had social events, just last month we launched our new logo and new website, so all our residents could come down and see what it's like and we could also talk to them about their issues that they have and how we can improve the project.'*

As noted above, Think Big helps young people by improving their own skills – but also inspires them to behave altruistically.

> '*We started O₂ Think Big and I got really involved in it. I think that's probably inspired me to do other things as well because I'm now also a deputy member of the youth parliament… so it's really made me kind of get into more helping the community with volunteering about stuff.'*

The ability to empathise with other young people and to bring them together to have new experiences was recognised by many as a significant benefit of the programme. While young people articulated their views in different ways, there was often a strong emphasis on increasing community cohesion by broadening horizons and bringing groups of people together.

> *'It's not only in running the business [of a Think Big project], but actually face-to-face talking and interacting with people; and you know it's actually good to mix with other people that are outside [your] social group... I think the main thing was, yeah, just being part of the community and actually seeing everyone come together and enjoying the day.'*

Having a voice and being taken seriously is important for many young people. But finding opportunities to express their opinions can be limited for a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons are associated with the confidence of young people themselves to stand up and be heard. Others reasons are associated with the limited range of opportunities for young people to engage in activities and events where they can speak up. These limitations may be direct, in the sense that young people are actually excluded from those fora where discussions take place and decisions are made. Or they may be indirect, where nobody has considered the importance of inviting young people along to make a contribution.

What is clear, however, is that when young people do get the opportunity to engage with audiences, they gain personal benefit from this in terms of building their confidence. And in addition, they get the opportunity to promote the project they are doing and increase its influence and impact.

> *'We are invited along and we get to be heard and they do respect our opinion, so that the [young people] that are actually putting themselves out there and wanting to make a difference are being heard and I think it's painting us in a better light… to see young faces in the audience at these conferences where they are discussing important issues, to know that there are younger people there that also do care, and it's not just something that you take into consideration when you are older.'*

> *'It shows the wider community that actually... [young people] do take a responsibility and they are not all standing on street corners and actually a lot of young people have got something very valid to say and its very important that we encourage them to think for themselves and actually understand where they are coming from, so it's definitely changed the perception of how young people are perceived.'*

In a sense, these quotations, and those which follow show that the young people involved with Think Big feel genuinely surprised that they can make a difference by challenging stereotypes. Echoing the more theoretical discussion in Section 2, young people who suffer from negative stereotypes start to feel that they are fundamentally different and something 'other' from the mainstream. Challenging negative stereotypes about young people was particularly important, following the riots in several UK cities in July 2011.

> *'Seeing as my event was a couple of weeks after the riots hit, I think it has challenged the ideas that people have about young people and their lack of ambition, drive and even talent. This event showed that there are young people who are determined to contribute to their community in a positive way and I think we sent out a strong message that not all youth are how they've been depicted in the media.'*

Young people wanted it to be recognised that they are socially responsible citizens and that they have the potential to make a positive difference to society.

> *'I think that it's going to show people that we can be responsible, that we can run and maintain a project and that we can organise ourselves in something worthwhile.'*

> *'A lot of the local people have seen young people doing something positive and they've seen all our press releases and things like that and the response from the local people was really good.'*

'I think some people who previously would have just passed us off as teenagers going out and doing horrible things, we've done a positive thing and I think it's just a good example of a group of young people putting on a positive event for a good cause and yeah, I think it has changed people's perceptions.'

'I think it's a good way to get involved in making a difference and showing that we've actually wanted to do something and we're not as the media portrays us to be negative. There's quite a lot of young people that actually want to make a difference and make something with their lives… it's a good way to get a positive look on young people.'

Integral to the process of making an impact for the community is the development of young people's leadership and planning skills. Not all young people, presumably, are interested in doing this – but may be happy to join in with projects if someone else has got things started. Think Big recognises this benefit to 'active participants' and builds this element into the methodology of measuring overall social benefit – as shown above.

Those young people who do take the lead, clearly feel that they have been given a special opportunity:

'I think the best thing about it is that most people who wouldn't even think about doing project management that are only like 13 to 25, they wouldn't think about it. But when they've done their project, it gives them more experience in what to do in the future, if they want to do businesses or something like that.'

'The opportunity to take the lead in my own project, it's a great step forward for my future - as well as being able to make people happy.'

Being a leader is an important aspect of the Think Big experience. And with leadership comes responsibility, as the following quotation indicates:

'Managing a project and the responsibility and networking and promoting it and all of that stuff and obviously things like safeguarding and stuff I had to think of that as well, and health and safety, I had to think of all of that.'

'Aside from the [Think Big] funds - which sounds awfully shallow - I think some kind of organisational stuff from the training and also the project itself [has helped me]. Carrying out the conference has kind of made us all, as a group, I think quite open to a different, you know, diversity of people.'

Unlocking young people's leadership potential and building their confidence is an important element of the aims of Think Big. Without that confidence, they would not have the authority to motivate others to get involved and stay involved in their projects. The experiences young people had on the programme could often be multifaceted, as the following quotation indicates:

'I'm sort of more confident now in terms of being able to plan a project from start to finish and actually deliver it and lead it so that would be the main thing more confidence in terms of speaking with different people as well to promote the project so that has really helped me, sort of people management skills has really improved, networking skills meeting different people and getting contacts as well which has been a big improvement.'

Developing soft skills such as the ability to lead and motivate others requires young people to have a stronger sense of self belief and the ability to convince others that they can be trusted to get things done. Putting themselves in this situation introduced an element of risk

into their lives – but one which could pay significant dividends for themselves, and for those who were involved in or benefitted from their project.

> *'I think, definitely, I think in terms of confidence [I have benefitted]. I mean I have done projects before but this is a little bit out of my comfort zone… I've not run a project before looking at this subject and I think I developed in terms of confidence and leadership skills as well. Because I think they were seeing me as a role model (even though some of them were my parents age), so I think in terms of leadership and confidence that was quite a change but also just generally.'*

> *'I have gained even more leadership skills and I am also a lot more organised. I have proved that I can get quite far with an idea when I put my mind to it and I am a good leader.'*

The skills young people learned helped them to build the confidence to tackle more complex problems – which may, in turn, advantage them when they move on to Think Bigger or enter into other voluntary work or employment.

> *'I have gained experience in managing an event from planning to finish as well as [building] confidence in my own abilities to bring a large group of people together. Also this has helped me to think bigger and looking forward I would like to put on more events on a bigger scale.'*

Leadership is important for those who want to move on to Think Bigger, but also has an impact on the way the programme develops. Many young people, having had a positive experience, want others to be aware of the opportunity and are willing to help them get involved. Think Big is now developing an alumni programme to harness this enthusiasm. Over the next year, researchers will assess how they help and what they get out of it.

What is known now is that the level of support for Think Big as a programme derives from young people's own positive experiences, in part, but is also closely related to the achievements of the programme as a whole. As one participant stated*: 'Think Big is now being recognised as a supporter of youth projects so it adds some credibility to your project/event.'*

> *'It feels like we're getting noticed for the work we're doing for the community, and as O₂ is a recognised name [all the young people involved] feel self-worth and importance and a bigger sense of achievement for what they have all accomplished. Hopefully more young people will want to get involved.'*

A key objective of Think Big is to encourage young people to do what they think is important and to provide a flexible framework so that can happen. Young people clearly recognise the benefits of being able to decide what to do and being trusted to get on with their project.

> *'The fact that it gives everyone the opportunity to do something different, it gives them the chance to make a difference, but it's not strict, it's not regimented, you can make a difference in the way that you think is best and it gives you the opportunity to learn, to make mistakes and learn if you can apply for Think Bigger then you know from Think Big, what to do, how to improve.'*

> *'They're a pleasurable project to be a part of because it gave project leaders and project groups freedom to really do what they want to do and tackle the issues that they want to tackle.*

> *'I think it went really well, I think O₂ was really helpful, if it wasn't for the money we got from O₂ none of this would have been possible, so I think they played a major part and I wouldn't change what they did for us.'*

'You know, we weren't able to get to this stage if it wasn't for Think Big and O₂. And you know, people were actually quite surprised that a big organisation such as O₂ would do such a thing for local communities… it was a good experience and everyone recognised that O₂ and Think Big are actually here to do positive things so it really just boosted everyone knowing that.'

5.2 Experiences on Think Bigger

Residential Training

The second level of the programme, Think Bigger, provides young people with £2,500 worth of funding to do project work. To qualify for this level of funding, they must first have successfully completed a Think Big project. To help them make the transition to Think Bigger, young people are expected to join a residential training programme organised by UK Youth.

These training sessions involve young people from a range of backgrounds who will lead Think Bigger projects. The residential programme is managed by UK Youth and team building activities which are overseen by qualified staff. Additionally, O₂ Helpers join the residential. O₂ Helpers are employee supported volunteers (ESVs) who will provide support to young people throughout the life of their project. Finally, the residential feature 'master classes' run by senior O₂ staff on a range of issues. The presence of senior staff is also intended to signal the high-level investment of the company in the programme.

Residential training was evaluated in its pilot phase to help develop the programme quickly to meet the needs of young people and O₂ Helpers.[50] This involved semi-participant observation by two researchers at three of the first four residentials. A minimum of three months after observation of residentials, follow up interviews were undertaken with project leaders to gauge the longer-term impact on their work.

Reflecting on their projects over time, young people drew upon the relationships they built while on training. They generally maintained these links through Facebook.

> *'I'm in touch with a few of the guys I saw there. We speak about how each other's projects are going and we use the O₂ Think Big Facebook page to chat to each other… and a lot of them are on MSN Messenger and email so we write to each other and stuff and text each other.'*

> *'The O₂ Think Big page on Facebook that's where most interactions [now] take place because everyone's on Facebook so there's always loads of stuff going on there… If you've got someone that needs help with their project you can speak to them and if you're just talking to them as well you can just talk on Facebook as well.'*

> *'I have actually been in contact with quite a few of them, it's almost like a support network.'*

Their recollections of training provide some useful indicators on what young people needed, in terms of support, to run a successful project. Inevitably, some of the participants felt more confident about their skills than others – which could mean that they wondered about the relevance of some of the activities.

> *'I think it was more geared towards the younger [participants]. I think it wasn't very balanced, our residential was very much swayed on the side of the younger*

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[50] Technical working papers on detailed aspects of methodology are available on request.

> *[people's] education… there was only a few of us there and I kind of felt like we were being treated like kids.'*

> *'I was fortunate enough that I have run projects, so it may be perhaps a bit easier for me this time round with Think Bigger but I do think overall training is very useful for people who maybe don't have the experience.'*

In some cases, their project focus was such that anything on the periphery was not regarded as particularly relevant.

> *'Listening to some of the stuff that was talked about in the training wasn't relevant to my project. So some of it I struggled to engage with if I'm honest.'*

> *'I found the training useful in some respects, I think if I was entirely honest I have done projects before of a similar nature and there were some aspects I didn't benefit from fully. Maybe I had experience that meant the training wasn't teaching me anything new in some ways… I know that the [person] that I came with, really benefited from it because he had never done anything like it before and never managed a project so he certainly gained a lot of confidence, got ideas about budgeting and things like that, that he had never ever experienced before.'*

For the majority, however, the residential was recalled as enjoyable and relevant. It provided them with skills and knowledge that had been useful to them as they developed their projects. Indeed, some argued that residential could have run over a longer period of time.

> *'It was really good, I think there was just a lot crammed into the weekend and I thought it could have maybe been spread over four days.'*

> *'The [residential] for me was really beneficial... Where I'm from, there's not even that much grass. So being in that kind of environment was just nice on my eyes being with nature, that and getting out of the grittiness of where I live it was quite refreshing.'*

> *'It was a really good experience, it would have good if was a bit longer, I would have liked to have been there for like a week.'*

Learning new things was important for young people, but it seems to have been *as important* that they felt Think Big had invested in them personally.

> *'The lectures were just brilliant because they gave us a talk on things you would never have thought of. For example one of them was just literally a lecture on the use of Facebook which was brilliant because we use Facebook every day, but not once had I thought about how it could actually improve a business or improve publicity.'*

> *'There was a lot of stuff that I did really take on board... everything that UK Youth done was cool. Then we had O₂ people come in and talk and there was a couple of them that I really felt had a genuine concern for Think Big. And then there was other people that what they were talking about wasn't really that useful to my project, but I still got something out of it.'*

Meeting other project leaders was particularly important for participants – not just in the sense that this gave them ideas – but instead, because they were able to work with highly motivated and optimistic people. This gave them a stronger incentive to invest in their own projects.

> *'[It was] really motivational to be around other young people with bright ideas because where I'm based, I'm one of few young people to carry an optimistic*

perspective on life. So being in a room full of kids like me showed me there's actually a lot more young people out there and it should be celebrated do you know what I mean, for what they're doing and that was great.'

'I do think it's good from a point of view that people are integrating who have a common sense of purpose who are all trying to achieve a common goal and all come together for the same programme and therefore mixing ideas and that respect can be really, really helpful.'

The tangible benefits of training included information on issues such as safeguarding, communication budgeting and business planning.

'It gave us the skills we need to actually successfully run the project rather than getting stuck at a point whether it was a communication point or whether it was organising. We both had a chance to sort of sit down and plan it properly and then put it into practice.'

'Project planning skills, not like I didn't have them skills before, but I definitely improved them and they provided me with a lot of material in a folder that was really useful, I still look at that folder today.'

'I learnt how to do a business plan. I've never done one before… also how to publicise, how to get my name out there, how to get physically out there and to get people to hear about my project, rather than just word of mouth. I thought that was really helpful because before that I had no idea. I didn't know how to you know, I didn't want to go out and fork out for adverts in newspapers and stuff but at the training we were taught how to use free supplies and how you can use publicity.'

But underlying this was a strong sense that the event gave them a lasting sense of confidence to get their project done. This was particularly important in relation to their ability to communicate with people at different levels.

'It definitely gave me more confidence in communicating with other people because I find that quite challenging, it was really nice to be talking to people who were doing a similar thing and having the same experiences, it was really nice.'

'Speaking to people that you usually wouldn't, like corporate individuals and trying to understand the language. It's just having a greater self awareness, you've got to be aware of how people are perceiving you… but the more I'd done it the more I kind of engaged with the project and the people and the more and more comfortable I became.'

The skills required to do their projects were underpinned by a need to keep a strong focus on what they wanted to achieve – and to ensure that their objectives were realistic in the first place.

'I think it just helped us to focus our idea on what we actually wanted because you had to think about for the whole weekend.'

'[I learned about] different ways of thinking and taking on more challenges, try again even if you fail the first time because the other people there were so inspiring it made you want to make your project bigger and better...'

'If we felt a bit stressed about something then we'd talk to each other and kind of make us see it straight instead of all over the place.'

Support from O₂ Helpers

Building realism into their project planning was supported by their O₂ Helpers who were present at the residential. Subsequently, Helpers gave project leaders a great deal of support in many cases.

> *'She was amazing… she was a huge support… like if I had any concerns then I'd email her and let her know and she'd email me back or she'd call me, always checking to see how everything's going, even if there wasn't anything wrong she'd still see if everything was in check and see I hadn't forgot anything.'*

> *'He's been sending a load of stuff and trying to get us into radio stations and he's sent me application forms for work experience with the BBC and stuff and… sometimes when we plan an event he looks for stuff like venues and that kind of stuff for us and what's going on at O₂. So I think it's really good that he's there to back us up from that aspect and then if I ever need help with anything, he's there.'*

> *'They're brilliant… they're quite aware that I'm nearly twenty four and I'm aware of like my own finances and stuff, they're quite aware of that and I love that about them, they're a brilliant choice for me.'*

> *'To be honest I haven't got one criticism, I know that I'm not the kind of person she would normally be dealing with. Like I know I'm very different to her staff and that but she's so patient with me… She's really like open minded to me as an individual and my project and I can't give her any more credibility, I think she's great, she's a good help.'*

In other cases, project leaders already had a clear idea of what they wanted to do and needed less support.

> *'She's good, although we didn't need her that much to help us because we conducted the session before [she became involved] so we knew how to do it. So maybe she found us a boring group to work with because there was not much. We didn't go 'we need you for this, we need you for this' because honestly the most of it was done anyway.'*

> *'When I had my one-to-one with my advisor and we had time to go and discuss with them budgets, when I presented mine to her, she was like, 'well you've thought of everything', and she couldn't really contribute anything to it. I don't mean that in a bad way, but she was kind of like, 'ok, well you've covered everything then', and there was nothing to go over.'*

The amount of contact project leaders had with their Helpers varied, depending partly upon their level of need and also upon their helper's own availability. In some cases, contact was minimal: 'Not too often, to be honest, we communicate through email', one participant stated. Another said:

> *'He's good, when we're getting stuff going on ideas it's always good to see what he thinks but we've not actually met with him because he's a call centre guy so he finds it hard to get time off the phones… so I suppose it's just over emails that we can exchange ideas.'*

Lack of regular contact was not necessarily due to a lack of interest on the part of Helpers so much as the level of need. Consequently, Helpers were often in a responsive mode once projects were underway rather than interfering too much.

> *'I haven't spoken to them in a while now they're just waiting on me. But they're always at the other end of the phone if I need them I just give them a call and we have a good old chat.'*

Others would have liked more contact with their Helpers, but this was not always possible:

> *'I couldn't be in contact with her as much as I would have liked. I did make contact to say could we maybe have a meeting or whatever and she is busy herself... so contact has been quite slim in that respect' I don't know, maybe because I've been kind of getting on with it anyway, I don't really know if that's been a difference at all. Maybe if I was struggling I would benefit more from having a bit more communication with her.'*

In other cases, however, reliance on Helpers was considerable, but this support was gladly given.

> *'I'm literally in contact with her every couple of days sending emails back and forth, keeping each other updated. She's helping me with other stuff as well not just my project like she's helping me with my CV and helping me getting an idea of what kind of industry I could work in. What I could use my skills in, she's helped me in more ways than just the project.'*

> *'I couldn't be in contact with her as much as I would have liked. I did make contact to say could we maybe have a meeting or whatever and she is busy herself... so contact has been quite slim in that respect' I don't know, maybe because I've been kind of getting on with it anyway, I don't really know if that's been a difference at all. Maybe if I was struggling I would benefit more from having a bit more communication with her.'*

Closing the circle

Being seen to have completed their projects successfully was important for most participants. Consequently many talked about their experiences in terms of a 'rite of passage'. In some case, this produced effusive testimonials:

> *'I've loved the journey we have been on throughout this project and I highly recommend it to every young person who has passion to share skills to benefit others.'*

> *'I couldn't have a break from it, if I was ill and had to have a day off school, just because I loved it so much … I'd have to keep going at it just because I enjoy it…it was a challenge to keep going and keep doing it every single day.'*

As noted above, young people generally felt that Think Bigger, through its residential training and Helper support, enabled them to run successful projects. It provided them with the confidence to see the project through to completion and built their skill sets as project managers. Many of the young people were grateful for this opportunity as they felt it had a real impact on their lives.

> *'It's really made me who I am now, it's really shaped me. I mean, I know I was doing it while I was doing my GCSE's as well… but anyone can get qualifications but not anyone can do that - actually gain funding. I had an amazing experience and it wasn't just about me as well - it was about everyone - which I really liked. Yeah, it was just amazing.'*

In some cases, young people took this further and stated that involvement in Think Bigger helped them to make a more successful transition towards adult life.

> *'It's just helped me find my path in life earlier on than other people, I've found that already.'*

> *'[It has] shown me that what I am doing is a good thing, hard work like. but worth it and built my confidence up a lot.'*

For some young people, Think Bigger gave them new opportunities which had not been available to them before – from which they had gained real practical benefits – such as going to college.

> *'It's given us opportunities to go places and meet people you wouldn't have had if you hadn't had the project because I mean, there's just so many different things happening. It's helped me get into college as well because of all my experience and stuff, so that helped me get into college.'*

As was shown to be the case amongst the Think Big project leaders, participants in Think Bigger felt the investment by O₂ was important to them in more ways than just the investment of funding.

> *'It's been a great experience it's helped me in a lot of ways... It's done a lot more than, like a lot of people just write cheques to me and you go and do your work and come back with a form but this has been much more like, it's been really involved... they have a genuine concern of the kids I'm trying to help rather than just like signing off a cheque they're a lot more than that, but everybody as well not just the O₂ people but the UK Youth people. I almost feel like I have a personal relationship with the individuals and they all genuinely have a concern for what I'm doing.'*

> *'…the fact I can now tell people I've got this close working partnership with a company like O₂ Telefõnica says a lot and has given a lot of credibility to me and my work, so that for me is like the top thing about the whole programme being able to use this as an opportunity to develop myself further.'*

For some participants, it was important that they had a strong sense that their project had been completed and that they could gauge the impact it had had. At present an overall impact study is being undertaken – but individual project leaders are not expected to carry out evaluation of their work. Some would like this to happen.

> *'My mum is helping me do an evaluation of the project but I think it would be really good if O₂ looked at that aspect of it more, everything was great and then you kind of finish off and it's, like, 'oh I've finished now'. If they'd sent an evaluation for you to do or something, I dunno… maybe if they sent it in email or through the post or something to maybe sum it up and maybe feel like 'oh wow, I've done this'.'*

While this is an isolated example, it nevertheless indicates the importance of showing that work has been completed. The same person also suggested that issuing certificates may be a good way of demonstrating to others that the work had been done successfully.

> *'Maybe sending certificates to people would be really good because, I mean, a lot of people don't like certificates. But certificates for doing this sort of thing would be really good because it would actually show people what you've actually done.'*

Others argued that the development of an alumni association would be beneficial (prior to its establishment towards the end of 2011).

> *'I do hope they develop what they offer with the alumni and develop things further... It would be a shame to just build [young people] up to this level and then just walk*

away. That wouldn't be that great. But it's important to me and to them hopefully to continue to develop things and continue to be innovative, like they're really innovative and if they carry on doing that I'm sure this whole programme will be really successful.'

Project leaders were pleased that the Think Big programme showcased some of its projects through media campaigns, attendance at conferences, and at celebration events.

'[showcasing the project] was a good experience because it was showing that young people not only have a voice but have real issues and they are angry about things and getting frustrated and they want to be heard…it really is inspiring because you think these people are an inspiration to other young people so I think it's really good that O$_2$ showcase that and engage it and embrace it and show that young people do actually have something valuable to contribute as opposed to just being criticised and not listened to.'

Even if their own project was not showcased, young people still recognised the benefit in promoting the programme as a whole and for celebrating young people's achievements.

'The series of short films that have been made about other Think Big projects and how successful they are; and obviously, they are now being advertised in the cinema. I feel quite proud to be part of that. So I think they are doing a good thing and yes, I am just delighted that I was accepted.'

'I think it's great to see corporations like O$_2$ giving a damn basically…it says a lot about them in terms of setting an example to other corporations…generally I think it's great what O$_2$ Think Big stand for and to support other young people in similar situations to me really.'

5.3   Case Studies

Project Change

Project Change is a charity which encourages young people to make a positive contribution to their community by getting involved with practical activities. For their Think Big project, Daniel asked other young people to get together to talk about the main priorities in the community and to make a team decision about what they could do to help. They decided to offer their services gardening and decorating on their local estate.

The project brought many benefits for the young people and the community. Young people gave their time, learnt practical skills and helped people in their community that they may not have otherwise have come into contact with. Members of the community benefited because practical jobs got done that they may not have been able to do themselves. As importantly, the project increased contact and understanding between older and younger generations on the estate. As Daniel said:

'I think the community has benefited because they see young people from their community doing something positive... And it has also helped to build communication between young people and the older people, where there can sometimes be quite a bit of a divide. But there seems to be quite a good sort of atmosphere between the two generations which is good.'

Working with young people from the estate, Daniel believes, has helped to change negative perceptions of those young people who tend to 'hang out' wearing hooded sweatshirts. It

has shown that they can be just as friendly as the young people who were taking part in the project:

> *'A few young people walking to the shop with a hooded jumper, there's the assumption that they are going to cause havoc, so anything that we can do which is obviously positive helps a lot and especially the estate where we've been [working], where young people look exactly the same, wear the same hoodies and look like any other teenager but doing something like [our project] changes their perception, you know, quite a lot.'*

The project not only helped the community by completing practical tasks, it also provided a sense of achievement and fulfilment for the young people involved. The project has also encouraged and enhanced a sense of community cohesion. The visibility of young people out in their community doing something positive has helped challenge and change negative perceptions of young people on the estate. It has also raised awareness of the work that Project Change does and increased opportunities for them to get involved in other projects in the local area.

Disability Awareness Road Shows

The main aim of Josh's Think Bigger project was to raise awareness of one of his passions: wheelchair basketball. He was interested in promoting the sport and raising awareness about the skills needed to play it. To do this, Josh arranged visits to schools with members of his team to make presentations. They also took wheelchairs along, to let young people have a go and see what playing the game entailed. The idea was to challenge ideas about the game by showing how skilful and competitive it is. Josh concluded:

> *'Not many people knew how to play wheelchair basketball… the amount of people that came up before [the road show] and said - 'oh it's easy we'll be able to score'! Then after[wards], we had people coming up saying 'my hands are*

*killing me', or 'I've got blisters' or 'wow that was hard' - it changed people's
views very fast.'*

The sessions provided an opportunity to raise awareness about the lives of wheelchair
users. As Josh pointed out, it gave able-bodied young people the chance to ask questions -
which was important for widening understanding of disabilities.

> *'…A lot of people now know how to treat [disabled] people and just treating everyone
> the same. Everyone wants to be treated exactly the same and everyone be equal.'*

Josh's Think Bigger project has raised his own confidence and he now feels better able to
communicate with people with whom he is unfamiliar:

> *'I got a lot of confidence from it, getting used to talking to people and pitching an
> idea. Everyone asking me questions was, like, a really good confidence booster.
> Getting used to it, because I was nervous at the start, with people asking me
> questions and I was, like, 'what do I say?' I know what I'm saying now.'*

Sound Skills

Laura's Think Bigger project involved making music with children and young people who
are autistic. Laura was already involved with other music projects but wanted to do
something different for her Think big project, believing that 'music is a good way to inspire
and connect different groups to achieve positive outcomes, [so the aim was to] bridge the
social gap that young people with autism often feel.'

In her Think Big project, Laura had worked with young people from one school in Glasgow
and they produced a CD of their sessions. For Think Bigger, Laura's aim was to work with
and link young people from different locations across Glasgow, of this she said:

> *'it's been a lot more diverse [than Think Big) in terms of age and culturally as
> well, different races…and it's been quite interesting hearing stories about
> different things and different upbringings. It is very social what we do and it is to*

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> *stimulate them and to get them thinking differently as opposed to being angry all the time.'*

As part of the Think Bigger project, young people produced CDs of their music. An event was also planned to take place at the end of the project in January 2012 to showcase their talents.

Previous to her Think Big and Think Bigger projects, Laura had not worked with autistic young people and, though she found the work challenging, she has personally benefited from the sessions she spends with them:

> *'I think from a personal point of view, it's learning to communicate differently. Working with children from different autism units that haven't met before and I wasn't familiar with, it was challenging in that, trying to get to know someone who has learning difficulties can be quite tough and sometimes they aren't happy to communicate. [They] find it quite difficult to integrate with other children who are struggling with the same problems - so that was quite tough at times. Trying to get them all to get along and to listen to me and to co-ordinate and be happy to share some of the roles…it has been very rewarding'*

At all stages of the project, Laura has worked to the young people's strengths. Some of them have been involved in recording, some working in the control room at the recording studio. While others were involved with designing the CD covers.

The Think Big website became an integral part of Laura's project. The project webpage helped to engage participants by showing their achievements:

> *'I've tried to keep the young people that I'm working with involved [by] keeping an online track of what they are doing… Having an online space that documents what they are doing is beneficial for them because it's something tangible that they can look at and remember… and get to see their work documented, so yes I do think it's useful'*

Although Laura found her project challenging at times, the responses of the group and the difference in the young people have made it a worthwhile experience:

> 'It's been hard, but at the same time it's made me want to do it more because you do see such a real difference in these children's behaviour and even towards things like having an aspiration for the future and careers and things. So from a personal point of view that's what I've learned - that with a bit of extra time, you can really make a difference to someone's life.'

Kingston Crew

In her Think Bigger project, Abbie runs a contemporary Morris Dancing group. She decided to set up the group due to the lack of other opportunities for young people in her local area. Abbie says:

> 'Our project was all about getting the kids and youths off the street and out of trouble by teaching them new skills and bringing different parts of the community together which would not normally and we did this through dance'.

Abbie's Think Big project helped the group establish themselves by buying new costumes so that they could perform in competitions. A group of younger participants won their competition, and another group came second in their age group. Abbie's first project had the unexpected outcome of attracting participants from older generations. So the age range of the group stretched between 2 to 60.

Abbie's Think Bigger project aimed to build on her now established dance group and to branch out into other kinds of dance. She hoped this would appeal to an even wider audience and enable the group to enter more competitions. She hoped that younger participants would benefit by building their confidence and self-esteem – which would help them out later in life.

Entering competitions was not just about giving the participants something to aim for and a sense of achievement, it was also a chance for them to venture out of their local community and see other places – something many of them had previously never had the opportunity to do.

Abbie's project has been successful in reaching across all generations with a total of 70 people of all ages now attending her classes. Being part of Think Bigger has opened up opportunities for the group that may not have been possible otherwise. It has encouraged females of all ages to get involved with their local community, interact with those of different ages within their community and also the chance to broaden their horizons by going to new places and meeting people who share the passion of dancing.

Their increased interaction with the local community has helped to raise awareness of the positive actions of young people. For example, Abbie's dance group got involved with a charity event at a local supermarket, and as Abbie explained:

> *'When we were doing the display we heard an old man saying to his wife 'see, all these youngsters ain't bad'. It put a smile on my face. So it is changing slowly, that we ain't all bad'.*

5.4   Summary of findings

The aim of the programme is to encourage young people to think up ideas on projects which are important to them and set themselves challenges. This 'youth led' approach is appreciated by participants – but they also welcome the support they get as well.

Think Big helps young people by improving their own skills – but also inspires them to behave altruistically.

The ability to empathise with other young people and to bring them together to have new experiences was recognised by many as a significant benefit of the programme.

Having a voice and being taken seriously is important for many young people. When young people do get the opportunity to engage with a wider constituency of people, they benefit from this in terms of building their confidence.

Many young people involved with Think Big were genuinely surprised that they can make a difference by challenging stereotypes. Challenging negative stereotypes about young people was particularly important, following the riots in several UK cities in July 2011.

Young people wanted it to be recognised that they are socially responsible citizens and that they have the potential to make a positive difference to society.

Unlocking young people's leadership potential and building their confidence is an important element of the aims of Think Big. Without that confidence, they would not have the authority to motivate others to get involved and stay involved in their projects.

Developing soft skills such as the ability to lead and motivate others requires young people to have a stronger sense of self belief and the ability to convince others that they can be trusted to get things done.

Participants felt valued and trusted by being involved in Think Big. The investment of trust by giving young people responsibility for managing money, was a highly valued aspect of the programme.

Experiencing Think Bigger: key findings

The second level of the programme, Think Bigger, provides young people with £2,500 worth of funding to do project work. To qualify for this level of funding, they must first have successfully completed a Think Big project.

The higher level of investment puts more demand on young people to invest in their own development at residential courses, run by UK Youth. The residential helps to cement a community of practice so that project leaders can draw on each other's advice and experience as their projects developed.

Residential training gave young people a lasting sense of confidence to get their project done. This was particularly important in relation to their ability to communicate with people at different levels.

Building realism into their project planning was supported by their O_2 Helpers who were present at the residential. Subsequently, Helpers gave project leaders a great deal of support in many cases. In some cases reliance on Helpers was considerable, but this support was gladly given.

Being seen to have completed their projects successfully was important for participants. Many talked about their experiences in terms of a 'rite of passage'. In some cases, this produced effusive testimonials.

> *'It's really made me who I am now, it's really shaped me. I mean, I know I was doing it while I was doing my GCSE's as well… but anyone can get qualifications but not anyone can do that - actually gain funding. I had an amazing experience and it wasn't just about me as well - it was about everyone - which I really liked. Yeah, it was just amazing.'*

As was shown to be the case amongst the Think Big project leaders, participants in Think Bigger felt the investment by O_2 was important to them in more ways than just the investment of funding.

> *'It's been a great experience it's helped me in a lot of ways... It's done a lot more than, like a lot of people just write cheques to me and you go and do your work and come back with a form but this has been much more like, it's been really involved...*

they have a genuine concern of the kids I'm trying to help rather than just like signing off a cheque they're a lot more than that, but everybody as well not just the O₂ people but the UK Youth people. I almost feel like I have a personal relationship with the individuals and they all genuinely have a concern for what I'm doing.'

Section Six

Employee volunteers

Voluntary action is lauded in Western societies because of its positive contribution to building social capital and strengthening of civil society.[51] In the UK, governments have invested in the promotion of voluntary action. From 1997 – 2010 the Labour government invested significant resource to encourage more people to volunteer in the UK. Following the formation of a Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government in May 2010, enthusiasm for volunteering has not diminished. Much of the underlying thinking behind the Big Society in the UK is the belief that there is an untapped resource of people power.[52] In the recent *Giving Green Paper* the size of this resource is estimated: '26 per cent of non-volunteers (~3.3m people) are willing to start giving time through volunteering.' (Cabinet Office, 2010: 20).

> *'Many people give time because they want to help, but there are also specific motivations which differ from person to person, and recognising this diversity is important. If we can do this, our analysis suggests that more people will give more of their time' (HMG Green Paper 2010: 20).*

But the empirical basis upon which it claimed that 'people will give more of their time' is not particularly strong. Indeed, recent data from the Citizenship Survey indicates that levels of formal volunteering at least once a month has fallen to 33 per cent of the population – at its lowest rate since 2001 (www.communities.gov, 2011). The Government wants to encourage volunteering, but it is evident that fiscal constraints may result in reduced investment in the encouragement, support and management of volunteering. As a consequence, the government, has put significant emphasis on the role business can play in encouraging volunteering through the development of employer supported volunteering (ESV) schemes.[53]

ESV has become one of the fastest-growing areas of voluntary activity in the UK, throughout Western Europe and North America.[54] Although it is often difficult to quantify its impact, there is evidence to suggest that ESV benefits the business organisation,

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[51] In much of the literature on building civil society there is a strong emphasis on the positive aspects of volunteering in building social capital. See, for example, Putnam1993, 1995 and 2000). There is also a more critical literature on volunteering, arising from the work of Bourdieu 1988 (see also Wilson, 2000 and Woolcock, 1998) which warns that some kinds of voluntary action can reinforce social divisions rather than challenge them. For a review of this literature, see Chapman and McGuinness, 2012.

[52] Norman, 2010; Blond, 2010; Office for Civil Society, 2010; Her Majesty's Government, 2011.

[53] I am indebted to Helen Bussell, Teesside University, who worked on the research project in its early stages, for providing a literature review on employer supported volunteering, upon which this summary is based.

[54] For the UK, see Volunteering England, 2005; Western Europe, see: de Gilder *et al.,* 2005; for North America, see: Miller, 1997; Lantos, 2001; Hess *et al,* 2002.

employees, the voluntary organisation and society in general. As a result ESV has been described by several commentators as a 'win-win' situation.[55]

Involvement in community schemes has a positive impact on employees' perception of the work organisation. Those involved in ESV are more committed to the organisation. ESV facilitates employee development in that it helps employees develop job-related skills such as team working, leadership, greater social awareness and interpersonal skills.[56]

Employees also benefit from ESV by enhancing skills related to work through taking on new roles as a volunteer and bringing newly acquired skills back into the workplace.[57] Taking time out from work to volunteer reduces the pressures of the workplace, energising them so that they can better take on the challenges of the job when they). For the career minded volunteering may enhance the CV and open up new career possibilities. For those coming to the end of their careers it can help the transition from work to retirement. Research suggests that employees volunteering through ESV also tend to participate in volunteering outside work time and people who work with colleagues who volunteer are more likely to volunteer themselves.

Finally, there are benefits to the wider community. Those who participate in ESV have an opportunity to mix with people they might not normally have contact with. This external focus make them more aware of the problems facing people in the community and get to know and become involved with their locality and increase their understanding of social issues. ESV adds sustainable value to the local community. The co-learning which arises between the local region and businesses involved in ESV can increase prosperity in a community.

Employee supported volunteers in Think Big

Young people taking part in Think Big have the opportunity to receive support from O₂ employees while they are doing their project. O₂ employees can support young people's projects in several ways: as online Helpers who are attached to particular projects; by engaging in Team Challenges to support their local communities; by getting involved in a international Telefõnica volunteering day, amongst other things. For many years, O₂ has been keen to get their employees involved in local communities. Several programmes preceded Think Big – include its five year programme – *It's Your Community*.

This section considers the involvement of ESVs on the three dimensions discussed above to assess its benefits – from the perspective of the people who get involved, in terms of its impact on the community, and, the benefits it brings for O₂ Telefõnica as a company. The evidence is drawn from several elements of the research including: an online survey of nearly 200 current ESVs in November/December 2011; 4 focus groups with employees in London and North West England; observation of ESVs in the international volunteering day in London and Leeds; and, observation and interviews with ESVs at three training residential at Avon Tyrel, Hampshire and Thirsk, North Yorkshire. [58]

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[55] See for example: Steckel *et al.,* 1999; Phillips, 2000; Brewis, 2004; Lovell, 2005.

[56] There is a growing literature in this field, see for example, the following useful contributions: Involvement in community schemes has a positive impact on employees' perception of the work organisation Brewis, 2004; de Gilder *et al.,* 2005; Wild, 1993; Miller, 1997, Lovell, 2005, return Geroy *et al.,* 2000; Rose, 2002 and Finney, 1997.

[57] The most frequently cited are transferable skills such as communication: Geroy *et al.,* 2000; Rose, 2002; Brewis, 2004; time management, Rose, 2002: and leadership Brewis, 2004. Developing new skills and building on existing ones increases self-esteem and confidence, Brewis, 2004; Murray, 2005; Geroy *et al..,* 2000.

[58] Technical working papers on detailed aspects of methodology are available on request.

Getting involved in Think Big

Figure 6.1 shows how ESVs became involved in Think Big in 2011. The evidence suggests that employees were already quite keen to find an opportunity to get involved in volunteering and that Think Big provided a route to achieve this objective. Over 80 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that this was an important reason for getting involved. There is also a clear indication that employees were eager to try something new – almost two thirds agreed that this was a clear incentive to get involved.

As noted above, people who take part in ESV schemes have often been volunteers in the past: well over half of ESVs in this survey had previously volunteered (61 per cent). That said, getting involved was dependent on other social processes – nearly half of participants were further encouraged by the fact that their friends and colleagues in the company were getting involved. A minority of participants in Think Big were encouraged to get involved by their line manager, but this is a significant minority, about 36 per cent, suggested that the support from management is beneficial. Similarly, about a third of participants were influenced by their previous involvement in ESV activities in the company.

Figure 6.1 **Influences on getting involved in Think Big**

	A great deal of influence	Some influence	Not much influence	No influence at all
I wanted to volunteer and it seemed like a good opportunity to get involved	46.7	33.8	5.6	13.8
I wanted to try something new	29.7	32.8	14.4	23.1
I have done something similar before	24.6	35.9	9.7	29.7
I My work colleagues/friends were getting involved	17.9	31.3	17.4	33.3
I was encouraged by my line manager	14.9	21.5	23.6	40.0
I was volunteering with O_2 before	14.9	24.6	15.4	45.1

To get a better understanding about ESVs motivations, Figure 6.2 draws distinction between three types of motivations to get involved in Think Big: altruistic motivations that is, benefits to others or society more generally; interest in personal development – such as the consolidation or acquisition of skills; and, instrumental motivations - surrounding career advancement at work or avoidance of work.

What is immediately evident from these data is that altruistic motivations are much more important to ESVs than instrumental ones. Nearly 90 per cent of respondents wanted to make a positive contribution to society; well over two thirds wanted to get more involved with their communities; and, nearly a half wanted specifically to work with young people. Personal development is important to them too. About a half of respondents wanted to learn new skills and over 60 per cent wanted to improve their personal management skills and sense of wellbeing. Of less importance, but nevertheless significant, was their interest in further developing specific work related skills (about 40 per cent) or getting some training so that they could learn how to work with young people (nearly 40 per cent).

Instrumental motivations for volunteering were less important to respondents – but are worthy of note. Nearly a half of respondents felt that building social networks was of no real importance to them – strongly suggesting that involvement was much more work focused.

That said, 11 per cent felt this was very important and a further 20 per cent recognised that this was influential. Similarly, about 20 per cent felt that Think Big might help them to get access to social events they might not otherwise attend – that stated, 60 per cent felt that this had no influence at all. Instrumental motivations surrounding career development were not thought to be very important by the majority: only 7 per cent felt that this was very important and 15 per cent quite important. Evidence from focus groups suggests that for those who did think that career progression was an issue they did recognise potential benefits, and in some cases, had already realised these benefits through promotion.

> *'It's certainly increased my reputation in the company… it shows people that you can tap into rich and deep well of experiences and find solutions and make things happen. Think Big gives you the opportunity to do that, it's fantastic.'*

A tiny minority of respondents were motivated to get involved because it would give them time off work – and 86 per cent felt that this factor was of no significance whatsoever. The indications are, from focus groups, interviews and observation at training and events, that investment in Think Big generally led to a higher level of time investment than could be afforded by the time given by the employer to do ESV work.

Getting involved in Think Big is strongly encouraged by senior management, but at local level, some line managers were less enthusiastic.

> *'There's some management who don't really like you to spend much time, so they just seem to think that you're just doing a lot of work on Think Big rather than the day job. Take, me I've put a lot of time in my own time and on holidays.'*

Most participants were reasonably stoical about their need to juggle their working time to some extent to fit Think Big in.

> *'[Colleagues] have lots of things to work on at one time, things that just kind of land on them, which makes it difficult to devote to Think Big, they have to juggle – that's the general consensus round here.'*

> *'Basically everyone has an opportunity to do it whatever directorate you're in and whatever level you're at… The fact of the matter is that you have to try to arrange the time with your line manager. If they allow you to do it, fair enough, but you might still find yourself going home and logging on, you're looking up stuff. I think some if is about how passionate the individual things about it… I've worked on projects in my own time as well.'*

Figure 6.2   **Motivations for getting involved in Think Big**

	A great deal of influence	Some influence	Not much influence	No Influence
Altruistic motivations				
I wanted to make a useful contribution to society	59.5	29.2	4.1	7.2
I wanted to get more involved with the community	36.9	35.9	9.7	17.4
I wanted to work with young people	26.7	20.5	16.4	36.4
Personal development motivations				
I saw it as an opportunity to gain different skills	32.3	22.6	16.4	28.7
I saw it as an opportunity for personal development (e.g. confidence, self-esteem, self management)	29.2	29.2	14.4	27.2
I wanted to improve or develop existing skills (e.g. team work, computer literacy)	18.5	21.0	22.1	38.5
I saw it as an opportunity to access training in new areas (e.g. working with young people)	16.9	21.0	21.0	41.0
Instrumental motivations				
I wanted to build networks and social contacts outside work	11.3	19.5	20.0	49.2
I wanted to increase my access to social events with others	8.2	13.3	19.5	59.0
I wanted to improve my career prospects/enhance my CV	6.7	15.4	16.9	61.0
I thought it would get me time off work	1.0	3.1	9.7	86.2

A positive sign of the way people had become embedded into the programme was their lack of clarity on how they were drawn into it in the first place. In cases, the impetus was attendance at events to bring in new volunteers:

> *'I'm not quite sure how I got involved actually, I think I was just in the atrium and things were going. But I'm quite a sociable person and want to know what's going on when I see something. Others just seem to walk past each other so it's probably harder to get them involved. But I was tuned in too – I've done community work – but not volunteering as such.'*

> *'Originally when it was rolled out as a business, it was initially through posters to get people introduced, you know, you'd look and read and it would be on the intranet, on the web page. And then slowly slowly you start getting the comms through. Now we've got our own Think Big groups, you know in Slough, Leeds and Bury, that's what's really made a difference.'*

As the above quotations suggests, for the most part people engaged with the programme through contacts with people they already knew who were taking part. A common response was as follows: 'I got drawn in by someone, someone I'd worked with who was looking for a contact to promote things and get people involved. Got nudged, really.' Many others had been involved in previous CSR volunteering programmes within the company.

'I was involved with Western Spirit first, then got into It's Your Community, and so it just seemed natural to get involved with Think Big. I like getting involved in that stuff, so it's just a matter of carrying on.'

Many ESVs already had an interest in volunteering prior to the launch of Think Big, but they also recognised that without opportunities being made immediately available, the likelihood would be that they would not actually start volunteering;

'The thing about Think Big is that it lets you know about what is available around you. Quite a lot of the time if you do external volunteering it's hard to know what opportunities you have. You have to go out and search for it. But the good thing about this is that people come to you and, yes, they offer you this, this, this and this. And you can choose for yourself if you're willing to put yourself forward.'

Once they had become involved themselves, many wanted to bring others into the programme. It was recognised that some would be more able and willing than others to take part – which produced a range of strategies to ensure they did.

'I've got loads [involved]. Earlier this year I organised a summer fayre and a cake stall, but some said 'no I can't get involved', 'I can't come on the day this time'… but I found out that they're really good bakers, so I rallied them together and said, why not do some baking… And it wasn't just ladies [laughs], some blokes were baking cookies and muffins and all that, and I was, just so impressed.'

'I've got a rep from each department [laughs], and when they see me coming, they think, 'oh yes I knew I had to do that, must do it.''

In some cases, however, it was recognised that people either could not or would not take part.

'A lot of people that don't get involved in Think Big are those people who tend to come to work and keep their heads down. They come into the office, do their job and go home. They don't want anything to do with O₂ in their home-time. So it's finding the right people, with the right mentality that takes my time. You need to find the right network of people with the right kinds of personalities and the right kind of commitment. I mean, obviously, you don't ignore the people who don't speak, you want to get them involved, you don't want to exclude anyone – to make Think Big as wide as possible. It's a difficult job, just get as many involved as you can.'

The following focus group exchange indicates awareness of the risks of putting too much pressure on colleagues who are undecided about involvement or are clear that they do not want to participate.

'I mean there's one or two in the department who feel pestered by it, it's important not to pester too much,'

'like when it's kind of a flood of information.'

'So there's a kind of [management] policy just to send one thing out on each thing.'

Limits on the flow of information, particularly by email, could be a source of frustration for people organising events.

'Comms wouldn't help me, and you know, I'd done a lot of work to get the whole thing organised and a lot of people involved. So you're putting posters up in the stations, but people were saying 'we didn't know anything about it'. So we understand why there's a limit, but it can be a bit frustrating. They had it on the plasma for the Giving Tree, but they didn't have it for other stuff, you know.'

The survey evidence indicates that ESVs feel that they have gained benefits from their involvement in Think Big. Figure 6.3 list a wide range of factors which may have brought benefit. The factors which brought positive benefits are listed in priority. Following the discussion of these data, a wider ranging *thematic* discussion will follow drawing upon qualitative data from different elements of the research. Amongst the most beneficial aspects of being involved in Think Big were social factors rather than direct personal benefits. Well over 60 per cent of respondents felt that Think Big had helped them feel more a part of their community and about 58 per cent felt that they had a stronger understanding of social issues.

Many respondents felt that they had become more able to communicate with young people, to take part in non-work related leadership and, very importantly, about half felt that they were more able to have new experiences and were willing try to do new things. Each of these factors suggest a broadening of minds, building self confidence and strengthening of pro-sociality. Indicative of these factors: about 45 per cent of respondents felt that they had more self-confidence, for example, and a similar percentage felt that they had a better understanding and appreciation of young people. Crucially, about half of respondents felt that they had enhanced their self-esteem.

Figure 6.3   **Advantages gained from being involved in Think Big**

	Increased greatly	Increased	Stayed same	Decreased
Feeling of being part of community	16.4	45.6	35.9	2.0
Willingness to try new things	15.9	34.4	48.7	1.0
Lead or encourage others	14.9	31.8	51.8	1.5
Communicate with young people	14.4	23.1	60.5	2.0
Self esteem	9.7	40.5	48.7	1.0
Understanding of social issues	13.3	44.6	40.0	2.0
Confidence in own abilities	12.8	31.8	53.8	1.5
Positive perceptions of young people	13.3	32.8	50.8	3.0
Personal motivation	11.8	37.4	48.2	2.5
Decision making ability	11.8	21.0	65.6	1.5
Work as part of a team	11.3	27.7	60.0	1.0
New skills used outside work	10.3	26.2	61.2	1.5
Communicate with other people	9.7	29.7	59.0	1.5
Time management skills	6.2	17.9	74.4	1.5
New skills related to work	9.7	17.4	70.8	2.0
Participation in social situations	6.7	22.6	68.7	2.0
Interests and hobbies	5.1	15.4	76.4	3.1
Range of friends outside work	5.1	10.8	81.5	2.0

Lower order benefits tended to surround their working lives. That said, the survey reports clear advantages to many participants in personal developmental terms. More than a third felt that they had benefitted in relation to the following factors: working in a team; communicating with other people; and, decision making abilities. Some factors were generally of less importance, such as time management, developing new interests and

hobbies, and so forth. But they still represent real benefits of the programme for those participants who felt that such factors were important to them.

Experiencing Think Big activities

ESVs can participate in Think Big in different ways, including Team Challenges where groups of employees go off-site together to tackle a range of issues such as refurbishment or decoration of buildings or clearing and planting gardens. Being involved in Think Big through Team Challenges was generally welcomed and focus group participants offered examples of their experiences without being asked. Team Challenges served a number of purposes for participants: meeting new colleagues or engaging with existing colleagues in a different context; developing or learning new skills which could be useful at work; and, making a contribution to society by helping out local organisations. The following quotation clearly illustrates the multifaceted elements of the experience:

> *'It was very good because we all got there, painting, putting things on the wall, did all sorts of refurbishment. Then we got invited back for their awards ceremony, and you know, it was really nice to see the young people who benefitted – lots of them were telling their stories – what had gone wrong for them at school, including some who had disabilities that hadn't been picked up on until it was too late and in a sense they had written themselves off. So by getting into the centre, they got skills that could take them forward. It was very motivating really, not just a case of sloshing paint on because we could see that there was an end product. Yes, it was very very good.'*

> *'The reward that you get from it is great, we're still in touch with the organisations that we helped, and now it's seen as an ongoing thing. So what we've said to the outside organisations is, you know, if you ever need anything we can help you with please get in touch with us – don't just think of it as a one off. You're encouraged to keep the relationship going with the people you have helped.'*

O₂ Helpers assist young people when developing and carrying out their larger scale Think Bigger projects (see Section 5 for further discussion of Helpers' roles and experiences). From the ESVs point of view, being a Helper gave them insights into the potential of young people, but also made them realise that they had a lot to offer themselves – often to their own surprise:

> *'I'm a Helper – so I've got a guy who got involved about a year ago – I didn't really know much about what they were doing, it's not my kind of thing – not really – but it involved me getting an understanding of some of things they have to do – which was fantastic. A lot of my role was asking them questions and getting them to question things. I thought, God, I'm not going to be able to tell them anything, but I did manage to help them see things from a different point of view. [TC: 'has it benefitted you?'] Definitely, getting the confidence to ask things, to have the confidence to get out myself and mix with different people… I think, it has a very indirect benefit for company to see that these young people have achieved so much.'*

In Section 4 the experience of young people was judged to be beneficial on the basis that it was an 'ephemeral event' which provided them with additional confidence and resilience to tackle other issues in future. ESVs comments on their own experiences tended to echo this. What struck them as most important was not the direct benefits of learning skills or building confidence so much as their opportunity to see the world in a different way – and to realise how much potential young people have when they are given a chance to do things for themselves. Often this involved their own prejudices being challenged:

'It was hard work, amazing work and we met some wonderful people – people we just wouldn't normally meet, or to be honest [embarrassed laughter], have that much time for.'

For others, who had previous community work and volunteering experience, Think Big could still throw up surprises for them and make them feel glad that they had tried to make a contribution. Feelings of self- worth often emanated from their experience of humility when they considered the problems others had to deal with:

'Mine's a bit of a complicated journey… I volunteered, was volunteered, press ganged! [laughter], but whatever happened, I found myself leading groups of people to get involved with Think Big and organise community events – getting them to turn out and organise them on the day. We did many things. The one that really got to me was [a project involving people who had been badly exploited]. To go there and meet the people, to meet them and so on, was really emotional – that was a day that made a real difference to me.'

Helpers received training in residential settings prior to supporting young people on their Think Bigger projects. Some participants in the training were sceptical about what they had to offer young people. When observing training sessions with Helpers at the start of residentials, it was commonplace to find that ESVs felt that they had rather less confidence than the young people they were going to help. That initial nervousness could sometimes be compounded when Helpers and the young people engaged in outdoor team building activities.

'I was "re-programmed" at Avon Tyrel [laughs]… I was a bit sceptical about it. [the outdoor activities] but actually, they gave me so much support, you know. And actually it was really really good fun… More rain, and all that stuff, but it was amazing, especially the team building exercises [involving climbing trees]. And I thought there's no way I'm going up there – but actually they gave me so much support it was really good fun and what amazed me was that I met people who were so inspiring. Some of them were looking after their projects even though they were looking for full-time employment, and their enthusiasm just never wavered. They were just, you know, the deal.'

Many were taken by surprise, subsequently, by the impact of their support on the way that projects developed. Perhaps more importantly, in terms of the benefits that ESVs gained, they saw themselves in different ways too. This reappraisal of what they had to offer could be strongly felt:

'I got to help them in ways I never thought I could do. I mean, I'm not their parent, but was there for them. It's all about alerting them to issues rather than imposing views on them, like I might do with my own kids. I have to say it's affected me really powerfully. To get involved and make a difference is something most people don't get a chance to get involved with like this.'

Some focus group participants wished they had been involved as Helpers but did not have the time to do so. But they often participated in other ways. For example, some gave support to young people who came into the company to get some work experience:

'I've not been a Helper and I regret that decision, but just couldn't find the time. But I have been involved with work experience and have mentored about seven people through now – two of whom I am still friends with and I think it was that experience, the interaction with people, that has opened my eyes. So when you see a group of

teenagers hanging around on the street corner that's not necessarily them plotting to overthrow the world…'

'They might think that's what you're doing! [laughter]'

'Absolutely. And I've met some young people who appear, visually, to be quite threatening but they're the sweetest people in the world. So I think my realisation is that.'

Impact on working lives

Being involved with Think Big has had a generally positive impact on ESVs feelings about their working lives and relationships with immediate colleagues and the company more generally. As Figure 6.4 shows, Think Big provided a talking point for employees (76 per cent), which resulted for many, in developing new friendships and associations (45 per cent). Almost half of respondents felt that Think Big had made them feel like they were part of a distinctive social group and a similar number believed that Think Big provided new ways of relating to colleagues. In short, Think Big makes a contribution to the 'social glue' of the organisation.

Of lesser importance, were the practical benefits of being involved with Think Big. Nevertheless, almost a third of those surveyed felt that they had met people who may be able to do their job better. This is borne out with qualitative evidence from focus groups where many ESVs stated that having personal contact with people from other departments/directorates on their site of the company or from different offices around the country helped ease communication.

> *'Although the community stuff I did wasn't that different [from other volunteering previously done], I think the team building exercises were really good because people got to know each other in different contexts. In the three [other main sites] events we did I got to know people I wouldn't normally meet. And when you're climbing over somebody's shoulders to do some painting, or whatever, you get to know them fairly quickly! And I think that has helped, because if I need to phone somebody up in Preston Brook, Bury or Leeds, I've got a head start.'*

Recognition of their contribution to Think Big was important for about a quarter of respondents. In focus groups, ESVs commented that their own managers or managers in other departments became more aware of their abilities. But more importantly, it provided employees with more confidence in communicating with people at different levels across the company.

A tiny minority of employees felt that involvement in Think Big would have a strong impact on their career prospects, and judging from data presented in Figure 6.2, above, few entered the programme with this in mind. That said, in focus groups, some participants stated that involvement in Think Big had benefitted them in this way or it had the potential to – but that this was an unintended consequence of involvement which could not have been anticipated or planned.

Figure 6.4   **Perceptions of personal impact and benefits of Think Big**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree/strongly disagree
Provides a talking point with colleagues	21.0	54.9	19.0	5.2
I have made new friends at work	15.9	28.7	45.1	10.3
It makes me feel special to be Part of a distinctive group	15.4	33.8	38.5	12.3
Provided a new way of relating to colleagues	13.3	36.4	40.5	9.8
I have met colleagues who help me do my job better	9.7	20.0	54.4	15.9
It has increased my chances of Being recognised at work	8.7	23.6	49.2	18.5
It has increased my chances of Promotion	1.0	3.6	59.0	36.4

When reflecting upon their experiences of Think Big, ESVs tend to have positive attitudes about its benefits for them. As Figure 6.5 shows, three quarters of participants looked forward to working on Think Big and more than two thirds felt that they were making a positive contribution to the community. Similarly, about 60 per cent agreed that they now felt like they were part of their community.

Figure 6.5   **Benefits of involvement in Think Big**
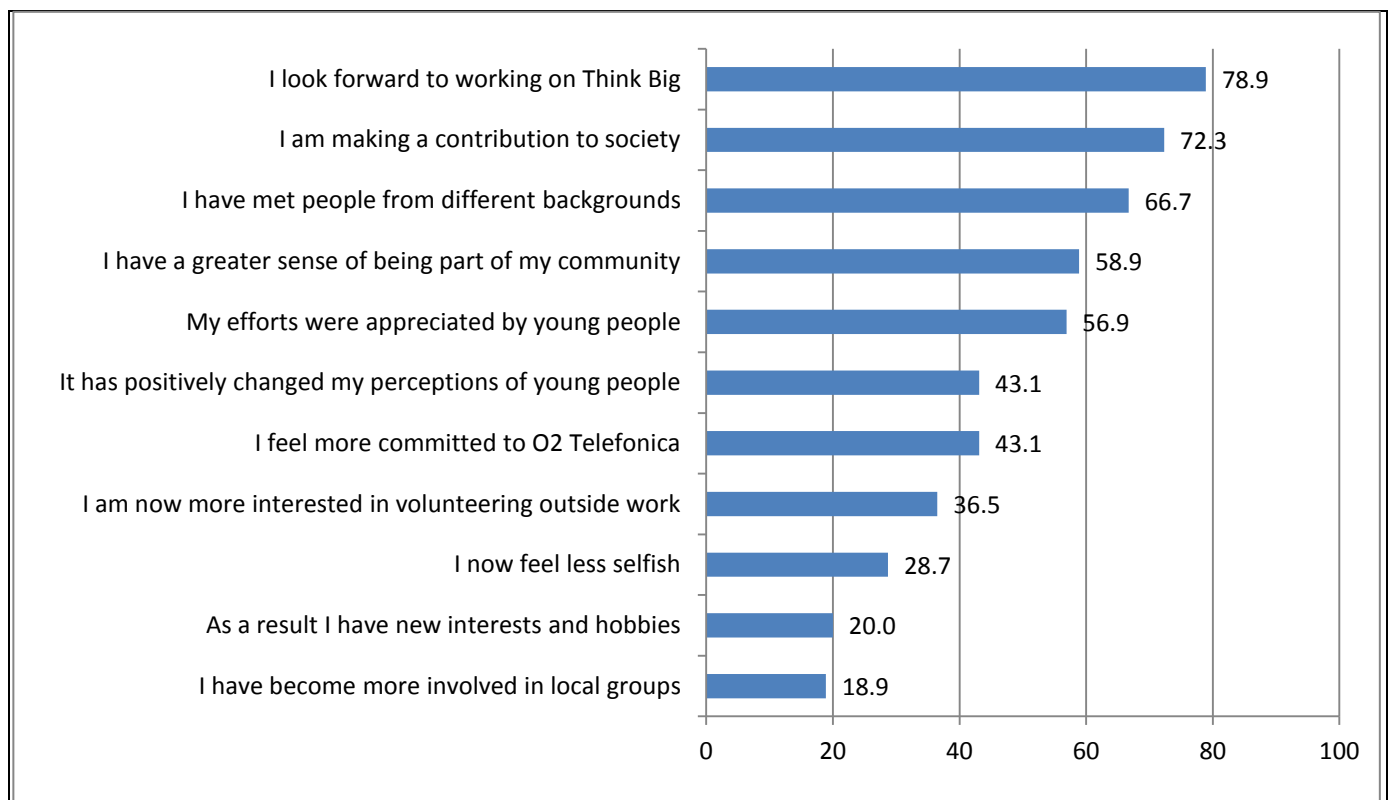
The commitment people make to Think Big can be substantial in terms of their out-of work hours contribution. An additional social benefit of this is that more than a third of participants agreed that they were more likely to get involved in voluntary work with external organisations. Indeed, almost 20 per cent of participants were already involved with outside organisations – although they may have had contact with such organisations before in some cases – the indications are that they have become more involved since participating in Think Big. Furthermore, nearly 60 per cent felt that their efforts were appreciated by the young people with whom they had come into contact. In turn, nearly 45 per cent agreed that involvement with Think Big had changed their perceptions of young people in a positive way. Qualitative research findings illustrate why they may take this view:

As evidence from focus groups indicate, it is hard for people to assess the impact of the contribution they have made to young people's lives. But for many ESVs there was a shared sense that changing attitudes was valuable in itself – the opening of young people's eyes to realistic opportunities. They also recognised, albeit in an unexpected way, how they had helped with this. The following dialogue between three members of a focus group illustrates this:

> *'I think if you are a mentor, or Helper, or whatever, it is about breaking down barriers – that's what it's about exactly. It's about people [who] feel like a failure they will be a failure and It's about that you can actually help, be instrumental, [to help] people see what steps they need to take to get there.'*

> *'Maybe sometimes, it's just about having someone to take an interest. Some people just aren't used to that. Getting on with things themselves without having people there who are caring where they go or what they do – so it can make a lot of difference.'*

> *'in my experience, the only adults they know are family – they have very few, well, objective adults. And I guess that's where we can produce some real value for them. I guess we have no axe to grind when talking to them about options or choices. There's no real judgement from us, which I don't think in a lot of case, they can get from [their family]. They can never get that impartial response.'*

Tackling negative stereotypes about young people cannot, arguably, be achieved simply by telling people that they are mistaken in their views. Instead, ideas change when people go through a learning journey independently and under their own volition. Furthermore, changed attitudes about young people helped them think about themselves in different ways to and could affect the way they related to colleagues at work:

> *'I think what was most surprising for me was that I just didn't have any awareness that there were all these projects, and I wasn't just affected by the information, the knowledge – but that you can't just categorise young people, you know the ones who are on the path to do academic work and have a great future and then these others who you see a hopeless cases, and then the others who you see as borderline delinquents. I've had my eyes opened, you know, they're not a bad lot, they've just had bad breaks. So I think that my views have change. Changed about colleagues in the workplace too. Interacting with people on the outside has made me see things differently here – I have found that I get less stressed in the workplace [laughs]. If I am getting wound up, I'm better at walking away for a few minutes and not making anything of it.'*

> *[many young people] 'have no relationship with people who work – 'third generation doleys' but have now got aspirations… We do forget, sometimes, that it's not that*

they just missed the boat - but that they've never been encouraged. In this day and age, there are still people who have no motivation to get out of their situation – so something like this helps to open a window so that they can see there's another way. I've had my eyes open, if the truth be told, like-attracts-like, so it's made me see things differently.'

Focus group participant recognised that the programme had gained in developmental terms. This could include the acquisition of particular skills – but more often, this was underlain by a strengthening of confidence.

'For me, it's got to be organisation skills. Before, I suppose, I wasn't really given the opportunity, but, before I used to think of rounding up a group of people and getting them all together, you know, planning and organising a task. I'd have thought, oh God, know, I can't do this. I'll leave it to someone else.'

'I don't know, I think it was the communication thing, it's not so much apprehension, as approaching people on different management levels from senior people right down to a junior analyst of something. But now, you know, I can do it with my hands tied and blind folded, it's not a big thing now.'

Communication across different levels within the hierarchy of an organisation is often a complex problem to overcome when concerned with formal issues which require decisions and action. Furthermore, organisational protocol can often limit the opportunities for people from different levels to meet. Think Big provides a less contentious environment within which to communicating, allowing for a more free flowing approach to information exchange. The involvement of people in unfamiliar settings doing voluntary work in unfamiliar ways also allows people to get to know each other in ways which might normally be more constrained. When observing volunteers in Leeds and London on the International Volunteering Day events, it was clearly evident that people at all levels of the company were relaxed in each other's company. The environment was informal and productive, people were dressed the same way in Think Big tee-shirts, and more often than not, people seemed to be having fun in each other's company.

'I think because I had Think Big to give me the opportunity to do it was, you know, not just about having to grab twenty people from different backgrounds who knew nothing about something, get them involved, get them interested and just get it happening, I can do it from A to Z now without thinking, oh gosh, you know, I can't do it.'

'I think for me, I come across really confident, but I'm not [in every context]. So now, like, I have to make presentations at monthly meetings – giving updates… Speaking out, presenting my own slides, I think I really really improved on that.'

'The good thing about Think Big is that whether you're skilled or not, you can still get involved, and I think that's a really good thing to have. So, you have to think to yourself 'how can I help?' rather than just shy away from it.'

'It gives everyone the opportunity to take part, no matter what your background.' 'Yes, exactly.'

'I mean you can be a school leaver, or someone like me, who's, like, in the middle of your career.'

Undoubtedly, in summary, the majority of participants in Think Big reported significant benefits for young people and the community, but they also felt that they had been affected too. Many felt less selfish than they had done previously through their involvement

(although this is difficult to interpret as many of those who did not agree may already have felt that they make a significant contribution to society through formal or informal social action). From a company perspective, it is also interesting to note that over 42 per cent of participants felt more positive about their employer than they had done previously.

ESVs perceptions of the wider social benefits of Think Big to young people are presented in Figure 6.2. The most important benefits, according to respondents, were the creation of new opportunities for young people and the development of their skills. These factors both refer to the practical benefits of Think Big for young people and relate closely to the experiences of ESVs when involved in the programme. About half of ESVs also felt that the programme made a strong contribution towards changing social attitudes by challenging negative stereotypes about young people on one hand, whilst encouraging young people to trust others on the other. The investment of time and money in Think Big was recognised too, with about a third of respondents believing that the programme had taken some pressure of public sector investment – however, only 7 per cent thought that this was a significant contribution.

Figure 6.6   **Contribution of Think Big to Young People**
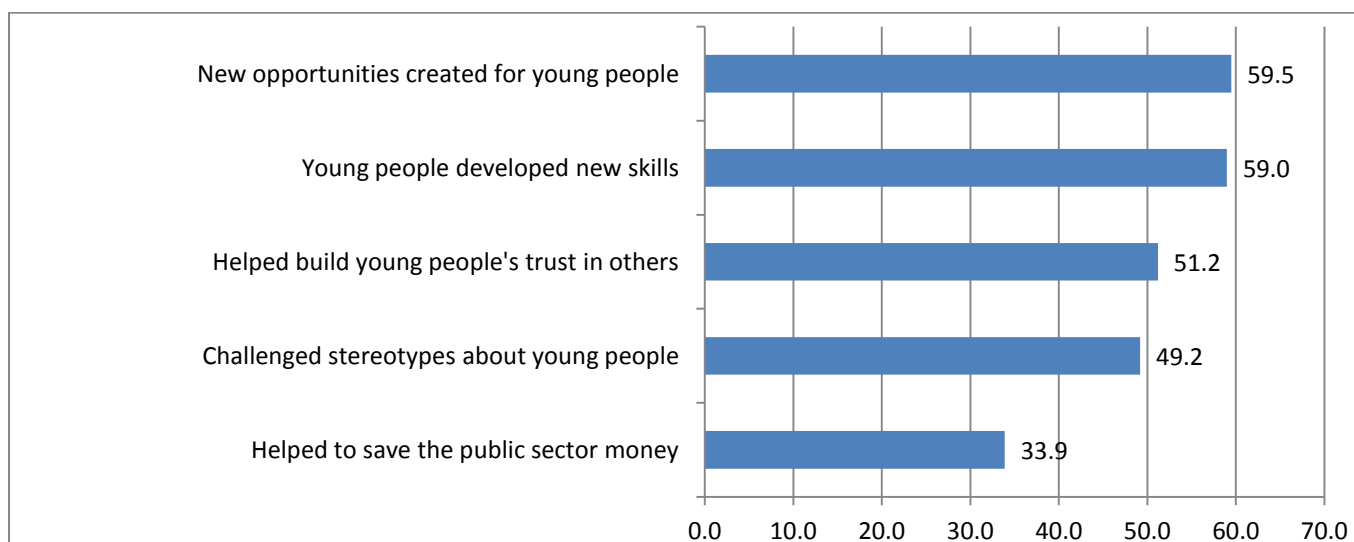

Benefits to the company

The Think Big programme's primary aim is to benefit young people and their communities, as indicated in the introduction to this report. However, as a CSR programme, the company also hopes to gain other benefits by improving its reputation with its customers and enhancing the commitment of its employees. Figure 6.7 shows that ESVs generally believe that Think Big has brought benefit to the company in both of these respects. Almost 85 per cent of respondents felt that the general public would have more positive attitudes about the company, and 84 per cent thought that Think Big demonstrated that O₂ had a sense of social purpose and that the work they did personally shows how the company helps communities. Furthermore 81 per cent of respondents stated that they would be willing to tell outsiders about the Think Big social programme. Just over 62 per cent of ESVs felt that they now felt more positive about the company themselves since being involved with Think Big.

Figure 6.7   **Benefits of Think Big for the company**
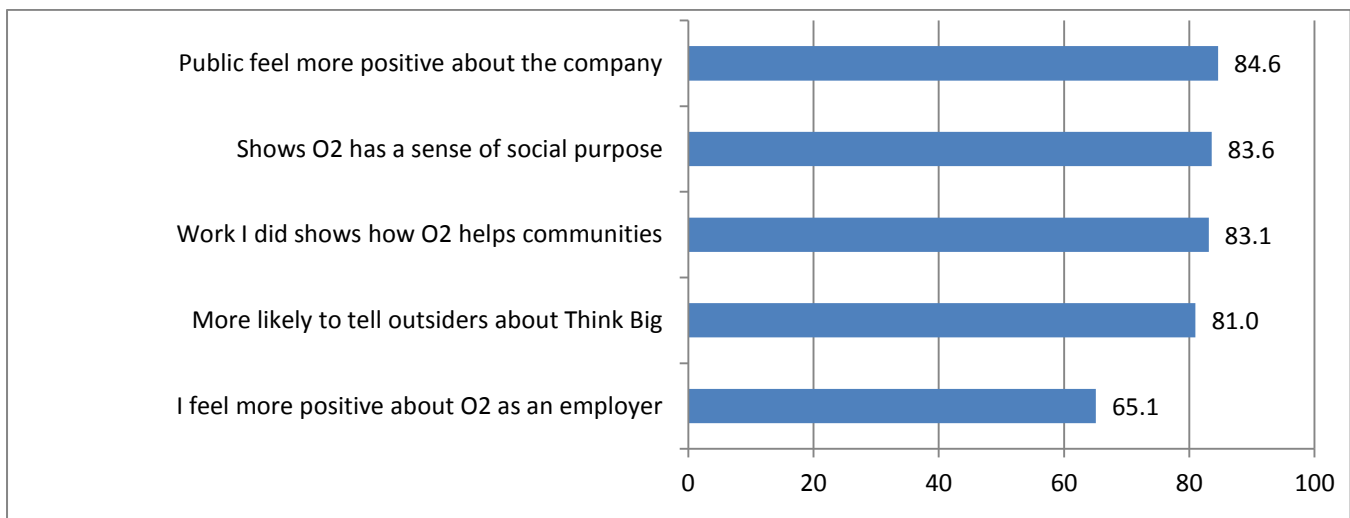
At the end of the first year of Think Big, ESVs expressed some disappointment that the programme had not fully taken off. They were impatient to become active and in some cases they feared that the programme might lose momentum and that they may lose interest too. A year on, focus group members had a good understanding of the aims of Think Big, they were committed to the programme and were keen to involve other people as well as to stay involved themselves. When asked what reactions they got from people they knew outside of the organisation, they could clearly state the benefits of the programme.

> *'I guess it's a distinct part of corporate social responsibility agenda. I guess that Think Big is one project that has a number of distinctive themes, including reusing and recycling, the social and community programme to encourage volunteering. So I think collectively that it's demonstrating that we have a distinct contribution to make to society. I get quite a lot of ribbing about signal quality and that kind of thing, but I get a lot of positive comments too – suggesting that it must be a great company to work for. It's largely because of our brand, it looks very cool, it's recognisable and it appeals particularly to younger people with the Academies, the O_2 and so on.'*

> *'it's about getting employees involved. It's quite varied the things they get us involved in, including six places in the London Marathon, that's exclusive to Telefõnica employees… It's good for brand reputation, its good all round, it's what's driving everything these days. I mean if you've got a company of this size not investing the time and effort, then there's something wrong with it.'*

A common theme in focus groups was to emphasis the forward looking approach of the company in a relatively new and fast changing area of business.

> *'I think the fact that O_2 is a telecommunications company makes a different, that it's part of the present and the future makes a real difference. It's not an old industry and they see it as going forward. At a local level they see what we're doing too, working with local hospitals and communities. I don't think they are relating it to corporate social responsibility, as such. No, they are relating it to the company giving something back – at the hospital, improving gardens and facilities and stuff like that - that's what people notice. You know, it's about tangible things, not just money going into a coffer and being given out with a grant here and a grant there.'*

Most focus group participants were aware of the CSR programmes of competitor companies (although they were much less well aware of companies' CSR programmes outside of the telecoms field), Interestingly, ESVs were often quite critical of other companies' approaches – arguing that they were short-term attention-seeking interventions.

> *'They do [CSR] but they don't have a social action programme for young people like we do. What differentiates us is that we're in it for the long term, not just a quick hit. In the current economic climate, where the situation is difficult for young people, we need to give them opportunities, skills and confidence and a voice.'*

Whether this is fair commentary or not is beyond the scope of this study, but the point it reveals is that ESVs felt pride in working for their company. Indeed, many argued that O₂ Think Big was significantly undersold in public relations terms, as one person said, 'we never really promote our CSR stuff' and felt that the company should do more to promote the good work it was doing.

> *'I think it does bring loyalty and pride in the company. If I was just doing my day job, then I would probably leave earlier, every day, in order to go off and do something else, outside work, to feel more complete.'*

An indication in the level of pride and commitment to Think Big and the company more widely is the response of focus group participants to questions about how people in their everyday lives perceive them. This exchange of views, indicates a mixed reaction – but emphasises the point that ESVs generally felt that working for the company raised their sense of social worth.

> *'Oh really, you're on O₂, can you get me a discount! And I'll go whoa whoa whoa! and they'll say, 'So you're the reason why my phones not working when I'm in, like, Salford trying to call someone in London...'*

> *'So you kind of get different reactions, but it's always up-beat, and I've never had someone, apart from the odd occasions when there's, something about the network…'*

> [TC: 'So they don't think that you work for a boring company?'].

> *'Oh, no no, never. There's O₂ Arena, and the Academies, that's the other aspect, then they're after tickets [laughter]. Or, it's 'Oh do you work on Bath Road? it's massive, it's brilliant - can you get me a job there?'*

> *'I've never had anyone have a bad word about Telefõnica or O₂, and that's not me being biased either.*

> *'When people find out about it, you know, they always think a little bit more of me, that's quite impressive.'*

> *'Yeah, it is impressive, yeah.'*

> *'And it's only happened a couple of times, but when people have heard about Think Big, you know… you know, they're impressed and I never really expected that.'*

> *'I think it's seen as impressive, spot on, with one of the highest profile consumer brands and they get that. Seeing us as progressive and a creative place to work.'*

To some extent, the experience of volunteering on the Think Big programme differed for ESVs because they worked in different environments. Two principal site offices of O₂ Telefónica were chosen for study which had very different characteristics. At the Slough site, which is the houses the main strategic core elements of company activity, ESVs tended to work in a wide range of occupations and departments. And even though the site

is very large, employing many people, experiences of work are disparate and varied vertically and horizontally within the organisational structure. Furthermore, staff at Slough tended to live in a wide area – often involving long travel to work journeys.

In Preston Brook, by contrast, the working environment was more uniform. Preston Brook is a call centre and a large employer. Its staff work in a narrower range of occupations and the occupational hierarchy is less pronounced than at Slough. From focus group discussion, it was also evident that people were much more likely to live in the vicinity of the workplace – meaning that they had a stronger collective identification with the surrounding community than was the case in Slough. Many of them had also lived in the area most of their lives and had generally been employed by Telefónica for many years too. This produced a stronger sense of an occupational community which had a clear impact on the way that Think Big was working. There was a very strong collective sense of ownership of the programme and a clear mission and determination to make a difference to the local community.

In Slough, many local community issues were also attended to through Think Big, but there appeared to be a weaker sense of collective ownership. This is not to say that one site was doing better than the other. They were different. In Slough, the development of Think Big is characterised by its diversity of activity – reaching a range of people and doing things in different ways. This suited staff who were, arguably, less able to commit wholeheartedly to a collective effort. But they found other ways around this.

Preston Brook, arguably, was making a big impact in a narrower range of activities and areas – but the depth of involvement was greater. As the evaluation progresses in 2012, other centres of O_2 Telefónica activity will be visited to find out what kinds of practices are emerging – with a view to encouraging a sharing of methods, in appropriate contexts, as the programme rolls out further in 2013.

Summary of findings

Many ESVs were keen to find an opportunity to get involved in volunteering and Think Big provided a route to achieve this objective. 61% ESVs in the survey had previously volunteered.

Nearly half of participants were encouraged by friends and colleagues in the company who were getting involved. A significant minority, 36%, were encouraged to get involved by their line manager.

Altruistic motivations are more important to ESVs than instrumental ones. Nearly 90 per cent of respondents wanted to make a positive contribution to society; well over two thirds wanted to get more involved with their communities; and, nearly a half wanted specifically to work with young people.

Personal development is important to them too: about a half of ESVs wanted to learn new skills and over 60 per cent wanted to improve their personal management skills.

Well over 60 per cent of respondents felt that Think Big had helped them feel more a part of their community and about 58 per cent felt that they had a stronger understanding of social issues.

About half felt that they were more able to have new experiences and were willing try to do new things - suggesting a broadening of outlook, building self confidence and strengthening of pro-sociality.

Being involved with Think Big has a positive impact on ESVs feelings about their working lives and relationships with immediate colleagues and the company more generally.

Almost half of survey respondents felt that Think Big had made them feel like they were part of a distinctive social group and that Think Big had become part of the 'social glue' of the organisation.

Many ESVs make a significant out-of-work time commitment to Think Big. More than a third of participants said that they were now more likely to get involved in voluntary work with external organisations.

Nearly 45 per cent of ESVs agreed that involvement with Think Big had changed their perceptions of young people in a positive way.

Changed attitudes about young people helped ESVs to think about themselves in different ways and could affect the way they related to colleagues at work:

> *'I think what was most surprising for me was that... you can't just categorise young people, you know the ones who are on the path to do academic work and have a great future and then these others who you see a hopeless cases, and then the others who you see as borderline delinquents. I've had my eyes opened, you know, they're not a bad lot, they've just had bad breaks. So I think that my views have change. Changed about colleagues in the workplace too. Interacting with people on the outside has made me see things differently here – I have found that I get less stressed in the workplace [laughs]. If I am getting wound up, I'm better at walking away for a few minutes and not making anything of it.'*

ESVs generally believe that Think Big has brought benefit to the company: almost 85 per cent of respondents felt that the general public would have more positive attitudes about the company, and 84 per cent thought that Think Big demonstrated that O₂ had a sense of social purpose and that the work they did personally shows how the company helps communities.

Section Seven
Summary and conclusions

This report shows that Think Big has matured as a successful social programme. It was ambitious from the start in scope, which set its key partner organisations very significant challenges. Because it is innovative in its approach, enormous effort had to be put in to develop the systems, processes and support mechanisms to get it up and running. Furthermore, when things didn't work out first time – compromise, flexibility and creativity was needed to get the programme in shape. This has been something of a voyage of discovery, not merely the delivery of a set of outputs.

Many CSR programmes are much less ambitious. Often they are short term and involve handing money over to an organisation to do more of what they already do – a form of corporate sponsorship. Others put money in fast into things which get a quick win. Think Big, on the other hand, is in for the long term. It has allowed itself to evolve into a programme which will get better as it grows and have more impact too.

The process is not yet complete. The programme is now being rolled out across six European countries which will throw up many new challenges. And in the UK, where the programme began, there is much yet to do. The Alumni programme is developing fast now – which needs to be evaluated over the next year. The role of partner organisations needs to be explored in more detail – to see which organisations are having the biggest impact – and finding out if what they do can be adopted by others. Think Bigger is now getting off the ground – so we need to see what works well for young people and what makes the biggest difference for society. We still need to know more about the longer-term impact on young people's skills, confidence and resilience – which means capitalising on opportunities for more in depth qualitative analysis.

Last year, the headline finding of the report was that investing trust in young people paid the biggest dividends. I think it is important to keep that in mind as the programme evolves. This year, one of the key messages is that young people and older people (in the guise of employee supported volunteers) are capable of challenging their stereotypes and tackling their prejudices – so that they can both understand and appreciate other young people more. It's a key objective of the programme - but it's not the most important message.

In the 2011 report, it was stated that the programme could not have come at a better time as unemployment was rising. In reality, this was just the start – unemployment has rocketed since then and this is having a strong impact on young people's hope and confidence about the future. They know, no matter how hard they try, that there is a risk that they will not get a good job – or perhaps a job of any kind for some time to come.

In times like these, it is easy to become fatalistic – trust in luck not personal effort. So young people need to be resilient. And that resilience will help them make better choices when opportunities come their way – or be able to manage their lives more successfully when they don't. Think Big, in my view, is making a very important contribution to young people by helping them build their resilience. That is the key finding of this year's study.

Young people and life transitions

Much of the evidence on young people's attitudes, as a whole, suggests that they share similar aspirations – a good long-term relationship; a decent home in a safe neighbourhood; a job with reasonable security, pay and prospects; and, a good for start in life for their children if they have them now or intend to have them one day in the future. So it is tempting to assume that if young people work hard and make the right choices – they will have an equal chance of achieving what they want. But it's not that simple. A range of factors can block their progress and stop them thinking about, or knowing about, some options in the first place.

Making successful transitions from childhood to adulthood requires young people to make good decisions about how they want to shape their future and act on these decisions in a positive way. Such decisions are made in the context of the opportunity structures that are available (or perceived to be available) to young people.

Making such decisions involves choices which may be inherently risky. Risks might include the possibility (or even the probability in some contexts) of failure and disappointment. Not taking risks, by the same token can also have damaging consequences. There are few prospects available for achieving success for those people who are not prepared to take a chance.

Taking risks which may lead to positive outcomes requires young people to have self-belief and confidence. Affluence, as noted above, produces a higher degree certainty and stability in people's lives – it affords opportunities to plan ahead, build stocks of human and social capital, experiment with alternatives and have a safety net if things do not work out first time around.

Deprivation, by contrast, limits the prospects of planning ahead and increases insecurity, closes down possibilities for building social and human capital, and restricts the range of opportunities available to them.

Being positive about young people, all young people, is the key to challenging society's (and often young people's own expectations) about what they can reasonably be expected achieve. Building young people's assets to bolster resilience is a central part of this process so that good choices can be made within the range of opportunities that are open to young people.

This report has provided an evaluation of an 'open programme' for all young people who choose to take part – but in so doing, it recognises that some of these young people may have strong personal assets at the outset, while others have few. But it is not assumed that these differences will translate into particular outcomes for individuals – on the contrary, the point of the research, as it proceeds over the years, it to assess many different and often unpredictable sources of benefit emerging from participation.

Achievements of Think Big: key findings

The volume of Think Big project applications and approvals are as follows:

- In 2010 there were 1,037 completed applications, of which 338 were awarded Think Big project grants in 2010.

- In 2011 there were 2,498 completed applications, of which 1,370 had been awarded Think Big grants by the end of December 2011.

- The total number of Think Big completed applications by the end of December 2011is 3,535, of which 1,708 have been awarded grants.

- In 2011 there were 120 Think Bigger applications, of which 70 were awarded Think Bigger project grants.

It is estimated that for the programme as a whole:

- About 3,400 young people have been involved in the project in leadership roles.

- About 29,890 young people have benefitted as participants in the programme.

The programme is socially inclusive:

- Applications are being received from each UK Nation and English region broadly in proportion to population. The exceptions are London where applications are about twice as high than would be expected by population estimates, and Scotland where only half as many projects are received as would be expected.

- Applications and awards by gender are equal. Applications from ethnic minority groups are also broadly similar by gender, except amongst Asians where male applications are about 25% higher. The success rate of female Asians is about 15% higher than for males.

- In 2011 the age distribution of applications was relatively balanced with 19% from 13-16 years, 30% for 16-18 years, 22% for 19-21years and 29% for the over 22 years. Awards of projects were not significantly dissimilar. Partner organisations tended to introduce young people aged 15-18 years into the programme. For the over 18s, most Awards were made to young people who made open applications

- Disabled young people, or young people with limiting illnesses currently make up about 5% of applications and awards. Similar numbers of applications come through open applications or via youth partner organisations.

- About 33% of participants in Think Big have achieved A Level qualifications or degrees. By contrast 24% have no qualifications and 17% have fewer than 5 GCSEs at A-C.

- The programme reaches all ethnic minority groups successfully. The programme is particularly successful at making awards to Asian and Black young people – especially from the most deprived quintile of the Index of Multiple Deprivation. White young people, and young men in particular, are less well represented in the more deprived communities.

- The distribution of projects by the Index of Multiple Deprivation indicate that the programme is successful in meeting its ambitions. 34% of awards come from the two most deprived deciles in the Index of Multiple Deprivation, and 57% from the four most deprived deciles (7% above target for the programme.

Social return on investment: key findings

The value of the programme has been assessed using methods broadly in line with those adopted by Social Return on Investment (SROI) practitioners. This aspect of the analysis is still in its early stages and estimates given may rise or fall once more is understood about the impact of the programme.

It is recognised that measuring the 'economic value' and 'social value' of interventions is difficult. But a range of quantitative indicators are used, and judgements on value are informed by intensive qualitative research. Data used include:

▪ *Data on programme volumes* – including the numbers of: projects started, young people trained and supported, project leaders, active participants and benefitting participants.

▪ *Biographical information on young people in the programme* – including age, gender, ethnicity, disability, employment and education status, educational achievement, and socio economic status as indicated by the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

▪ *Attitudinal data on young people in the programme* – data are collected on: pro-sociality; expectations and experiences of the programme; perceptions of person skills and attributes; and, confidence about the future.

▪ *Data on the involvement of employee supported volunteers*, including information on the impact of the programme on their changed attitudes towards young people.

The assessment is made on the basis of impact against the following assumptions that Think Big can help:

▪ young people feel more hopeful and confident (which may help them tackle problems/opportunities in a positive way).

▪ young people to become more resilient (so that they have the emotional strength to get through difficult times and make good choices).

▪ challenge negative stereotypes about young people (by showing that they can make a positive difference to community).

▪ young people in the programme develop employability skills which may help them get a job or spur them on to complete or start education and training.

It is estimated that the value of time invested by young people can be valued at £4.4m; that the pro-bono support by partner organisations is valued at £80,000; the value of time invested by employee supported volunteers is £1.175m.

On the basis of weighting data to account for the added value to the programme by reaching young people with fewer opportunities (measured by their position in the Index of Multiple Deprivation), it is estimated that this adds over 56% additional value to the programme.

When the value of the impact is set against the cost of programme delivery by O₂ Telefónica, it is estimated that the value of the investment is increased by about 290%, about three times the cost of the programme

The impact of the programme on young people's confidence, attitudes and beliefs is significant as indicated by Figure

▪ 85 per cent of young people cared more about their community by the end of the project

▪ 75 per cent have widening horizons – indicated by their willingness to state that they look at the world in a different way.

- Over two thirds state that they are now willing to try to do new things and that they have learned new skills.
- Just short of two thirds of young people say that they have met other young people from different social backgrounds
- While young people understandably feel worried about their future, after taking part in Think Big, 55% feel more confident about their future.

How young people benefit Think Big: key findings

The aim of the programme is to encourage young people to think up ideas on projects which are important to them and set themselves challenges. This 'youth led' approach is appreciated by participants – but they also welcome the support they get as well.

Think Big helps young people by improving their own skills – but also inspires them to behave altruistically.

The ability to empathise with other young people and to bring them together to have new experiences was recognised by many as a significant benefit of the programme.

Having a voice and being taken seriously is important for many young people. When young people do get the opportunity to engage with a wider constituency of people, they benefit from this in terms of building their confidence.

Many young people involved with Think Big were genuinely surprised that they can make a difference by challenging stereotypes. Challenging negative stereotypes about young people was particularly important, following the riots in several UK cities in July 2011.

Young people wanted it to be recognised that they are socially responsible citizens and that they have the potential to make a positive difference to society.

Unlocking young people's leadership potential and building their confidence is an important element of the aims of Think Big. Without that confidence, they would not have the authority to motivate others to get involved and stay involved in their projects.

Developing soft skills such as the ability to lead and motivate others requires young people to have a stronger sense of self belief and the ability to convince others that they can be trusted to get things done.

Participants felt valued and trusted by being involved in Think Big. The investment of trust by giving young people responsibility for managing money, was a highly valued aspect of the programme.

Experiencing Think Bigger: key findings

The second level of the programme, Think Bigger, provides young people with £2,500 worth of funding to do project work. To qualify for this level of funding, they must first have successfully completed a Think Big project.

The higher level of investment puts more demand on young people to invest in their own development at residential courses, run by UK Youth. The residential helps to cement a community of practice so that project leaders can draw on each other's advice and experience as their projects developed.

Residential training gave young people a lasting sense of confidence to get their project done. This was particularly important in relation to their ability to communicate with people at different levels.

Building realism into their project planning was supported by their O₂ Helpers who were present at the residential. Subsequently, Helpers gave project leaders a great deal of support in many cases. In some cases reliance on Helpers was considerable, but this support was gladly given.

Being seen to have completed their projects successfully was important for participants. Many talked about their experiences in terms of a 'rite of passage'. In some cases, this produced effusive testimonials.

> *'It's really made me who I am now, it's really shaped me. I mean, I know I was doing it while I was doing my GCSE's as well… but anyone can get qualifications but not anyone can do that - actually gain funding. I had an amazing experience and it wasn't just about me as well - it was about everyone - which I really liked. Yeah, it was just amazing.'*

As was shown to be the case amongst the Think Big project leaders, participants in Think Bigger felt the investment by O₂ was important to them in more ways than just the investment of funding.

> *'It's been a great experience it's helped me in a lot of ways... It's done a lot more than, like a lot of people just write cheques to me and you go and do your work and come back with a form but this has been much more like, it's been really involved... they have a genuine concern of the kids I'm trying to help rather than just like signing off a cheque they're a lot more than that, but everybody as well not just the O₂ people but the UK Youth people. I almost feel like I have a personal relationship with the individuals and they all genuinely have a concern for what I'm doing.'*

The role of employee volunteers: key findings

Many ESVs were keen to find an opportunity to get involved in volunteering and Think Big provided a route to achieve this objective. 61% ESVs in the survey had previously volunteered.

Nearly half of participants were encouraged by friends and colleagues in the company who were getting involved. A significant minority, 36%, were encouraged to get involved by their line manager.

Altruistic motivations are more important to ESVs than instrumental ones. Nearly 90 per cent of respondents wanted to make a positive contribution to society; well over two thirds wanted to get more involved with their communities; and, nearly a half wanted specifically to work with young people.

Personal development is important to them too: about a half of ESVs wanted to learn new skills and over 60 per cent wanted to improve their personal management skills.

Well over 60 per cent of respondents felt that Think Big had helped them feel more a part of their community and about 58 per cent felt that they had a stronger understanding of social issues.

About half felt that they were more able to have new experiences and were willing try to do new things - suggesting a broadening of outlook, building self confidence and strengthening of pro-sociality.

Being involved with Think Big has a positive impact on ESVs feelings about their working lives and relationships with immediate colleagues and the company more generally.

Almost half of survey respondents felt that Think Big had made them feel like they were part of a distinctive social group and that Think Big had become part of the 'social glue' of the organisation.

Many ESVs make a significant out-of-work time commitment to Think Big. More than a third of participants said that they were now more likely to get involved in voluntary work with external organisations.

Nearly 45 per cent of ESVs agreed that involvement with Think Big had changed their perceptions of young people in a positive way.

Changed attitudes about young people helped ESVs to think about themselves in different ways and could affect the way they related to colleagues at work:

> *'I think what was most surprising for me was that... you can't just categorise young people, you know the ones who are on the path to do academic work and have a great future and then these others who you see a hopeless cases, and then the others who you see as borderline delinquents. I've had my eyes opened, you know, they're not a bad lot, they've just had bad breaks. So I think that my views have change. Changed about colleagues in the workplace too. Interacting with people on the outside has made me see things differently here – I have found that I get less stressed in the workplace [laughs]. If I am getting wound up, I'm better at walking away for a few minutes and not making anything of it.'*

ESVs generally believe that Think Big has brought benefit to the company: almost 85 per cent of respondents felt that the general public would have more positive attitudes about the company, and 84 per cent thought that Think Big demonstrated that O_2 had a sense of social purpose and that the work they did personally shows how the company helps communities.

Section Eight
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