

Enriching Education Recovery

The role of non-formal learning, extra-curricular and enrichment activities in driving a transformational catch-up experience for children and young people

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About this paper

Convenors



The Centre
for Education
& Youth

In partnership with



This discussion paper is the outcome of an initiative convened by NCS Trust in partnership with the Centre for Education and Youth to explore and support discussion and thinking on how non-formal learning opportunities can be an integral part of education recovery ambitions.

The Centre for Education and Youth reviewed the evidence base on the impacts of Covid-19 on children and young people and the positive effects of non-formal learning on children and young people's outcomes, as well as outlining a series of areas for further consideration in increasing access.

NCS Trust and CfEY also brought together a diverse range of experts at a workshop on 17th September 2021 to discuss the evidence and promote dialogue. The discussion paper has incorporated the insights and reflections shared at that session, and explores a range of opportunities for expanding the provision of non-formal learning for children and young people.

With thanks to

The following organisations engaged with this discussion paper and welcome it as a helpful contribution to ongoing discussions on how to deliver a transformational catch-up experience for children and young people:



The following experts have all provided invaluable insights throughout this process and have been consulted and engaged in the development of this paper:

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Note that neither the convenors nor those who have been involved and engaged necessarily endorse everything in this paper, which is a discussion paper and presents a range of evidence and areas for further exploration.

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Executive Summary

1) The government is rightly investing in academic catch-up to mitigate the long-term costs of lost formal learning during the pandemic

In England today, young people are predicted to lose up to £50,000 in lifetime earnings due to lost learning during the pandemic. Youth unemployment, wage scarring and reduced tax revenues are projected to cost the government more than £14 billion over the next 7 years. The catch-up premium, National Tutoring Programme and recovery premium are helping to reduce these impacts of lost formal learning.

2) Even if young people catch up on formal, academic learning, their wider learning and development remains at risk

Young people need more than good grades to make a successful transition to adulthood. Too many young people are held back by poor mental and physical health, and a lack of life skills such as leadership, communication and decision making. Looking ahead, two thirds of the UK workforce are projected to be lacking in key life skills by 2030 - costing the economy over £8 billion a year.

3) Increasing access to non-formal learning (NFL) drives positive outcomes for children and young people and can be a core component of education recovery

There is robust evidence linking NFL¹ to improved educational outcomes, employment prospects, and physical and mental health. Investment in this area can also deliver economic benefits in the longer-term through improving educational outcomes and life skills leading to greater productivity; reduced costs of social care and creating a stimulus for NFL providers.

4) There is a high level of support among children and young people, parents and teachers for improved access to extracurricular and enrichment opportunities

Recent polling shows that - whilst people recognise that children and young people need extra support with formal, academic catch up (58% of teachers surveyed agree with this, along with 63% of parents, and 68% of children and young people) - even larger proportions agree with the need for more access to extracurricular activities and wider learning experiences: almost 9 in 10 teachers (88%), and 8 in 10 parents and children and young people (78% and 80% respectively) want to see more around this.

5) Community-based provision is crucial in reaching marginalised young people who are more likely to engage with opportunities outside school

For many children and young people, particularly the most marginalised and vulnerable, the opportunity afforded by non-formal learning is enhanced through it taking place off school grounds. Out-of-school activities, youth clubs and youth workers are all part of the fabric of a non-formal learning 'offer' that extends beyond the school gates and is delivered by trusted adults who are not teachers.

6) Further embedding non-formal learning in schools and the education system also presents an opportunity to expand access

Polling shows there is appetite among children, parents and teachers for extracurricular and enrichment activities to be a more integral part of the existing school day. There is an opportunity for schools to offer a gateway for children and young people to access NFL both within the school, as well as connecting them to off-site opportunities. Frameworks, guidance and benchmarks could effectively support this - including exploring Ofsted's role in further supporting schools to understand what constitutes excellence in non-formal learning.

¹ Non-formal learning is a broad term for learning experiences that take place outside of a formal or academic setting - including a wide range of extra-curricular activities, outdoor pursuits and trips away from home, music and drama lessons, debating and public speaking, attending a youth club and engaging with a youth worker. In the school context it is often also referred to as 'enrichment'.

7) Partnerships and collaboration between the non-formal and education sectors hold much promise

The expertise of specialist providers of non-formal learning is well-recognised, with polling showing that children and young people, parents and teachers are all in favour of schools partnering with specialist external organisations to deliver these activities. Leadership and coordination at a strategic level - including the kinds of cross-sector initiative that has led to this discussion paper - can help to build bridges across sectors that enable better partnerships. At an operational level, the role of Partnerships Managers in schools has been shown to be effective, and digital platforms could be explored to enable schools to better understand and connect with the non-formal learning 'landscape' at both a community and national level.

8) There is a diverse range of funding opportunities and approaches that could help to scale-up NFL in a community and school setting.

The £500 million Youth Investment Fund has huge potential to expand non-formal learning provision in communities. There are also funding avenues to be explored in the education system - from central grants (learning from the approach of the Character Grants), to an 'enrichment premium' for disadvantaged pupils (following the model of the pupil premium) as well as a bursary scheme as proposed by the Social Mobility Commission, with funds going directly to low-income families.

9) Engaging children and young people themselves will help to build an inclusive and sustainable education recovery plan

Children and young people have been engaged at multiple points in the development of this discussion paper - including through polling over 1000 9-18 year olds, and also involving young people in stakeholder workshops. This has helped to build a better understanding of their overall enthusiasm for enrichment opportunities and how they prefer to access them. Continuing this kind of engagement will provide invaluable insights for education recovery plans.

1 The impact of Covid-19 on young people's educational, employment, health and social outcomes

The pandemic has had a significant impact on children and young people's education, employment prospects, and physical and mental health, as well as exacerbating the risk factors for involvement in violent crime.

Education

Pre-pandemic, disadvantaged pupils were more than 1.5 years behind their more advantaged peers in educational attainment by the time they finished their GCSEs². Studies over the course of the coronavirus pandemic highlight that this achievement gap has widened. The Education Policy Institute's analysis highlights that pupils had experienced a loss of up to two months of learning in reading (in primary and secondary schools) and up to three months in maths (in primary schools only)³. Between Autumn 2019 and Autumn 2020, research by Education Datalab and Teacher Tapp found that the achievement gap in maths widened from 10% to 24% between high achieving and lower achieving pupils⁴. When measured in Autumn term 2020, this gap showed no signs of receding.

These learning losses are felt most sharply by students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Secondary schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged students have experienced 50% more learning loss than schools serving more advantaged communities⁵. At primary, some estimates suggest that between a third and two thirds of the progress made over the past decade in closing the achievement gap has been lost⁶. In principle, this would set the UK back 10 years in improving overall educational outcomes for its young people.

The OECD's 2010 analysis concludes that lower academic achievement in a population leads to lower economic growth. This represents major wastage in the economy and loss of economic opportunity. According to estimates, a 25-point increase in PISA performance (an international measure of academic ability and attainment) in the UK could contribute to a further 5% of growth in the UK economy by 2030⁷. This would lead to £10 billion of increased economic productivity over the next 10 years.

Covid **has almost completely reversed the past 10 years of progress** in closing the achievement gap between well-off and poorer students.



3



Pupils have lost up to **two months** of learning in reading and **three months** in maths.

2



Schools with a high portion of poor students have **50% more learning loss** than those with a low proportion.

Improving academic achievement in the UK by 25-points on the international measure of PISA could add **5% of growth to the UK economy** in the next 10 years (\$14 billion to UK GDP).



² Hutchinson, J., Reader, M., & Akhal, A. (2020). Education in England: Annual Report 2020. Education Policy Institute. <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/education-in-england-annual-report-2020/>

³ Department for Education. (2021). Pupils' progress in the 2020 to 2021 academic year: interim report. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupils-progress-in-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year-interim-report>

⁴ Weidmann, B., Allen, R., Bibby, D., Coe, R., James, L., Plaister, N., Thomson, D. (2021) Covid-19 disruptions, Attainment gaps and primary school responses. Education Endowment Foundation. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Covid-19_disruptions_attainment_gaps_and_primary_school_responses_-_May_2021.pdf

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Education Endowment Foundation. (2021). Best evidence on impact of Covid-19 on pupil attainment. <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/eef-support-for-schools/covid-19-resources/best-evidence-on-impact-of-school-closures-on-the-attainment-gap/>

⁷ OECD. (2010). The High Cost of Low Education Performance. <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/44417824.pdf>

Employment

Covid-19 has significantly disrupted young people's employment prospects. Despite recent improvements, some estimates suggest that long-term youth unemployment could rise back up to around 500,000⁸ over time. This could result in new entrants into the labour market from school and college encountering a much more competitive landscape than in previous years. Analysis from the Education Policy Institute estimates that pupils in England could see a loss in future income of £8,000 - £50,000 due to learning lost from the pandemic⁹. The Institute for Fiscal Studies goes further, suggesting that young people's employment prospects have been so "severely dented" that £350 billion in lifelong earnings could be lost across the economy¹⁰.

As elsewhere, damage to employment opportunities will affect young people from poorer and ethnic minority backgrounds the most¹¹. These groups already enter the job market at a relative disadvantage, and lost educational opportunities over the course of the pandemic is likely to exacerbate this inequality¹².

Forecasts from the Learning and Work Institute estimate that increased youth unemployment could cost the economy £5.9bn in lost output in 2021 and £6.9bn in 2022, only falling to £2.1bn by 2025¹³. Youth unemployment will result in lower tax revenue alongside higher benefit spending, with an increase to £2.5bn in 2021, peaking at £2.9bn in 2022. Overall, scarring effects on young peoples' wages will cost a likely total of £14.4 billion over the next 7 years¹⁴.

The pandemic has **"severely dented"** the career opportunities of young people.

The job market for young people has become more competitive, meaning **more are likely to be unemployed or in low-quality work.**



Pupils could lose **£8,000 - £50,000** to lifelong earnings, due to lost learning from the pandemic.

Ethnic minorities and young people from poorer backgrounds stand to struggle the most.



Youth unemployment, wage scarring and reduced tax revenue could cost the government **£14.4 billion over the next 7 years.**

⁸ Learning and Work Institute. (2020). Emergency Exit: How We Get Britain Back To Work. <https://learningandwork.org.uk/resources/research-and-reports/emergency-exit-how-we-get-britain-back-to-work/>

⁹ Education Policy Institute. (2021). Analysis paper: preliminary research findings on education recovery. <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/analysis-paper-preliminary-research-findings-on-education-recovery/>

¹⁰ Institute for Fiscal Studies. (2020). COVID-19 and the career prospects of young people. <https://ifs.org.uk/uploads/BN299-COVID-19-and-the-career-prospects-of-young-people-1.pdf>

¹¹ Learning and Work Institute. (2021). Facing the future: employment prospects for young people after Coronavirus. <https://learningandwork.org.uk/resources/research-and-reports/facing-the-future-employment-prospects-for-young-people-after-coronavirus/>

¹² Resolution Foundation. (2021). Double Trouble: Exploring the labour market and mental health impact of Covid-19 on young people. <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/double-trouble/>

¹³ Learning and Work Institute. (2021). Facing the future: employment prospects for young people after Coronavirus. <https://learningandwork.org.uk/resources/research-and-reports/facing-the-future-employment-prospects-for-young-people-after-coronavirus/>

¹⁴ Learning and Work Institute (2021), op cit.

Mental and physical Health

Covid-19's impact on young people's mental health has been a topic of considerable research and discussion over the course of the pandemic. Pre-pandemic, as many as one in six 5–19-year-olds had at least one mental health problem¹⁵. Subsequent research conducted by the Royal College of Psychiatrists claims that the highest number ever of young people referred for mental health help occurred between April and December 2020¹⁶, suggesting that this incidence rate has worsened significantly.

Loneliness is a pronounced problem among young people, with accompanying negative mental health effects. According to the Department for Digital Culture, Media & Sport, 16–24-year-olds are the loneliest age group – 37% reported being lonely 'always or some of the time' compared to the population average of 25%¹⁷. Disadvantaged young people are at highest risk of mental health issues, with those from the poorest 20% of households being four times more likely to have serious mental health problems by age 11 than the wealthiest 20%¹⁸.

When it comes to physical health, research by Bite Back in partnership with Guys and St. Thomas' Trust has found that young people, especially those from less well-off backgrounds, were more likely to eat junk food and takeaways over lockdown, whilst also being less likely to consume fruits and vegetables¹⁹. In tandem, some evidence suggests that young people's physical activity is low. A survey of parents in March of this year found that over half of parents of primary-aged children and two thirds of secondary-aged think their children do too little exercise²⁰. The same survey found that only 15% of primary schools offer sports-related clubs and 6% of secondaries.

This pattern in unhealthy behaviour takes place against a background of an advancing epidemic of childhood obesity in the UK²¹. According to the NHS, 20% of English year 6 children are classified as obese, with prevalence more than doubling in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived²².

For older age groups, a third of teens in the UK have excess weight (either overweight or obese) as they enter adulthood²³. This pattern represents a grave public health issue.

The European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies estimates that poor diet and low physical activity in the UK costs the government between £7.3 and £8.1 billion every year in economic costs²⁴. In an even more staggering figure, poor mental health is already estimated to cost the government £105 billion a year (including costs to the NHS; reduced educational outcomes, employment and productivity; and increased crime)²⁵.



The UK is experiencing a childhood obesity epidemic – **1/3 of teens enter adulthood overweight.**

Most parents believe their child does too little exercise. Only **15% of primary schools** and **6% of secondaries** offer sports-related clubs.



Between April and December 2020, more young people were referred for mental health help **than ever before.**

Children from the **poorest 20%** are **four times more likely** to have serious mental health issues by the age of 11.



Poor diet and low exercise cost the government between **£7.3 and £8.1 billion a year**, while mental health issues cost **£105 billion.**

¹⁵ NHS Digital. (2020). Mental Health of Children and Young People in England. <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2020-wave-1-follow-up>
¹⁶ Royal College of Psychiatrists. (2021). Country in the grip of a mental health crisis with children worst affected, new analysis finds [Press Release]. <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/news-and-features/latest-news/detail/2021/04/08/country-in-the-grip-of-a-mental-health-crisis-with-children-worst-affected-new-analysis-finds>

¹⁷ Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. (2021). Community Life Survey 2020/21. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-202021>

¹⁸ Centre for Mental Health. (2015). Children of the new century Mental health findings from the Millennium Cohort Study. <https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-09/newcentury.pdf>

¹⁹ Bite Back. (2020). Hungry for Change. <https://biteback2030.com/real-story/hungry-change-giving-children-food-system-works-them>

²⁰ Parent Ping. (2021, March 15). Healthy body, healthy mind? <https://parentping.co.uk/healthy-body-healthy-mind/>

²¹ Royal Society for Public Health. (2015). Tackling the UK's childhood obesity epidemic. <https://www.rsph.org.uk/static/uploaded/de21cde9-a77d-4ce6-bf9342c5f2bebo8.pdf>

²² NHS Digital. (May 2020). Statistics on Obesity, Physical Activity and Diet, England, 2020. <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/statistics-on-obesity-physical-activity-and-diet/england-2020>

²³ Fitzsimons, E., & Bann, D. (2020). Obesity prevalence and its inequality from childhood to adolescence: Initial findings from the Millennium Cohort Study, Age 17 Survey. UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies. <https://cls.ucl.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CLS-briefing-paper-Obesity-prevalence-MCS-age-17-initial-findings.pdf>

²⁴ Candari, C.J., Cylus, J., Nolte, E. (2017). Assessing the economic costs of unhealthy diets and low physical activity. The European Observatory on Health System. https://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/342166/Unhealthy-Diets-ePDF-v1.pdf

²⁵ Department of Health. (2011). No health without mental health: A cross-Government mental health outcomes strategy for people of all ages. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/215808/dh_123993.pdf

Violence and crime

While pandemic-related restrictions led to an average 15% drop in violent crime over the Covid period, the government believes that this rate may return to its prior level as these restrictions ease²⁶. The reduced provision of many youth services may have also increased the vulnerability of young people to involvement in youth violence. Prohibitions on providing face-to-face safeguarding and risk assessment may have left at-risk young people without the appropriate intervention to keep them away from being groomed for participation in youth violence. Closures of courts and delays in the procedures of Crown Prosecution Service may also have further exacerbated this vulnerability to youth violence participation²⁷.

Research by the National Youth Agency has also highlighted that gangs have adapted their methods for grooming young people over Covid, with many now relying heavily on social media. These methods allow gangs in principle to reach more young people, increasing their effectiveness at grooming and recruitment. This could lead to an increase in youth violence to levels that exceed pre-Covid levels²⁸. This is a concern for youth organisations, but also for the government. In addition to the enormous social costs, youth violence also represents an estimated annual cost of between £700 million and £1.3 billion to the government²⁹.

Younger adults are the most likely age group to be victims of violent crime. **20% of knife possession is among children aged 10-17.**



Economic inequality and poverty lead to higher rates of violent crime. Both have increased during the pandemic. This means that recent lower rates of youth violence **may increase** in the near future.

Youth violence cost the government between £700 million and £1.3 billion a year in 2018/19 – a **50% increase since 2014/15**, correlated with increased youth violence.



²⁶ Commons Library Debate Pack. (2021). Tackling Knife Crime. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2021-0129/CDP-2021-0129.pdf>

²⁷ Brewster, B., Robinson, G., Brotherton, V., & Silverman, B. (2020). The Impact of Covid-19 on Child Criminal Exploitation. <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/beacons-of-excellence/rights-lab/resources/reports-and-briefings/2020/november/briefing-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-child-criminal-exploitation.pdf>

²⁸ National Youth Agency. (2020). Vulnerable Young People: Covid-19 Response. <https://s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/assets.nyaz.joltrouter.net/wp-content/uploads/20210417221255/Out-of-Sight-COVID-19-report-Web-version.pdf>

²⁹ Youth Violence Commission. (2020). Final Report. https://ebc743b2-5619-4230-8e01-421540c665fc.filesusr.com/ugd/ad2256_aof38547a4134e0cb923905486bcc186.pdf

2 How can non-formal learning support young people's educational, employment, health and social outcomes?

What is non-formal learning?

Formal learning is the acquisition of knowledge and skills in an orthodox classroom environment, with a structured syllabus and assessment³⁰. By contrast, NFL takes place outside of such a classroom environment, with students participating in activities or acquiring a skill that is not formally assessed and is not always delivered by teachers. People typically refer to them as “extra-curricular activities”. Examples include:

- sports clubs of various kinds for all ages
- outdoor pursuits
- trips away from home involving structured activities
- skills-building activities e.g. badges and awards
- youth clubs and engagement with youth workers
- music lessons, amateur choirs and orchestras
- debating societies and public speaking
- volunteering and social action

While these activities may take place in the community, they may also be delivered in a school, or in partnership with a school. NFL opportunities may also advance students towards formal learning opportunities – for example, learning a musical instrument may lead to taking graded music exams.

What has happened to young people's NFL during COVID?

A perfect storm of disrupted schooling and public health restrictions has resulted in young people having engaged in substantially less non-formal learning in the academic years 2019-20 and 2020-21 than in previous years. A survey of 7,000 teachers by Teacher Tapp indicates that, in a ‘normal’ year 75% of teachers run some kind of extra-curricular activity in schools.

At the start of the 2020/21 academic year, this figure had fallen to only 25%³¹. Polls of parents from this period produce similar findings, with just 10% of parents claiming that they expected their child to participate in an extra-curricular activity in the coming school term, with 75% saying their child had done so at the start of the 2019/20 academic year.

This trend continued throughout the 2020/21 academic year, with extensive periods of disrupted attendance for many young people due to public health protocols within school. Even when schools re-opened after the second lockdown in March of this year, only 10% of teachers in state schools stated that they had any plans to restart NFL within their first week back. Meanwhile, plans for restarting NFL within the first week back to school were in place for 75% of teachers at independent schools.

This lack of access to NFL and activities extends beyond the school gate. UK sports clubs have lost 60% of their members, with 96% of football clubs having experienced reduced income³². A third of youth music groups have lower enrolment than in previous years³³. This lack of access is particularly acute for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Polling conducted by the Centre for Social Justice with YouGov in June showed that one in five parents in England report that their primary or secondary school children do no NFL activities in an average week³⁴. This rises to one in four of those in the lowest social grades³⁵.

³⁰ OECD. (2010). Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning. <https://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/recognitionofnon-formalandinformallearning-home.htm>

³¹ Teacher Tapp. (2020, August 31st). A New School Year, but what's missing? PIBus, findings on Pessimism and School clubs [Blog Post]. <https://teachertapp.co.uk/a-new-school-year-but-whats-missing-plus-findings-on-pessimism-and-school-clubs/>

³² Sheffield Hallam University Sport Industry Research Centre. (2021). Returning to Action: Evaluating Organisational Preparedness in the Wake of the Covid-19 Pandemic. <https://sramedia.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/e4a34300-b372-44dd-81d9-d7fbc1c29e2d.pdf>

³³ Youth Music. (2020). How COVID-19 has affected youth music-making: young people, staff and organisations. <https://network.youthmusic.org.uk/file/47774/download?token=dMIA2nRz>

³⁴ The Centre for Social Justice. (2021) A Level Playing Field. https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CSJ-A_Level_Playing_Field.pdf

³⁵ Ibid.

Furthermore, according to the People and Nature Survey for England, 57% of children from households with an income over £17,000 have spent less time outdoors since coronavirus, compared to 73% of those from households with an income below that threshold³⁶. Similarly, while 57% of white children report having spent less time outdoors since the virus, this is the case for 71% of children from ethnic minority backgrounds³⁷. 45% of survey respondents reported that this was at least partly due to lack of access – e.g. local parks or playgrounds being closed.

How can NFL improve outcomes for young people?

There is widespread research that demonstrates the positive impact of non-formal learning on children and young people's education and employment prospects as well as their physical and mental health. Opportunities to engage with these kinds of activities can also provide avenues that steer vulnerable children and young people away from violence and crime. Together these positive impacts have significant economic benefits.

Education

Numerous studies indicate a positive relationship between disadvantaged young peoples' access to NFL and their academic achievement³⁸. Vulnerable adolescents engaging in quality activities demonstrate increased educational resilience and are more likely to go to university³⁹, and at-risk students who participate in extracurricular pursuits are more likely to reach reading and numeracy benchmarks⁴⁰.

Engaging young people in social action activities – such as volunteering and peer-to-peer mentoring – has been shown in multiple studies to have a positive impact on learning. Participation in the National Citizen Service (NCS) programme is estimated to increase entry rate levels into university for those young people participating by 12%. The impact is even greater for participants from disadvantaged areas, with those attending the programme 50% more likely to go to university than their peers⁴¹.

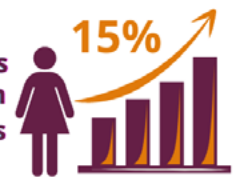
Focussed on disadvantaged students, targeted youth work in Scotland (delivered in partnership with schools) has been vital in closing the poverty-related attainment gap there⁴².

There is a **positive relationship** between young peoples' access to NFL and their academic achievement - **especially for the disadvantaged.**



NFL helps vulnerable young people to improve their **educational resilience** and supports them to **attend university.**

Social action activities have a positive impact on learning – the National Citizen Service **increases the likelihood of girls from the poorest backgrounds attending university by 15%.**



³⁶ Nature England. (2020). The People and Nature Survey for England: Children's survey (Experimental Statistics). <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-people-and-nature-survey-for-england-child-data-wave-1-experimental-statistics/the-people-and-nature-survey-for-england-childrens-survey-experimental-statistics>

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Oberle, E., Ji, X.R., Magee, C., Guhn, M., Schonert-Reich, K.A., & Gadermann, A.M. (2019). Extracurricular activity profiles and wellbeing during middle childhood: A Population Level Study. *PLoS ONE* 14(7): e0218488. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0218488>

³⁹ Peck, S.C., Roeser, R.W., Zarrett, N., & Eccles, J.S. (2008). Exploring the Role of Extracurricular Quantity and Quality in the Educational Resilience of Vulnerable Adults. *Journal of Social Issues*, 64(1). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2699299/>

⁴⁰ Marchetti, R. (2016). Academic Achievements and Extracurricular School Activities of At-Risk High School Students. *Education Research Quarterly*, 39(4). <https://search.proquest.com/openview/bfo4f79338e66826efb915facda88c5a1/pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=48020>

⁴¹ National Citizen Service, Jump Projects, Simetrica. (2017). If you could bottle it: A wellbeing and human capital value for money analysis of the NCS 2015 programme. <https://wearencs.com/sites/default/files/2020-09/NCS%20Wellbeing%20and%20Human%20Capital%20Valuation%20-%20Jump.pdf>

⁴² YouthLink Scotland. (2021). Youth Work: Closing the poverty-related attainment gap during the pandemic. <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/6371/youth-work-during-the-pandemic-final.pdf>

Employment

Studies have indicated that involvement in most NFL activities is positively correlated with securing a job after secondary school (for those who do not go into further or higher education)⁴³. This trend is perhaps unsurprising given business leaders and employers' positive attitudes towards NFL. In 2019, 92% of talent professionals and hiring managers agreed that candidates with strong 'soft' skills are increasingly important⁴⁴.

A Chartered Institute of Professional Development survey has shown that 67% of employers report better employability skills among young people who have participated in social action activities – whether volunteering or wider community activism⁴⁵. Nevertheless, McKinsey estimates that by 2030, millions of UK workers will be underskilled in critical areas such as communication and negotiation, interpersonal skills and empathy, and leadership and managing others⁴⁶. These are all areas that NFL can demonstrably improve.

Involvement in most nonformal learning activities is **positively correlated** with securing a job after secondary school.



92% of talent professionals and hiring managers agreed that candidates with strong soft skills are increasingly important.

67% of employers report better employability skills among young people who have participated in social action activities.



McKinsey estimates that **by 2030, millions of UK workers will be underskilled in critical areas** such as communication and negotiation, interpersonal skills and empathy, and leadership and managing others.

Physical and mental health

NFL has consistently been shown to improve young peoples' mental health. There is robust evidence of a causal link between skills interventions and improved social and emotional wellbeing in young people, as well as the prevention of negative behaviours⁴⁷. A study by the University of British Columbia found that participation in extracurricular activities led to higher levels of optimism and a greater sense of peer belonging, which helped to improve overall mental health outcomes⁴⁸. Similarly, annual evaluations of the NCS have shown how such programmes can positively impact young people's wellbeing, including on their life satisfaction, happiness and anxiety levels⁴⁹.

Physical NFL activities, such as sports clubs can support young people to get regular physical exercise. A cross-sectional study of 1,300 11-year-olds in the UK found that attendance at an 'active' after-school club was associated with additional 'moderate to vigorous' physical activity - children attending these clubs were more likely to get the recommended daily amount of physical activity⁵⁰.

It is plausible that NFL activities can have impacts that endure well into a child's future. Evidence suggests that behaviours that are set in place between the ages of 10-24 can set the stage for lifelong healthy habits that can continue to support positive physical and mental indefinitely⁵¹.

Children attending 'active' after-school clubs are **more likely to get the recommended daily amount of physical exercise**.

Learning a skill **improves social and emotional wellbeing** in young people.

Extracurricular activities lead to **higher levels of optimism** and **reduced loneliness**.

Setting in place healthy behaviours between the age of 10 and 24 can create **lifelong healthy habits**.



⁴³ Joseph, N.A. (2009). Exploring the Relationship between Extracurricular Participation and Probability of Employment for High School Graduates. <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/553790/josephNityaAlen.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

⁴⁴ Lobosco, M. (2019, January 28th). LinkedIn Report: These 4 Ideas Are Shaping the Future of HR and Hiring [Blog Post]. LinkedIn. <https://news.linkedin.com/2019/January/linkedin-releases-2019-global-talent-trends-report>

⁴⁵ CIPD. (2015). Unlock New Talent: How can you integrate social action into employment? https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/talent-social-action-recruitment_tcm18-3236.pdf

⁴⁶ McKinsey & Company. (2019). The future of work: Rethinking skills to tackle the UK's looming talent shortage. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/the-future-of-work-rethinking-skills-to-tackle-the-uk-s-looming-talent-shortage>

⁴⁷ Skills Builder Partnership. (2021) How do essential skills influence life outcomes? Evidence Review. <https://www.skillsbuilder.org/how-do-essential-skills-influence-life-outcomes>

⁴⁸ Oberle, E., Xuejun, R.J., Kerai, S., Guhn, M., Schonert-Reichl, K.A., & Gadermann, A.M. (2020). Screen time and extracurricular activities as risk and protective factors for mental health in adolescence: A population-level study. Preventive Medicine, 141. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0091743520303157?dgcid=author>

⁴⁹ Kantar for DCMS. (2021). National Citizen Service 2019 Summer Evaluation: Main report. <https://wearencs.com/sites/default/files/2021-09/NCS%202019%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf>

⁵⁰ Salway, R., Emm-Collison, L., Sebire, S.J., Thompson, J.L., Lawlor, D.A., & Jago, R. (2019). The association of school-related active travel and active after-school clubs with children's physical activity: a cross-sectional study in 11-year-old UK children. International Journal of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity, 16(72). <https://ijbnpa.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12966-019-0832-3>

⁵¹ Association for Young People's Health. (2019). Key data on young people 2019: key information and statistics. <https://www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk/key-data-on-young-people>

Crime and violence

The underlying causes of young people's involvement in serious violence are complex. However, there is a clear correlation between rising rates of knife crime and a reduction in youth service provision. Research in 2019 revealed that local authorities who had sustained the deepest cuts to youth services had also seen among the highest increases in knife crime offences since 2014. The research pointed to the widespread closure of youth centres, which are hubs for the provision of NFL⁵². A World Health Organisation study has similarly concluded the benefits of life and social skills training in preventing youth violence⁵³ and a review by the Big Lottery found that sports, arts and mentoring all had a positive impact⁵⁴.

Parliamentary inquiries have generated similar conclusions. A report on Serious Youth Violence by the parliamentary Home Affairs Committee in 2019 heard from a diverse range of witnesses - from the Children's Commissioner and Met Police Commissioner to youth service providers and victims' parents. They all emphasized the importance of youth services and access to positive activities - including sports - as vital in preventing violent crime⁵⁵. Young people also told the APPG on Knife Crime & Violence Reduction about how youth clubs and workers provided them with a safe place to spend their free time, emotional support, and advice around work and education options⁵⁶.

Economic impact

Improved educational outcomes have clear associated economic benefits. A 25-point increase in the UK's performance in PISA is estimated to result in an additional £14 billion in productivity the UK economy cumulatively over the next 10 years⁵⁷. Similarly, improving young people's employment, physical and mental health, as well as steering them away from youth violence, could save up to £14 billion⁵⁸, £27 billion⁵⁹, £104 billion⁶⁰ and £1.3 billion respectively⁶¹.

The current deficiency in life skills is estimated by Development Economics to cost the UK economy £8 billion a year. Greater investment in life skills through improving access to non-formal learning opportunities could enable the UK to mirror the success of countries such as Japan and South Korea who perform better on international measures of life skills. These countries also have capital-intensive, technology-based economies that are projected to be the future for high-income industrialised nations^{64 65 66}.

There is a clear correlation between rising rates of knife crime and a reduction in youth service provision.

Local authorities that have sustained the deepest cuts to youth services have seen the highest increase in youth crime since 2014.



Life and social skills training **prevents youth violence**, as does sports, arts and mentoring.

Young people have told both the parliamentary Home Affairs Committee and the APPG on Knife Crime & Violence Reduction that NFL gives them a **safe place** to spend their free time and **emotional support** that helps keep them away from crime.

⁵² Barnardos. (2019, 3rd May). New research draws link between youth service cuts and rising knife crime [Press Release]. <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/news/new-research-draws-link-between-youth-service-cuts-and-rising-knife-crime>

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The Big Lottery Fund. (2018). Preventing Serious Youth Violence: What Works? [https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/insights/documents/BLF_KL18-12-Serious Violence.pdf?mtime=2019052316221](https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/insights/documents/BLF_KL18-12-Serious%20Violence.pdf?mtime=2019052316221)

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3 What is the appetite for non-formal learning among children and young people, parents and teachers?

Recent polling conducted by NCS Trust together with the Scouts Association, in partnership with YouGov, provides a helpful snapshot of the attitudes to extracurricular and enrichment activities among children and young people, parents and teachers⁶⁷.

It's no surprise that teachers and parents feel that one of the big impacts of the pandemic has been children's disrupted education: cited by almost 9 in 10 teachers (89%) in our survey, and 3 in 4 parents and children and young people (75% and 74% respectively). But, almost as many believe that having fewer opportunities for engagement in extracurricular activities and experiences outside of school has been an issue: 84% among teachers and 68% among parents. Two in 3 children and young people (66%) also recognise this as a consequence of the pandemic.

Whilst the majority of the three audiences surveyed recognise that children and young people need extra support with formal, academic catch up (58% of teachers, 63% of parents, and 68% of children and young people respectively agree with this), even larger proportions agree that they need more access to extracurricular activities and wider learning experiences: almost 9 in 10 teachers (88%), and 8 in 10 parents and children and young people (78% and 80% respectively) want to see more around this. There is also a clear support for more access to trusted adults who can provide advice and support, such as careers advisers, therapists and youth workers: 86% of teachers agree children and young people would benefit from this kind of support, as do 73% of parents and 69% of children and young people.

'Life-skills' (including independent living, cooking and financial planning) emerges as the most important from a list of options presented for all three audiences surveyed: cited by 79% of teachers, 73% of parents and 68% of children and young people. Sports also scores highly for over 3 in 4 teachers (77%), and for around 3 in 5 parents and children and young people (61% and 57% respectively). Outdoor pursuits also score highly: 74% of teachers, 61% of parents and 58% of children and young people like the idea of more outdoor activities such as hiking or camping. Sixty-seven per cent of teachers and 55% of parents also like the idea of more nature-based activities such as tree planting, though just under half of children and young people advocate for this (47%).

There is also an appetite for more support around skills for the workplace, such as communication and presentation skills, for over half of our audiences surveyed (59% of teachers, 56% of parents, and 51% of children and young people).

⁶⁷ For more detailed polling results including see: NCS Trust and Scouts (2021), Enriching Education Recovery: Summary of polling findings with parents, teachers, children and young people, <https://wearencs.com/our-insights>

4 Where are there opportunities to ‘enrich’ education recovery?

This discussion paper explores a number of promising areas where there are opportunities to increase access to non-formal learning for a diverse range of children and young people, thereby delivering a broader and ‘enriched’ education recovery experience. Both community-based and schools-based provision are an equally important part of the picture, including a consideration of how they can best work in partnership with one another.

1) Community-based provision

NFL opportunities are often provided in a community setting, through out-of-school activities and programmes, youth clubs and youth workers (including detached youth work). This kind of provision is particularly important for those who are marginalised within the school system, have been excluded or who are at risk of exclusion. Growing rates of severe school absenteeism among pupils post-pandemic show that reaching those most in need will at times be challenging within the school setting⁶⁸.

Quality provision of youth services in the wider community can also provide a preventative intervention that helps to reduce the number of children and young people who will require late-stage child protection interventions. Analysis has shown that reduced funding for youth services since 2010 has come hand-in-hand with an increase in local authority spending on ‘late intervention’ services - which is not only a worse outcome for young people, but is also more costly⁶⁹.

This style of provision offers an important complement to schools-based opportunities, offering the chance to mix with other groups of children and young people - something which has been shown to increase confidence and resilience. Many children and young people are able to find a sense of belonging through a youth club or local group that they struggle to find at school.

Community-based services also facilitate access to trusted adults who are not teachers - something that the recent YouGov polling by NCS Trust and Scouts shows is considered important by a majority of children and young people, parents and teachers, particularly in the post-pandemic context - 69% of children and young people, 73% of parents and 86% of teachers agree that children and young people would benefit from this kind of support⁷⁰.

It is therefore helpful to consider the role that wider community-based provision plays in the tapestry of the education recovery offer - this could include revisiting the definition of ‘sufficient’ youth services, looking at the number of youth workers who should be available per school catchment area, understanding the extent to which there are waiting lists for youth groups, exploring approaches to upskill the youth workforce, and reviewing where there might be disparities in access to spaces and services both regionally and in rural versus urban areas.

⁶⁸ For more detailed polling results including see: NCS Trust and Scouts (2021), Enriching Education Recovery: Summary of polling findings with parents, teachers, children and young people, <https://wearencs.com/our-insights>

⁶⁹ Centre for Social Justice (2020), Kids Can't Catch Up If They Don't Show Up - driving school attendance through the National Tutoring Programme https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Cant_Catch_Up_FULL-REPORT.pdf

⁶⁹ NPSCC, Action for Children, Barnardo's, Children's Society, National Children's Bureau, Children and Young People's Services, Funding and Spending 2010/11 - 2018/19 (May 2020) https://media.actionforchildren.org.uk/documents/Joint_report_-_childrens_services_funding_2018-19_May_2020_Final.pdf

⁷⁰ NCS Trust and Scouts (2021), Enriching Education Recovery: Summary of polling findings with parents, teachers, children and young people, <https://wearencs.com/our-insights>

2) Schools and the education system

Schools, and the education system more broadly, can play a role as a gateway to increased NFL. The recent NCS Trust/ Scouts polling suggests there is appetite for enrichment and extracurricular activities to be a more integral part of the school day - with 75% of children and young people, 70% of parents and 61% of teachers supporting up to an hour every day being guaranteed in the normal timetable⁷¹.

Schools are sites of universal provision, bringing together young people from a range of backgrounds on a regular, sustained basis. As a result, delivery through schools has the potential to reach a wide range of children and young people, and to promote social inclusion and mixing. Importantly, schools have physical space to host NFL activities that is health & safety compliant and has been designed for young people. Aside from playgrounds and assembly halls, 39% of all available sports facilities in the country are located in schools. This includes 77% of sports halls and 61% of artificial grass pitches⁷².

The right frameworks, guidance and benchmarks can help further unlock this potential across the education system. Ofsted inspect schools and issue judgments on their quality. These judgments are the main formal index of a school's effectiveness. Parents, one of school's main stakeholders, also trust Ofsted and have usually read their child's school's most recent Ofsted report⁷³. As a consequence, Ofsted gradings have a large influence on a school's reputation, the number of applications for enrolment and opportunities for schools to grow (for example, by becoming a Multi Academy Trust and taking on other schools to manage)^{74 75}.

Ofsted's inspection framework can also have a large influence on schools' behaviour. The most recent version of this framework contains specifications that schools will be judged for the quality and extent of their "Personal Development"

offer for pupils (which includes "extra-curricular activities")⁷⁶. The school inspection handbook - widely known and used among schools and school advisers - provides a series of criteria against which schools will be evaluated^{77 78} - which plays a vital role in supporting schools to understand what they are aiming for. However, as a complement to this, there is also room to explore the role of more comprehensive guidance and benchmarking in supporting schools to further embed NFL as part of the education offer.

Lessons can be learned from the successful Gatsby Careers Benchmarking Tool, which provides practical guidance on how schools can evaluate and improve their internal careers guidance provision⁷⁹. The Gatsby Benchmarks now form part of the DfE's statutory guidance for careers education in schools. Evaluation of pilot programmes introducing the benchmarks into schools and local authorities suggest they command a high level of stakeholder comprehension and support, while making a significant difference to the quality of careers education in schools^{80 81}. There is an opportunity to learn from this success and consider how it could be applied to develop comprehensive guidance for non-formal learning provision - whilst the Character Education Framework⁸² explores how co-curricular and volunteering opportunities can be integrated into a school, expanded guidance might draw in more detail on high quality frameworks and expertise from the non-formal learning sector including the National Youth Agency's [National Youth Work Curriculum](#) and the Centre for Youth Impact's [Outcomes Framework](#).

⁷¹ NCS Trust and Scouts (2021), op cit.

⁷² Sports England. (2015). Why should we use our school? <https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/why-should-we-use-our-school-slides-for-senior-leaders.pdf>

⁷³ Ofsted. (2021). Ofsted Parents Annual Survey 2021. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987970/Ofsted_Parents_Annual_Survey_2021.pdf

⁷⁴ Börcsök, B., Cullen, E., & Hwa, Y. (2018). What factors influence parental preference of schools, and what are the outcomes of those preferences (and for whom)? Cambridgeshire Policy Challenges 2018. <https://data.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018%20CUSPE%20Policy%20Challenge%20-%20What%20factors%20influence%20parental%20preference%20of%20schools.pdf>

⁷⁵ Nye, P. (2019). Exploring MAT Ofsted ratings [Blog Post]. FFT Education Datalab. <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2019/05/exploring-mat-ofsted-ratings/>

⁷⁶ Ofsted. (2021). School Inspection Handbook. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif/school-inspection-handbook>

⁷⁷ Teacher Tapp. (2021). What Aspects of the New Proposed Ofsted Framework do you like? [Blog Post] <https://teachertapp.co.uk/what-aspects-of-the-new-proposed-ofsted-framework-do-you-like/>

⁷⁸ The Key. (2021). 2019 Ofsted Inspections Framework: What it means for your school? <https://schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com/school-evaluation-and-improvement/inspection/after-inspection/ofsted-inspection-framework-what-means-your-school/>

⁷⁹ The Gatsby Foundation. (2014). Good Careers Guidance. <http://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/gatsby-sir-john-holman-good-career-guidance-2014.pdf>

⁸⁰ Powel, D., Burgess, A., Grunhut, S., & Griffiths, E. (2020). Gatsby Benchmarking Pilot Interim Evaluation. Welsh Government Social Research. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-01/gatsby-benchmarking-pilot-interim-evaluation.pdf>

⁸¹ Hanson, J., Moore, N., Clark, L., & Neary, S. (2021). An evaluation of the North East England pilot of the Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance. International Centre for Guidance Studies. <https://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/ne-pilot-evaluation-full-report.pdf>

⁸² Character Education Framework - Non-Statutory Guidance on to schools on character education and development for pupils

3) Partnerships between the non-formal and education sectors

Schools are well placed to be convenors and sites for the delivery of NFL, but schools are already juggling numerous priorities post-pandemic, and the teaching workforce is close to capacity. School staff already report working long hours and high levels of burnout⁸³, particularly after the last year of repeated school closures, remote teaching and new in-school public health protocols⁸⁴. Recruitment and retention of teaching staff has been a major challenge for the sector for the past decade and an upturn during the pandemic already appears to be receding⁸⁵. Given that workload is the most commonly cited push factor by teachers leaving the profession, excessive increases to teacher workload should be avoided at all costs⁸⁶.

Meanwhile, NFL providers have specialist expertise and ready-made infrastructure to deliver high-quality non-formal learning experiences - from session designs and risk assessments to materials and off-site facilities. Research commissioned by the Department for Education identifies the value that school leaders place on NFL providers' different approach and style to engaging pupils, their connections with the local community, and their ability to teach specific sports, musical instruments or life skills such as debating. NCS Trust/Scouts recent polling with YouGov also shows that children and young people, parents and teachers are all in favour of schools partnering with specialist organisations to deliver these activities on the school grounds⁸⁷.

However, much of this expertise and infrastructure risks being undermined by a significant reduction in demand during the pandemic. UK sports clubs have lost 60% of their members, with 96% of football clubs having experienced reduced income⁸⁸. A third of youth music groups have lower enrolment than in previous years⁸⁹. These organisations can make a vital contribution to young people's wider development, but they

are emerging from the pandemic in a weak financial position. Taken together, there are therefore clear benefits to closer partnership-working between schools and external NFL providers to increase young people's access to non-formal learning opportunities.

This kind of partnership-working requires leadership, coordination and sharing of best practice at a strategic level. This discussion paper is the result of leaders and thinkers coming together across the youth, education and skills sectors to explore promising areas for expanding access to non-formal learning, including through building bridges across sectors and leveraging our respective expertise. There is an opportunity for more concerted coordination that seeks to build consensus in this respect - including through working collaboratively with existing coalitions and initiatives such as the Back Youth Alliance, the Fair Education Alliance and the #iwill Education Advisory Council.

Effective partnership at an operational level can also play a vital role in expanding young people's access to NFL opportunities in a way that is meaningful, sustained and beneficial to pupils, builds on the formal learning taking place within schools, and supports the work that teachers do rather than adding to their workload⁹⁰. Existing research indicates a range of facilitating factors behind successful partnerships between schools and external NFL providers, such as support from senior leaders, teacher workload management, and dedicated roles to broker and manage relationships⁹¹. School staff are typically overworked and lack the capacity to take on extra duties⁹² such as partnership cultivation and management. A promising area for investment is therefore the development of partnerships managers. A 2017 Department for Education review of the experience of schools and NFL providers of partnering together highlighted that several schools in the study had created roles for dedicated Partnership Managers who had a coordinating function for out-of-timetable provision - including supporting individual pupils in extracurricular pursuits outside the school gates.

⁸³ Teacher Tapp. Why are teachers walking out? The leading causes of teacher burnout [Blog Post]. <https://teachertapp.co.uk/why-uk-teachers-are-walking-out/>

⁸⁴ Education Support Partnership. (2020). Coronavirus: Teachers experiencing high levels of stress as school uncertainty continues. <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/news-and-events/news/coronavirus-teachers-experiencing-high-levels-of-stress-as-school-uncertainty-continues/>

⁸⁵ Jack Worth [JackWorthNFER]. (2021, September 1st). This ITT recruitment cycle has gone from very good to poor really, really quickly. It raises important questions about next year and beyond and potentially rockets teacher supply back towards the top of the policy agenda (or at least, it should) Here's what happened, and why [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/JackWorthNFER/status/1433061736903581696>

⁸⁶ Perryman, J., & Calvert, G. (2019). What motivates people to teach, and why do they leave? Accountability, Performativity and Teacher Retention. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 68(1). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00071005.2019.1589417?journalCode=rbej20>

⁸⁷ NCS Trust and Scouts (2021), Enriching Education Recovery: Summary of polling findings with parents, teachers, children and young people, <https://wearencs.com/our-insights>

⁸⁸ Sheffield Hallam University Sport Industry Research Centre. (2021). Returning to Action:

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⁸⁹ Youth Music. (2020). How COVID-19 has affected youth music-making: young people, staff and organisations. <https://network.youthmusic.org.uk/file/47774/download?token=dMIA2nRz>

⁹⁰ https://cfey.org/wp-content/uploads/partnerships_lit_review_final_v4d.pdf

⁹¹ Demos. (2015). Character by Doing: Evaluation. <https://www.demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Demos-Character-by-Doing-Evaluation.pdf>

⁹² Teacher Tapp. (2018). Why are teachers walking out? The Leading Causes of Teacher Burnout. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/818679/An_Unequal_Playing_Field_report.pdf

4) Funding

There is a range of funding approaches and mechanisms that can be deployed to expand access to NFL opportunities both in the community and through the school system.

Central grant funding

Releasing the £500 million Youth Investment Fund has potential to play a vital role in education recovery, including promoting partnerships. There are also plenty of examples of centrally-administered grant funding via the education system - directed to schools, third sector organisations (often in partnership) and to local authorities. The Character Grants were launched and managed by the Department for Education, but were open to third sector organisations, local authorities and schools alike. Similarly the #iwill Fund has provided support to a diverse range of actors to promote youth social action, with examples of funding direct to Multi Academy Trusts, and also to partnerships involving schools. The successes and learnings from these funding approaches can help to inform any future central grant schemes to advance these kinds of activities.

Premium funding for enrichment

There are vast disparities in access to NFL between young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and their more affluent peers. Disadvantaged students are also more vulnerable to obesity⁹³ and other negative physical health outcomes⁹⁴, mental health issues⁹⁵, youth violence⁹⁶, low educational attainment and poor transitions into post-18 education, training and employment. It is therefore important to consider how funding for NFL could include an element of targeting for disadvantaged young people.

There is much to learn from the Pupil Premium in this regard, which has been largely effective at reaching the most disadvantaged students⁹⁷. It has also required schools to publish a strategy and audit how the premium has been spent. A similar

approach could be taken to an 'enrichment' premium, utilising an established funding allocation process to distribute funding for non-formal learning opportunities, including a requirement for schools to demonstrate partnerships with external providers.

With over 2 million eligible pupils, Pupil Premium cost £2.41 billion in 2020-21⁹⁸. An 'Enrichment Premium' to cover the cost of all disadvantaged pupils accessing three varied extracurricular activities per week would cost in the region of £735 per pupil, per year - in line with the average entitlement experienced by all children in Britain⁹⁹. Set at this level, an Enrichment Premium would cost around £1.3bn annually - far lower than current rates of the Pupil Premium of between £955 and £2,345.

Bursaries

In their 2019 report 'An Unequal Playing Field', the Social Mobility Commission recommend an 'extra-curricular activity bursary' for children from low-income households¹⁰⁰. These bursaries could be distributed using Pupil Premium as an indicator and cover all costs associated with participating in an NFL activity, including equipment and transportation. Bursaries could be paid to local authorities or schools to be distributed directly to families.

Bursaries enable disadvantaged households and families to practice agency in deciding what activities they would like their child to participate in. Capturing this initial motivation may increase the likelihood of the child engaging with the NFL activity for a longer period of time than if they were only able to access the limited provision put on by their school¹⁰¹. Furthermore, this could be a more direct method of ensuring money reaches non-formal learning providers, the Youth Sector. It may also make NFL more accessible to the most vulnerable young people who may be averse to spending time in school after it finishes.

⁹³ Noonan, R.J. (2018). Poverty, Weight Status, and Dietary Intake among UK Adolescents. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15(6). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6024903/>

⁹⁴ The Health Foundation. (2020). Living in poverty was bad for your health long before COVID-19. <https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/living-in-poverty-was-bad-for-your-health-long-before-COVID-19>

⁹⁵ Mental Health Foundation. (2020). Mental health statistics: poverty. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/statistics/mental-health-statistics-poverty>

⁹⁶ London Assembly. (2019). Revealed: full links between poverty and violent crime in London [Press Release]. <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/full-links-between-poverty-and-violent-crime>

⁹⁷ Gorard, S., Siddiqui, N., & Huat See, B. (2021). The difficulties of judging what difference the Pupil Premium has made to school intakes and outcomes in England. *Research Papers in Education*, 36(3). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/02671522.2019.1677759?needAccess=true>

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Conclusion

This discussion paper has reviewed the existing evidence on the positive impacts of non-formal learning on young people's outcomes, as well as drawing on new insights from polling conducted with children and young people themselves, parents and teachers. All this points to the importance of a comprehensive approach to education recovery that recognises the value of extracurricular and enrichment activities in supporting children and young people to overcome the impacts of Covid. Community-based provision remains crucial, and there are many opportunities to embed non-formal learning more squarely in schools and the education system. Partnerships at a strategic and operational level across the youth and education sectors can help to drive success, along with a diversity of funding mechanisms that reach schools and community-based organisations alike. Children and young people's voices have been illuminating in this process, and should continue to inform the shape and scope of the evolving education recovery agenda.

