



**ON  
SIDE  
NETWORK  
IMPACT  
REPORT  
2022-2023**



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# FOREWORD

**It is increasingly important for organisations working in the youth sector to make the case for youth work and its significant impact on young people's lives.**

Youth work has never been more vital as the cost of living crisis places more pressure on young people and the communities we serve. Every young person deserves access to the support they need to live a healthy, happy life.

And the OnSide Network plays a key role in this. This year we supported over 55,706 young people through 618,493 engagements, and with this scale comes an increased ability to measure impact. Our work with thousands of young people can help us generate the evidence that proves the life-changing impact that youth work, delivered in Youth Zones, can have on young people's lives. And behind the numbers are the individual young people - some of whom have courageously shared their stories with us for this report.



I'm incredibly proud to present the first full year of impact data from the OnSide Network. Building on last year's pilot, all 14 Youth Zones took part this year, providing us with a comprehensive data set. This has allowed us to generate powerful insight and learning that will help amplify best practices and continually improve our delivery for young people.

Collaboration is at the heart of our impact evaluation. Last year, we developed a new process which aimed to embed a robust and consistent approach to evaluation across the Network. This was centred around the 'ME App' Evaluation System which you can read more about on the next page. The system has proved successful, but we are keen to monitor and evolve our approach continually. With more than 12-months of data collected, we commissioned King's College London (KCL) to explore how effective the 'ME App' Evaluation System was across the Network. Further work is now underway addressing KCL's findings, including further training to ensure data is consistently collected.

Looking to the year ahead and we're excited to work with George Williams College and other youth sector organisations to implement a common monitoring and evaluation process for the youth sector to demonstrate the collective impact of all youth work on young people.

Lastly, it's important to mention the hundreds of youth workers across the Network who have carried out the conversations with young people that generated the data. Without them, this report wouldn't be possible.

Together we will continue to play a key role within the sector, sharing our learnings far and wide to highlight the transformational impact of youth work and in doing so, hopefully inspire others to join our movement.

**Jamie Masraff** Chief Executive, OnSide



# METHODOLOGY

**As a Network, we are passionate about delivering high-quality youth work to support young people's personal and social development.**

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the reach, quality and impact of youth work delivered in Youth Zones, to help us learn and continuously improve the range of activities and opportunities offered to young people. We achieve this by collecting the following information:

- **Young people's information, through their Youth Zone membership records**
- **Engagement data, i.e. how often young people attend, what they engage with, etc.**
- **Outcome data and impact stories, measuring young people's journeys**

This report provides an overview of impact data collected between April 2022 to March 2023, the first full year of the 'ME App' evaluation system becoming embedded in Youth Zones across the Network.

1,740 evaluation records were available for analysis, providing a robust, statistically significant dataset from which to draw insights, themes and trends.

## WHAT IS THE ME APP EVALUATION SYSTEM?



The ME App evaluation system is an online form with a short series of attitudinal questions, that ask young people to rate themselves between one and five in several areas aligned to our defined outcomes including self-confidence, social skills, physical health and mental wellbeing.

Young people complete the questionnaire alongside their trusted youth worker at different points throughout the year, so we can monitor changes over time. Answers are logged online and pulled through to our content management system, Salesforce, from where we analyse the data locally and nationally.



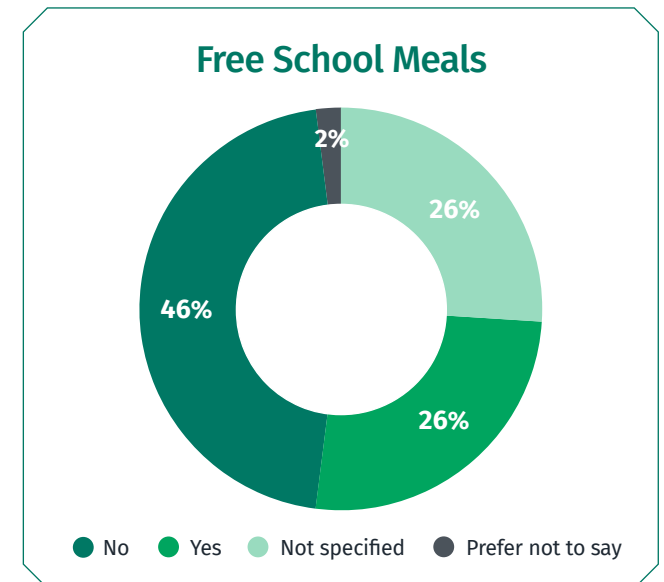
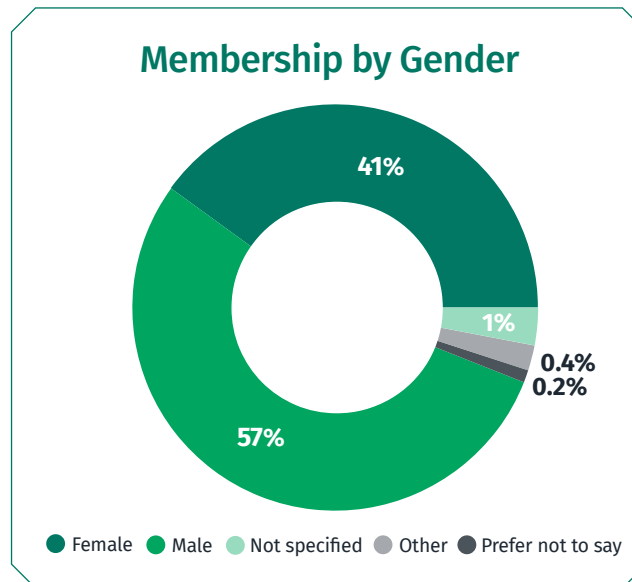
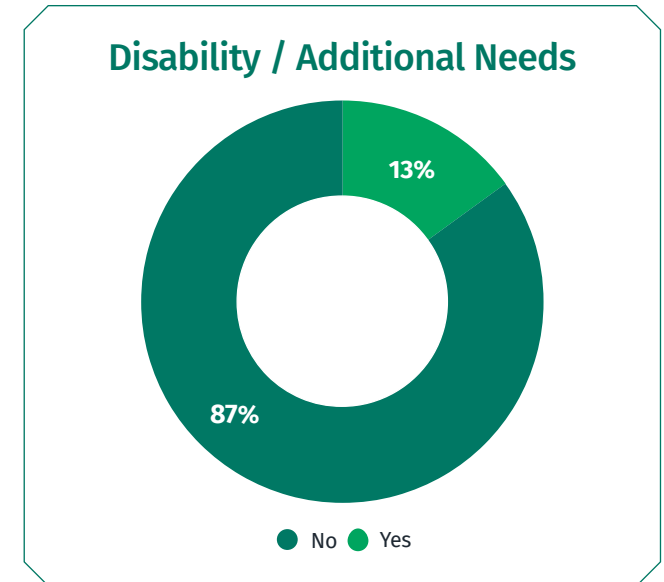
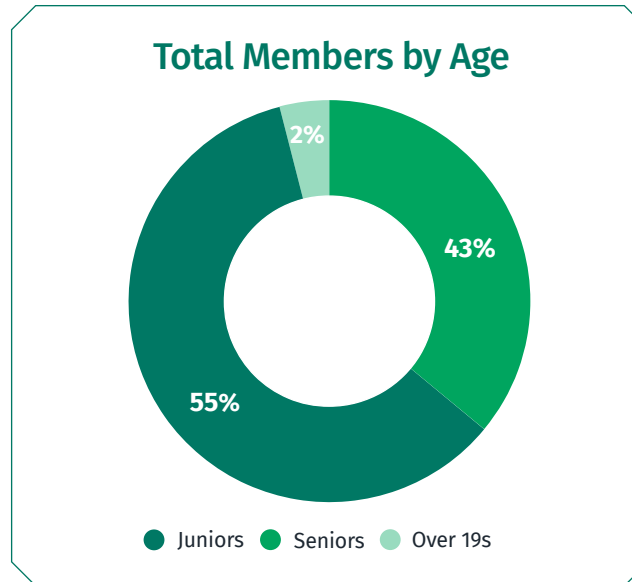
# OUR MEMBERSHIP 2022-23

55,706 young people attended Youth Zones through 618,493 engagements across the Network from April 2022 to March 2023.

Young people attend Youth Zones either as 'Juniors' (aged 8-12) or 'Seniors' (aged 13-19 or aged up to 25 years for young people with additional needs and disabilities). During 2022-23, Youth Zones engaged with more even proportions of Junior (55%) and Senior (43%) members compared to the previous year where 36% were Junior and 60% were Senior. OnSide will explore the trend of relatively less Senior members during 2023-24 and will investigate the effectiveness of different approaches being tested by Youth Zones.

Young people identifying as female represented 41% of the Network's membership (no change from the previous year). The proportion of young people with additional needs and/or disabilities attending Youth Zones decreased from the previous year: 15% (2021/22) to 13% (2022/2023).

At least 26% of the Network's members are registered for free school meals. The true proportion is likely higher as some young people or parents/carers (depending on the young person's age) may not disclose their free school meal eligibility to the Youth Zone.





Membership diversity varies across the Network, with each Youth Zone seeking to represent its own distinct local community. Our membership contains a lower proportion of young people who identify as 'White', over four times as many young people who identify as 'Black, Black British, Caribbean or African' and nearly three times as many young people who identify as being from 'Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups'.

The 2021 Census data on ethnicity in England and Wales<sup>1</sup> showed that:

- **81%** identified as 'White'
- **9%** identified as 'Asian, Asian British'
- **3%** identified as being from 'Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups'<sup>2</sup>
- **4%** identified as 'Black, Black British, Caribbean or African'

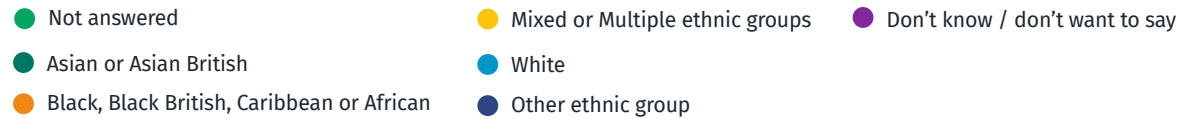
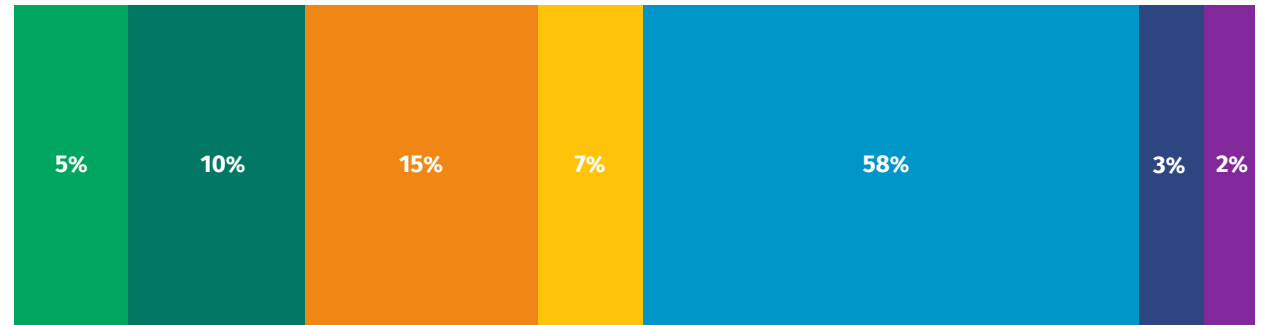
Youth Zones draw young people from some of the most deprived areas of England. 47% of members are from the 20% most deprived, and 70% of members come from the 40% most deprived parts of the country.



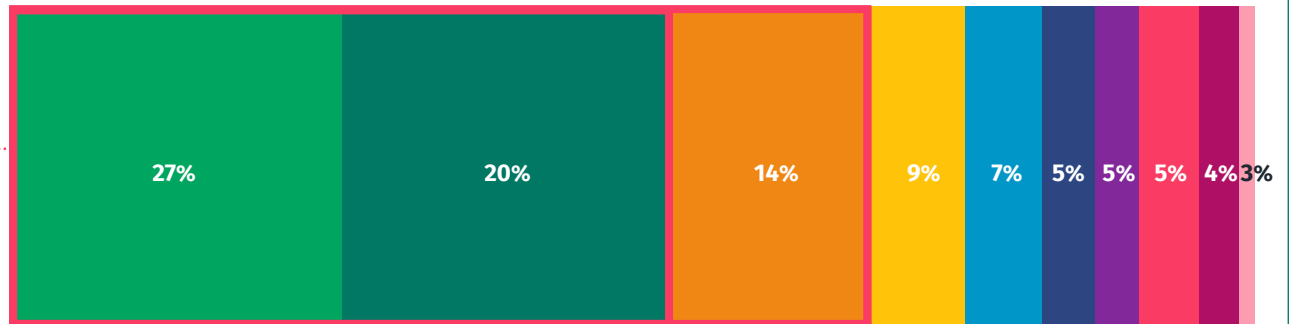
Deprivation deciles are defined by ranking neighbourhoods by level of deprivation and dividing into 10 equal groups using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 rankings.

Decile 1 = Most deprived Decile 10 = Least deprived

## Network Members - Ethnicity



## Network Members - Deprivation Deciles



# OUR NETWORK GOALS AND OUTCOMES

To ensure we are working towards the same mission, we have developed a number of Network goals to measure Youth Zone activities against:

## GOAL 1:

Giving young people a safe exciting place to go to have fun, build their social networks and support their personal development



## GOAL 2:

Helping young people to lead healthier, happier lives



## GOAL 3:

Enabling young people to better face the challenges of life



## GOAL 4:

Supporting young people to raise their aspirations and fulfil their potential



## GOAL 5:

Strengthening communities by supporting young people to be empowered, active, responsible citizens



By delivering these goals, Youth Zones positively impact on young people's lives, particularly within the following five outcome themes:

## CONFIDENCE:

Self-esteem and self-efficacy



## SOCIAL SKILLS:

Relationship and communication skills



## EMOTIONAL SKILLS:

Emotional intelligence and resilience



## HEALTH AND WELLBEING:

Physical, mental and emotional



## ASPIRATIONS AND ACHIEVEMENT:

Motivation and determination



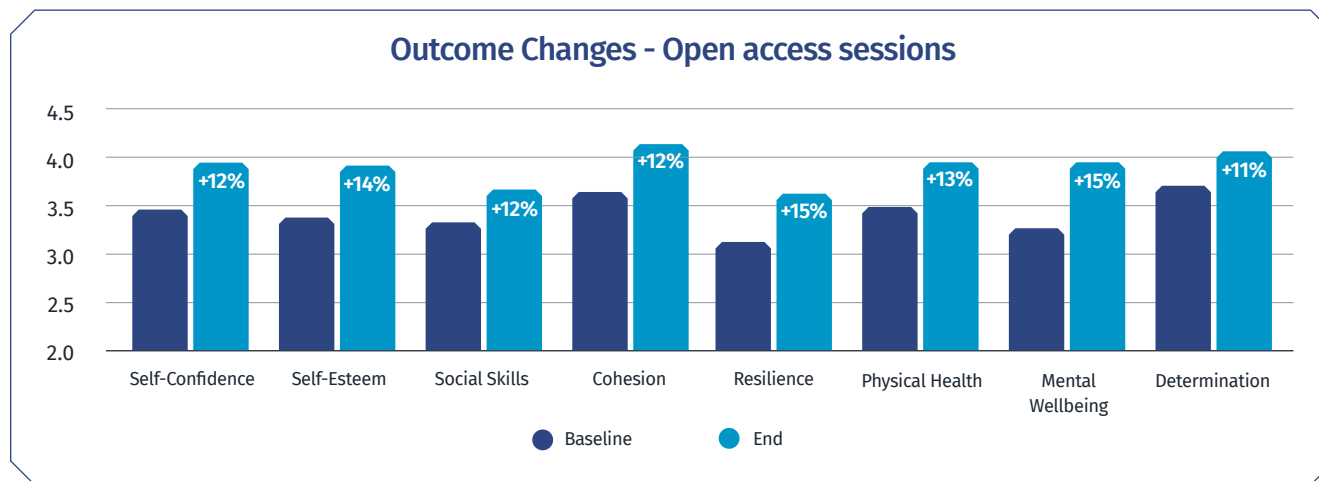
# WHAT THE 2022-23 DATA SHOWS





# GOAL 1: Giving young people a safe, exciting place to go to have fun, build their social networks and support their personal development

618,493 open access sessions, activities and opportunities were provided by Youth Zones during 2022-23, enabling young people to come together, make friends and engage in new experiences. Young people built confidence, self-esteem and social skills, such as how to communicate effectively and how to work together as a team. Getting involved in challenges helped young people to learn how to problem-solve and overcome setbacks, building resilience and motivation to help them achieve their goals.



## Key Outcomes

**15%** increase in young people's resilience as a result of attending open access sessions

**15%** increase in young people's mental wellbeing as a result of attending open access sessions

**15%** increase in young people's self-esteem as a result of attending open access sessions

In 2021-22, we reported an 8% increase in young people's physical health. This was boosted to a 13% increase during 2022-23.

The greatest increase during 2022-23 was with young people's resilience, even with higher baseline data points than seen during the previous year.



# ALEX'S STORY

**Alex joined Mahdlo, Oldham Youth Zone when he was 12 years old. A longstanding and active member of Mahdlo, and an OnSide Network Ambassador – Alex shares his story of eight years at the Youth Zone.**

“ I first entered the Youth Zone when I started secondary school. The way I was welcomed into the building when I signed up was so engaging. I'd never seen anything like it, the smiles were the first thing I noticed when I came through the door. That set the tone for my time as a member and started my experience in such a positive way.

Where I used to live, there was a small community club run on Fridays, so I'd never experienced anything like a Youth Zone. Going somewhere as vast as Mahdlo was daunting and I was experiencing a lot of nerves at first, as it was something new. Credit to the Youth Zone team because they managed to spot this. They noticed I was struggling a bit and suggested some things I could get involved in. I got over my nerves very quickly, and I settled into my groove. I found there were a lot of people there that were like me and I started making friends very quickly, which I thought wasn't even possible outside of school.

The first thing I got involved in at Mahdlo was music, I walked past the room and it looked so

enticing. On my third session I went in and picked up a guitar and started fake strumming.

At that point I got the vibe as to what the whole building was about. You could go into any room, pick something up, and start having fun.

I got involved in a lot of activities at the Youth Zone. Music was the start of it and as time went on I found the art room resonated with me, it was a really welcoming space. Sport was another interest I developed. I liked watching it but taking part wasn't my strong point, but I found I enjoyed taking part and still today I go to the gym regularly and I do sports at college. The Youth Zone set me up for what I now do on a weekly basis.

When I first joined the Youth Zone I was very secluded. If I was to speak to 13 year old me today he probably wouldn't believe how much I've put myself out there. I think he'd also recognise that I had to do all those things to get to where I am today. I think younger me would be a little bit proud.”



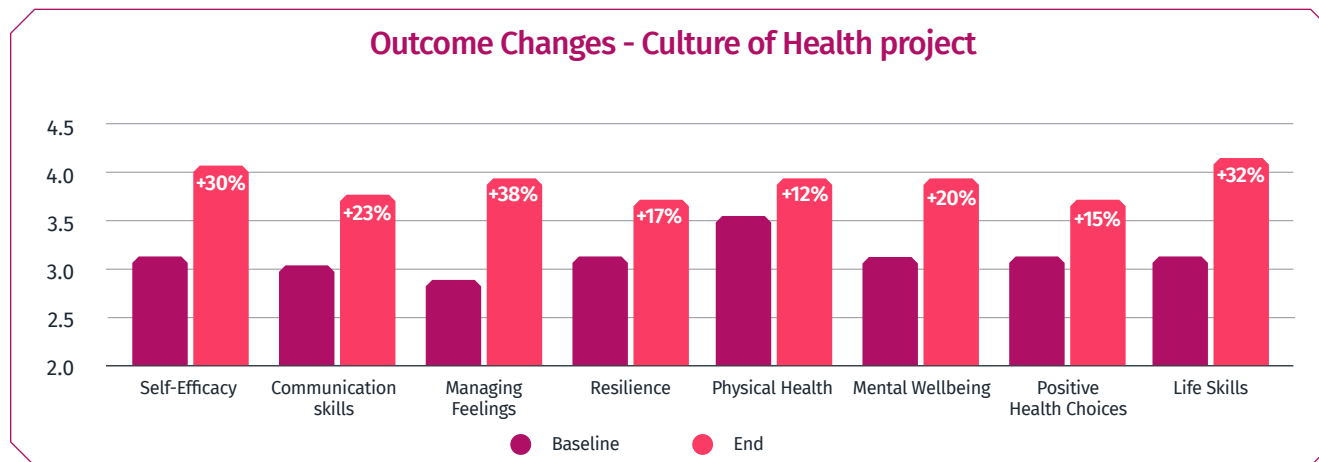
# GOAL 2: Helping young people to live healthier, happier lives

The cost of living crisis significantly impacted young people during 2022-23, with over half saying their mental health has been severely affected, a third saying they are more lonely and 20% reporting they have eaten fewer regular meals<sup>3</sup>. Research shows that young people in the lowest income families are 4.5 times more likely to experience severe mental health problems than those in the highest income families<sup>4</sup>.

Youth Zones provide exciting, varied and engaging sports offers, increasing young people's physical activity levels. Targeted interventions like health projects and mentoring support young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing. And, Youth Zones play a unique role in supporting young people with additional needs and/or disabilities to engage in open access sessions.

2022-23 saw the third year of delivery of the Network's Culture of Health project<sup>5</sup> engaging with 5,381 young people cumulatively.

By supporting young people to live happier and healthier lives, Youth Zones increase their life skills by 32%.



## Key Outcomes

**38%** increase in young people's ability to manage their feelings as a result of attending the Culture of Health project



**20%** increase in young people's mental wellbeing as a result of attending the Culture of Health project



**12%** increase in young people's physical health as a result of attending the Culture of Health project



<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ukyouth.org/2023/04/new-uk-youth-research-shows-impact-of-cost-of-living-crisis-on-young-people/#:-:text=Almost%20half%20of%20young%20people,social%20life%20to%20save%20money>

<sup>4</sup> Gutman L.M., Joshi, H., Parsonage, M., Schoon, I., 2015. Children of the new century: Mental health finding from the Millennium cohort study. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308083993\\_Children\\_of\\_the\\_new\\_century\\_mental\\_health\\_findings\\_from\\_the\\_Millennium\\_Cohort\\_Study](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308083993_Children_of_the_new_century_mental_health_findings_from_the_Millennium_Cohort_Study)

<sup>5</sup> Project funders were: Olgesby Charitable Trust, Rayne Foundation, 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust, CareTech Foundation and Fusion21



## Supporting members with disability/additional needs

13% of young people attending Youth Zones share details of additional needs and/or disabilities: a high proportion, given the open access nature of Youth Zones' delivery.

**17%** increase in self-esteem for young people with additional needs/disabilities

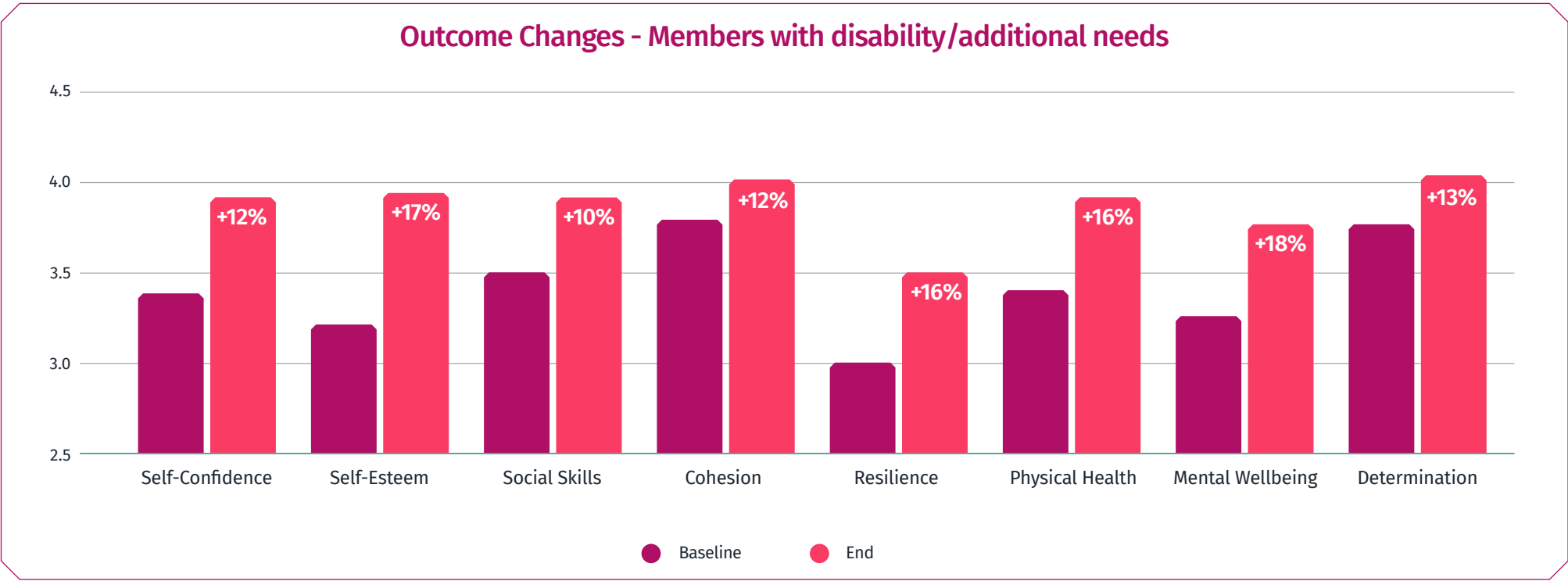
### Key Outcomes

**18%** increase in mental wellbeing for young people with additional needs/disabilities

**16%** increase in resilience and physical health for young people with additional needs/disabilities



Outcome Changes - Members with disability/additional needs



# OLIVER'S STORY

Meet Oliver, an 8-year-old member at Carlisle Youth Zone.

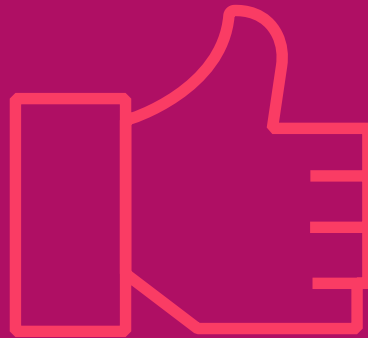
*“ I joined Carlisle Youth Zone (CYZ) as a lot of people are different, I have a disability, I'm almost deaf in one ear and other people like me are here. I have anger issues and need to express my emotions and Youth Zone helps. I like to visit zoos and to make stick houses for ants but every type of living thing should be celebrated.*

*I think Halloween is better than Christmas because you get to dress up as your favourite character - this year I will be dressing up as Dr Octopus or a Gorilla. I also make 3D animals on a laptop.*

*When I first started at CYZ I felt comfortable and everyone understands me. I made a lot of new friends and CYZ is a good place for me. Staff have a full conversation, not like a teacher who give one word answers. I also see people like me who have hearing aids. Now I believe CYZ is really nice and I get to share my ideas with people who I can trust. I like working on big projects - making a secret spy club and bringing a Gigantopithecus back to life with it's DNA, it will live at CYZ.*

*At school there are people with ADHD and Autism but I'm the only one who's almost deaf in one ear - I feel embarrassed and I don't like having to explain myself to people but at CYZ I'm not the only one. I have learnt how to make visual effects which has inspired me to create a short 30 minute film based on King Kong. Peter Jackson's King Kong is my favourite.*

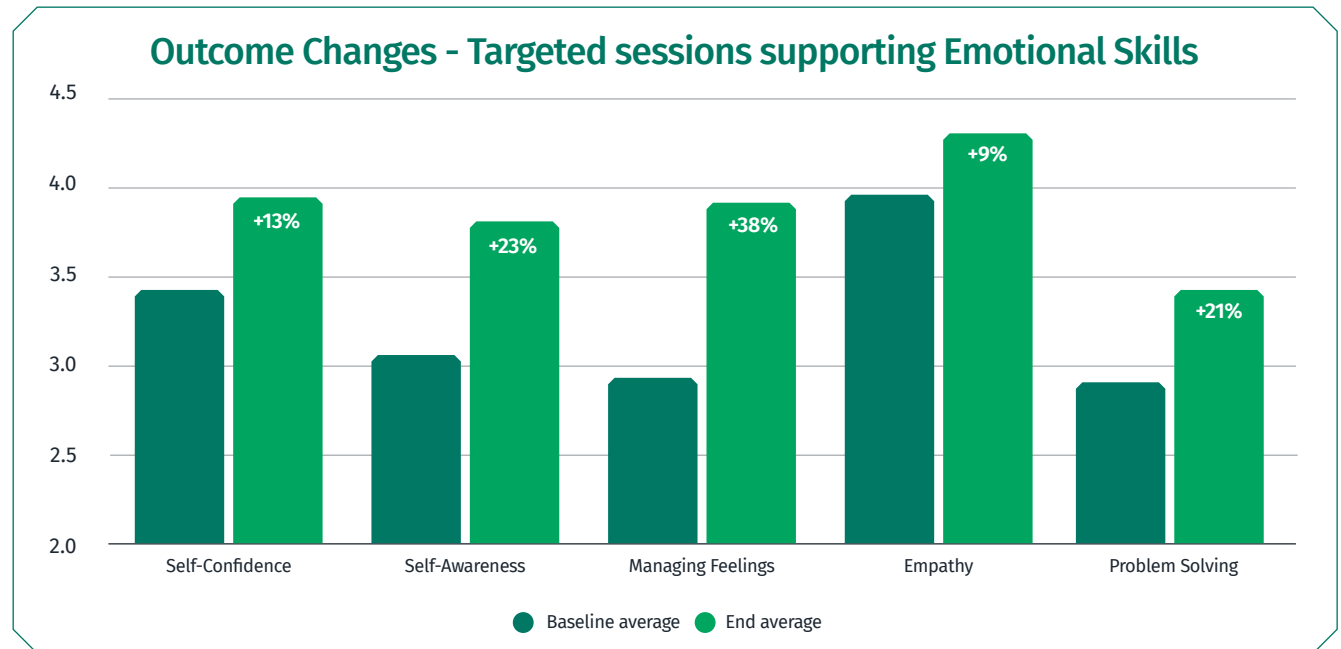
*I can trust people at CYZ and give my opinions and ideas which actually happen. One time I said we should do more drawing and next week I was here, it happened. A lot has changed now I attend CYZ as I now like drama and love singing, there's lots of fun stuff to do.”*



# GOAL 3: Enabling young people to better face the challenges of life

Youth Zones provide a safe environment where young people can build supportive relationships with youth workers and develop crucial emotional and social skills. Open access and targeted sessions support young people to increase their emotional self-awareness and management, confidence and problem solving abilities.

Mentoring provides young people with the opportunity to have one-to-one sessions, supporting them through challenging life transitions. Mentors draw on their own life experiences, helping young people to see they're not alone in what they're dealing with and to build the confidence and resilience needed for adulthood.



## Key Outcomes

**38%** increase in young people's ability to manage their feelings as a result of open access and targeted sessions



**21%** increase in young people's problem solving skills as a result of open access and targeted sessions



**23%** increase in young people's self-awareness as a result of open access and targeted sessions



Our data shows a high empathy baseline for young people attending Youth Zones, meaning there is less scope for improvement.





# GOAL 4: Supporting young people to raise their aspirations and fulfil their potential

Youth Zones positively contribute to young people's ability to transition into adulthood by equipping them with a good understanding of the breadth of opportunities available in their community and with the soft skills required to be successful in life. Equipping young people with essential life skills supports them to positively sustain employment, education or training from 16 years onwards<sup>6</sup>.

Youth Zones provide experiences and opportunities that support young people's personal and social development, working with local businesses and partners to shape delivery of targeted employability and enterprise sessions.

Youth workers support young people to fulfil their potential by raising aspirations and belief in their self-efficacy, strengthening their interpersonal skills and fostering determination. These soft skills enable young people to achieve and succeed in adulthood.

## Key Outcomes

**30%** increase in young people being ready for work or life-long learning as a result of attending targeted sessions



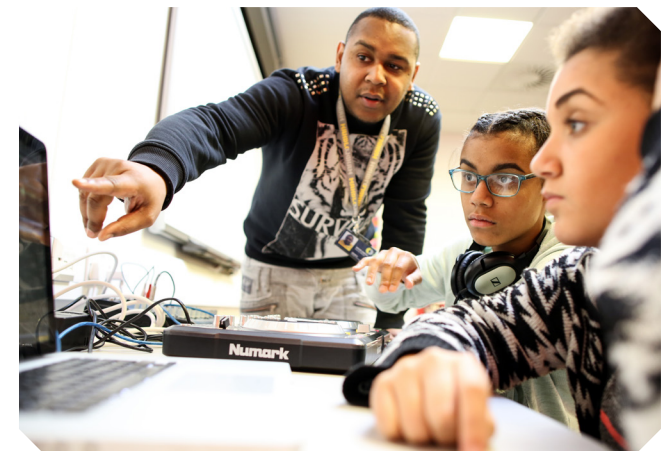
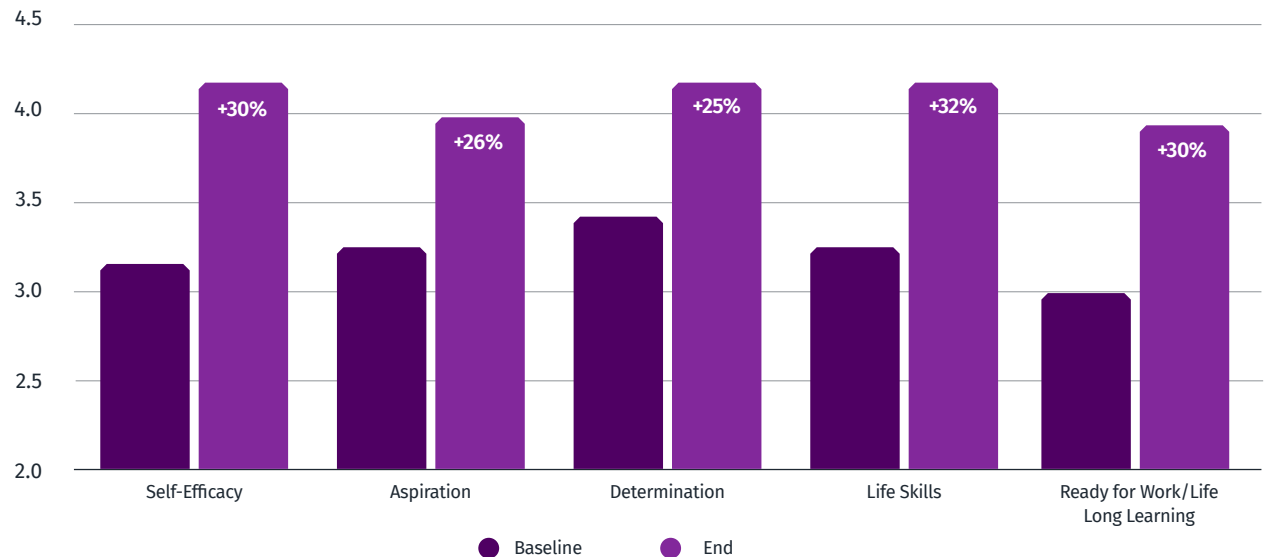
**32%** increase in young people's life skills as a result of attending targeted sessions



**30%** increase in young people's self-efficacy as a result of attending targeted sessions



Outcome Changes - Targeted sessions supporting Aspirations and Achievement



## Spotlight: Blackburn & Darwen Youth Zone Youth Hub

The Youth Hub at Blackburn & Darwen Youth Zone is a programme which supports young people aged 16-24 to prepare for the world of work.

It is a partnership programme working with other local organisations to provide a full support service for young people keen to access employment.

Young people's individual needs are assessed and an action plan is developed that will enable young people to overcome any barriers to employment.

The two key areas of focus on the programme are health & wellbeing and employability. Referred young people have the opportunity to access physical activity sessions, meditation and counselling sessions as well as support with CV writing, interviews, presentation techniques and breathing techniques. They can also attend enterprise days and local business site tours.

### Case Study: Holly's Story

Holly\* was originally referred to the Youth Hub by her Department for Work and Pensions Work Coach. Holly had been homeless on and off for over a year, living in her car and between friend's houses following a relationship breakdown. Holly's Work Coach felt that she needed more support and referred her to Blackburn & Darwen Youth Zone's Youth Hub.

Following an initial one-to-one, Holly's barriers to

employment were explored. She aspired to gain full-time employment in order to better her future prospects. However, it became clear that Holly's biggest obstacles were her housing situation and anxiety.

Rather than looking at her employment status straight away, the focus was on securing her stable accommodation. Holly was supported to contact Blackburn with Darwen Council's housing needs team and an emergency referral for support was made. Holly found herself with no accommodation for the night. Contact was made directly with the local homeless charity Nightsafe, and accommodation was sourced for the night with them.

Following the referral, Holly received further housing support from Nightsafe and secured more long-term stable accommodation. Once accommodation was secured, focus turned to one-to-one sessions to discuss Holly's aspirations and career goals.

Holly went on a world of work tour at one of Blackburn & Darwen Youth Zone's partners, Herbert Parkinson, and was able to meet the team she would be working with which helped ease Holly's anxieties. She was also supported to access help with travel costs.

Holly attended an employability programme and

social action project followed by four weeks in a paid placement with Herbert Parkinson. She had regular check-ins with her manager.

At the end of her placement, Herbert Parkinson were so impressed with Holly's ability and commitment that she was offered a full-time position with the company. Holly continues to receive aftercare support from the Youth Hub team to help her remain in her employment.



*The Youth Hub has supported me in so many ways, they are easy to talk to, they understand you when no one else does, and they are extremely supportive. I wouldn't be where I am now if I didn't have the support of the Blackburn Youth Hub. Through one-to-one's they have given me the opportunity to gain my confidence back and they have helped me push my limits even further and got me out of my shell. I have learned new skills and qualifications due to the training days and courses they have held."*

**Holly\*, 22, Blackburn & Darwen Youth Zone Youth Hub**

\*Name has been changed

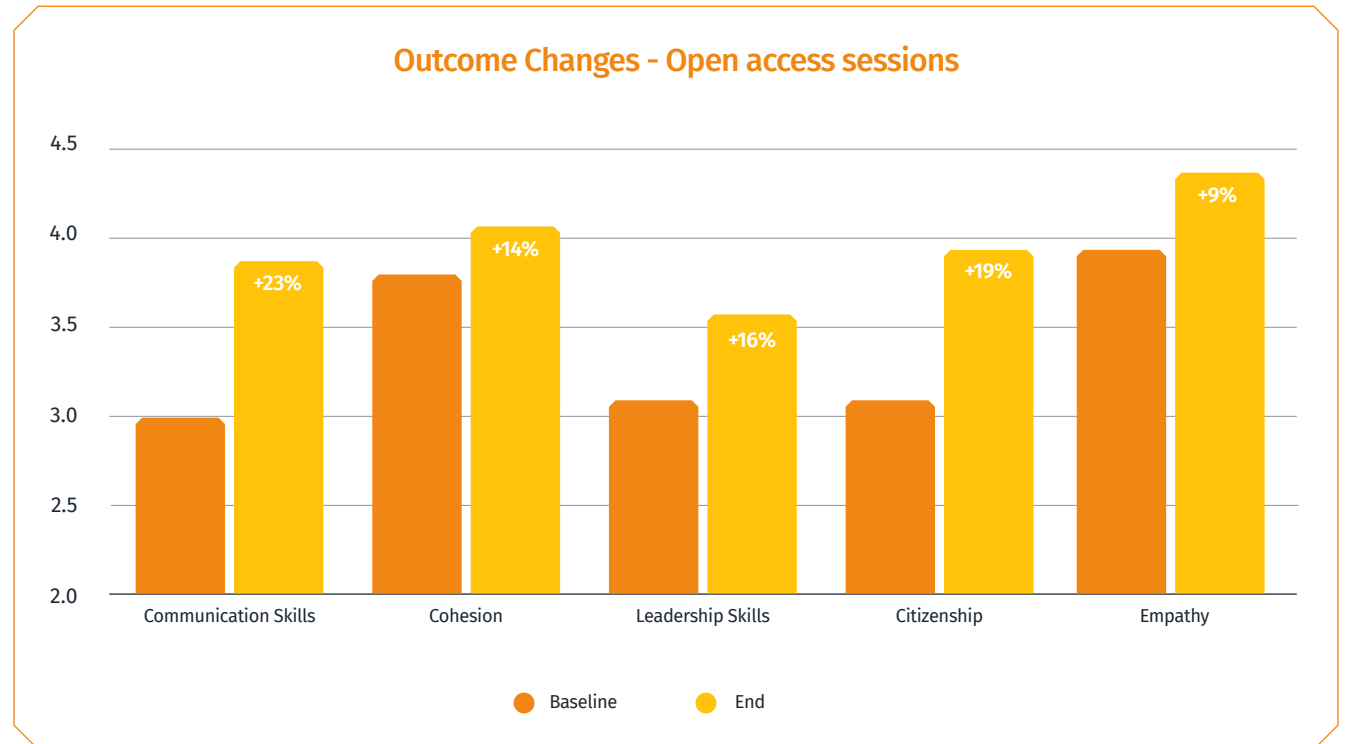
# GOAL 5: Strengthening communities by supporting young people to be empowered, active, responsible citizens

Youth Zones draw members from many different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Open access sessions in Youth Zones create the space for young people to belong and feel more connected to their community, promoting understanding and positive behaviours.

Young people build citizenship skills and social cohesion through leadership opportunities, empowering them to be more active and create change in their Youth Zone and local area.

Awareness and understanding of different communities and cultures is built and stereotypes are challenged through open access sessions and projects celebrating diversity, e.g. Pride, Black History Month, religious and human rights activities and events.

OnSide supports young people to have a voice and be heard at a local and national level by working with partners, patrons, central and local Government.



## Key Outcomes

**23%** increase in young people's communication skills as a result of attending open access session



**14%** increase in young people's cohesion as a result of attending open access sessions



**19%** increase in young people's citizenship as a result of attending open access sessions

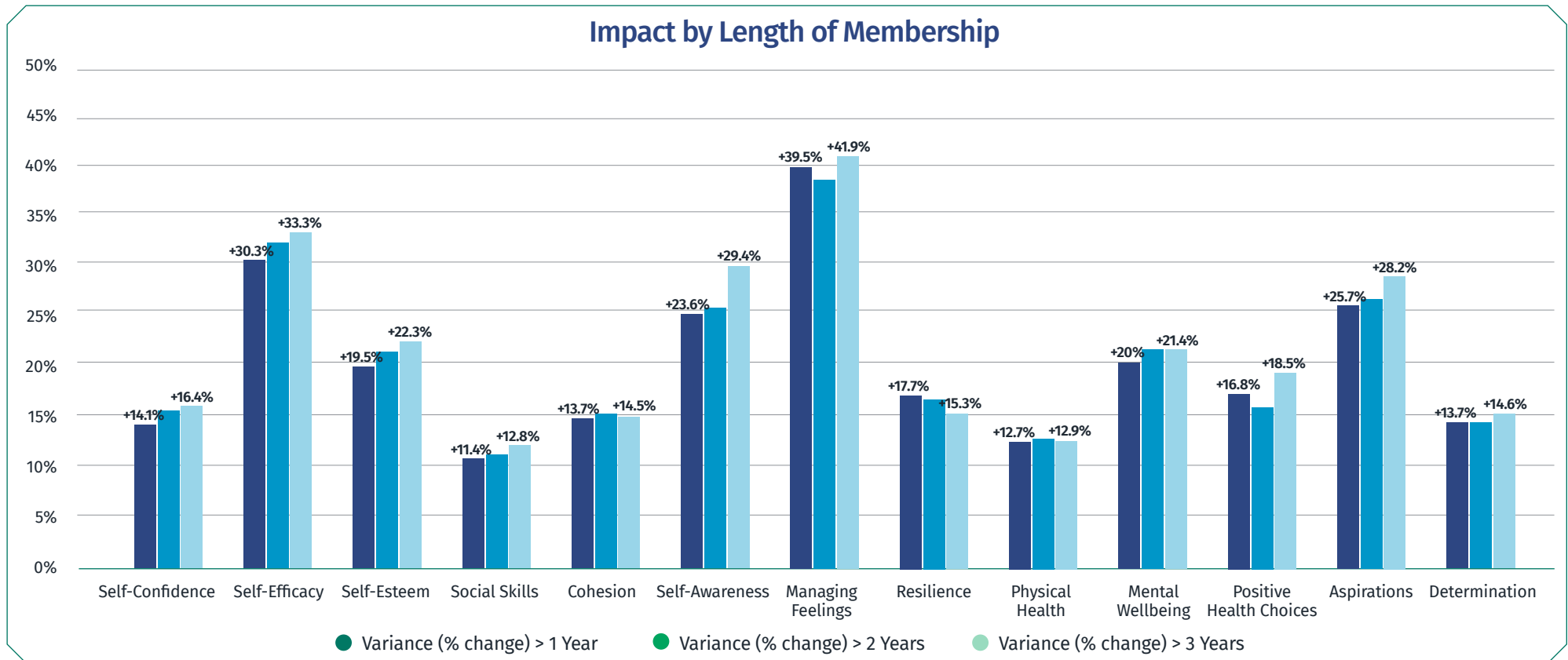


**16%** increase in young people's leadership skills as a result of attending open access sessions





# IMPACT OF LENGTH OF MEMBERSHIP ON OUTCOMES



This year's data has allowed us to start identifying long-term trends for the first time, looking at the impact of membership over time. The data shows a correlation between increased impact on young people and the length of Youth Zone membership after three years in most outcomes. We will continue to monitor impact year on year as the data builds, to form a more robust picture of how outcomes are affected by length of membership.

## Key Outcome Increases from Year One to Year Three

**33%** increase in young people's self efficacy

**30%** increase in young people's self-awareness

**28%** increase in young people's aspirations

The outcome which had a lower increase in year three compared to year one was resilience (-2.5%), however there was still a 15.3% increase from the baseline position. Resilience in year three is likely to have been impacted by the cost of living crisis.

# OnSide

Here for young people

Atria, Spa Road, Bolton BL1 4AG

**Tel: 01204 362128**

[onsideyouthzones.org](https://onsideyouthzones.org)



Registered Charity No: 1125893 Company Registration No: 06591785

Scan for our Network Theory of Change Document:

