

YOUNG BRENT FOUNDATION
**VALUING LIFE
PROGRAMME**

YEAR THREE EVALUATION
2022/23

Meghan Spacey David Woodger Naomi Thompson Goldsmiths University of London

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Young Brent Foundation acts as an umbrella group to support charities and voluntary sector organisations working with young people in the London Borough of Brent.¹ Their key strategies involve assisting organisations with fundraising and distributing grants to projects; the promotion of local youth projects; and facilitating capacity building where projects want to expand or adapt their aims and methods.

Supported by the National Lottery Partnerships Fund, Valuing Life has been a three-year consortium project led by the Young Brent Foundation which broadly aims to tackle serious youth violence. The Valuing Life programme was designed to involve a number of local youth projects, organisations and facilitators to work towards the programme's outcomes. Those that were involved in the evaluation of the project in the third and final year of the Valuing Life programme were as follows:

- Sport at the Heart
Sports, health and wellbeing; youth clubs and community provision
- Clube Dos Brasileirinhos
Brazilian language school for children and young people; supportive provision for families
- Wembley Football
Sports-based community/youth provision in Brent
- Springboard Youth Academy
Support and ESOL educational provision for newly-arrived young people to the UK
- Tyra Gordon
Entrepreneurship education for young people

Since the inception of the Valuing Life programme, it has encountered significant challenges in delivery. Year One of the project coincided with the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. The programme saw substantial adaptation to this crisis and the severe impacts it had on communities in Brent. Delivery shifted in many ways to respond to the emergency and as such this naturally evolved the approach to the original aims of the Valuing Life programme, which were as follows:

1. To prevent children and young people aged 8-13 from engaging in activities related to negative peer groups (in particular, 'gangs') and/or violent criminal behaviours.
2. To engage young people aged 14-17 who are known to be in the early stages of gang-related activities or on the fringes of criminal activity, and divert them towards positive pathways.²

¹ As stated in the Service Level Agreement with Goldsmiths.

² Service Level Agreement with Goldsmiths pp. 1-2

Valuing Life set out their own impact indicators of success for the programme, as below:

1. Reduce numbers of young people being excluded from school/or going to Alternative Provision
2. Decrease substance misuse in children and families
3. Improve wellbeing /mental and physical health of young people and families
4. Improve economic sustainability for young people and families
5. Improve housing outcomes for young people and families
6. Increase personal agency and self-worth of young people
7. Deliver social action projects
8. Increase civil action and participation among young people in Brent

The need for progression in response to rapidly escalating community needs forced a change in delivery structure and expected outputs for the programme. The core aims have remained embedded in the programme objectives, however a more inclusive and holistic process of achieving these goals has meant that certain 'markers' of success have been de-prioritised. This is either because the original indicators of success do not meaningfully represent delivery communities; or, as stated, the necessity of emergency provision during the pandemic brought forward more pertinent needs within Brent that could be attended to by the organisations under Valuing Life.

Outlined below, the adapted delivery strategy had been designed to reflect and achieve the above core aims and support the realisation of the success impacts and associated indicators. ³

The delivery strategy is separated into four key phases:

Phase One: Listening, reflection and creative group work with parents, families and caregivers.

Phase Two: Listening, reflection and creative group work with young people.

Phase Three: Listening and reflection with both young people and parents, families and caregivers.

Phase Four: A showcase and/or celebratory event for all involved in each project.

This evaluation has seen positive evidence for success in delivering these phases by each delivery organisation.

The delivery structure is grounded in two core themes:

1. *Creativity, Culture and Wellbeing.*

³ 'Core Themes and Structure' outline provided by management pp.1-3

This theme was underlined by creativity and connection through using narrative storytelling as a powerful tool for youth and community work. The Valuing Life project co-ordinator shared the following summary:

'Valuing Life invites participants to use narrative storytelling as a means for participants to make sense of their surroundings, culture and identity; such that they are better able to manage withheld emotions. Autobiographical storytelling can lead to owning your story, as well as helping others to understand their own journeys. In listening to the stories of others, both children and adults may see that they share similar, yet unique, experiences.'

2. Intercultural, therapeutic practice.

Valuing Life took a healing-centred, holistic approach to youth and community work. This theme heavily underlined Year Two of Valuing Life's focus on the impact of complex and collective emotional trauma for individuals, families and wider communities in Brent - particularly around the trauma endured due to the repercussive effects of Covid-19.

This had also been particularly pertinent in Year Three of Valuing Life, as communities in Brent and indeed Pan-London and nationally, have been experiencing both space for recovery and healing and a co-current cost-of-living crisis and economic instability following the end of Covid-19 related restrictions.

The project co-ordinator shared the following in regards to this theme:

'A primary goal of Valuing Life is to dismantle the negative framing of the lived experiences of young people, such that they are able to reclaim a positive self-image and sense of worth. To do this effectively, we must safeguard both their physical and emotional wellbeing. Whether in the home, in school or in employment; young people must feel that these environments are safe spaces for them in which to exist, navigate and above all, thrive in their chosen endeavours.'

This recentred focus and adapted delivery strategy has, overall, proved to be prosperous alongside natural re-engagement following Covid-19 restriction lifts. During the first year of delivery, Valuing Life estimated that around 200 young people engaged with the programme. In Year Two, a total of 364 young people and 41 parents, caregivers and family members were engaged with the programme. In Year Three, 630 young people and 84 adults were involved in the five projects under Valuing Life, with a total of 490 delivery hours across all projects.

Goldsmiths University has provided an evaluative report at the end of each year of Valuing Life's delivery with explorations of findings from data collection and recommendations for future practice. This year, we provide our evaluation to both examine findings from Year Three and to offer a retrospective overview of the programme impact as a whole. We present recommendations for possible future iterations of Valuing Life based on areas of success and considerations for development and improvement.

The evaluation will primarily refer to a set of five impacts and associated success indicators

as outlined in the Service Level Agreement with Goldsmiths. Secondly, the evaluation overall considers the attainment of these within context of the evolved delivery strategy and programme approach. Thirdly, the evaluation presents the findings from Year Three as they stand individually, and compares against both Year One and Two to interpret the scope of impact that Valuing Life has accomplished over the three years.

2.0 CONTEXT

This section outlines the contextual factors for the challenges, achievements and progression of Valuing Life over the three years of delivery - focusing on the community in Brent and the relevancy of the programme and associated delivery strategy to achieve its core aims. This section also provides context to the ways in which the Valuing Life programme has been innovative in establishing an effective model for future youth and community projects in Brent.

2.0a Community in Brent

The Valuing Life programme saw significant challenges since it launched in 2018-19. Years One and Two primarily encountered major interruptions in delivery and critical issues specific to Brent became a priority for delivery partners under the programme in both years. Year Three has seen a lifting of Covid-19 restrictions and some early signs of recovery within the youth and community sector.

Brent as a broad community was deeply impacted by Covid-19 and likely will continue to be in the aftermath, as economic instability and the cost-of-living crisis reaches a peak nationwide. At the time of the Year One evaluation, Brent had one of the highest mortality rates for Covid-19 in England and Wales. Although coronavirus cases and associated deaths have since reduced and restrictions lifted, the devastating effect of the pandemic continues to remain cause for intensive work by youth and community organisations in the borough.⁴

Valuing Life's focus on emotional and mental health sought to deliver support for the severe and collective grief and loss experienced within Brent. Alongside this, particularly during the pandemic, the delivery partners for Valuing Life were also committed to providing material support for food scarcity and poverty amongst their provision communities. Brent suffers disproportionately low-incomes and poverty and a lack of access to healthcare compared to other boroughs in London - so the focus on supporting health and wellbeing very positively accounted for serious gaps in accessibility for provision communities.⁵⁶

Young people across the UK continue to be seriously affected in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2022, a review by Durham University of young people's experiences found that:

⁴ UK Youth, 2021. The impact of Covid-19 on England's youth organisations, London: UK Youth.

⁵ Brent Council, 2021. Borough Plan: building a better Brent, London: Brent Council.

⁶ Local Government Association, 2021. *A perfect storm - health inequalities and the impact of COVID-19*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.local.gov.uk/perfect-storm-health-inequalities-and-impact-covid-19>

- Young people are worrying about their educational future as their experience at school, college or university had been seriously disrupted.
- Young people have been disproportionately impacted by the economic fallout of the pandemic, finding it increasingly difficult to gain and maintain a job.
- Young people are struggling with emotional and psychological wellbeing, citing ongoing grief and anxiety over the future as leading contributors.⁷

This review and other research has found that young people experiencing pre-existing marginalisation were more deeply impacted than others by the Covid-19 crisis.^{8 9} The second most ethnically diverse borough in London, 64% of people living in Brent are from a Black, Asian or minoritised ethnic background; and over half, 55% as of 2011, of those living in the borough were born outside of the UK.¹⁰ Communities in Brent face significantly high proportions of financial deprivation and, across the UK; Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic individuals are much more likely to live in poverty.¹¹

In Year Three of Valuing Life, 82% of participants self-identified as Black, Asian or mixed heritage. In Year Two, the Valuing Life approach expanded its delivery strategy to engage more inclusively with the lived experiences of all in Brent. The focus on emotional safety, collective healing and the reclamation of story and identity are important for building and maintaining mutual support and empowerment particularly within marginalised communities. One of the key findings from Year Three of the programme, as in both Years One and Two, highlights '*A sense of family and Community in Brent*' and the ways in which Valuing Life created space for the fostering of this via a reflective and insightful delivery strategy and structure of provision.

The alteration to the Valuing Life pedagogy following Year One offered an effectual vision of youth and community provision that meaningfully represented the experiences of communities in Brent.

2.0b Looking to the Future

The future for young people, their families and communities is no more uncertain than now. As outlined above, young people are feeling the weight of significant worry about their own outcomes. A Prince's Trust report in 2022 found that 51% of young people feel less confident about their futures than pre-pandemic, with fears about the impact of the cost-of-

⁷ MacDonald, R., King, H., Murphy, E. & Gill, W., 2022. The COVID-19 Pandemic and Youth People: Pressure Before, Pressure Now and Pressure to Come, Durham: Youth Futures Foundation.

⁸ Runnymede Trust, 2021. Ethnic inequalities in COVID-19 mortality: A consequence of persistent racism, s.l.: CODE.

⁹ Nazroo, P. J. et al., 2020. Rapid Evidence Review: Inequalities in relation to COVID-19 and their effects on London, Manchester: University of Sussex; The Ubele Initiative.

¹⁰ Brent Council, 2021. Community profiling: diversity in Brent – evidence pack, London: Brent Council.

¹¹ Institute of Race Relations, 2020. BME statistics on poverty and housing and employment. [Online] Available at: <https://irr.org.uk/research/statistics/poverty/> [Accessed 8 February 2021].

living crisis and inability to access employment or education. Another 41% worried about their future every day.¹²

Youth and community organisations have been working intensely throughout the pandemic to support young people in their education and employment prospects. A key theme that emerged from this year's evaluation of Valuing Life is the dedication to this by delivery partners, via the development of up-skilling programmes that enable young people to move from participant, to volunteer mentor and then to paid staff member. We explore this theme in more detail in section 40.b.3. A core finding of this evaluation is that Valuing Life not only supported provision communities at the time of engagement but integrated 'the future' in detail - by creating many vital opportunities for learning and development that have supported young people in their life-progression that will likely continue to benefit and empower them post-engagement with Valuing Life.

The forwards-thinking innovation of Valuing Life also included its approach to youth crime prevention, which remained central to its core aims. Valuing Life takes a holistic and supportive approach to preventing youth people from becoming justice-involved. It is widely agreed that this approach, as evidenced in the delivery strategy, is much more effective in reducing (re)offending and serious crime. In the UK, recent increased efforts have been made to integrate trauma informed practice into youth justice - which considers the impact of trauma on the individual, families and wider communities and its connection to offending. It also emphasises the necessity of long-term relational support for young people, both internal and external to family and community units.¹³ This approach aligns with that of Valuing Life, and signifies an important shift towards a future of person-centred, holistic and non-stigmatising crime prevention.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

September 2021 to September 2022 marks the third and final year of the Valuing Life programme and the Goldsmiths University independent evaluation. For Year Three, as in previous years, Goldsmiths has gathered data and information for evaluation using the following methods:

- Interviews and focus groups with staff
- Surveys for young people and parents, caregivers and family members (PCFs)
- Interviews and focus groups with both young people and PCFs
- Impact and outcome reports for projects completed by organisations associated with Valuing Life
- 'Project Outputs' data collation summary provided by Valuing Life project manager

3.0a Focus groups and interviews

¹² Prince's Trust, 2022. Class of Covid Report 2022, London: Prince's Trust.

¹³ Skuse, D.T. & Matthew, J. (2015) 'The Trauma Recovery Model: Sequencing Youth Justice Interventions for Young People with Complex Needs'. *Prison Service Journal*, 1(220), pp. 16-25.

The focus groups and interviews with young people, staff and PCFs were designed to collect qualitative data. Their responses have been anonymised and presented in the Findings section of this report. We were unable to arrange focus groups or individual interviews in Year One of the project and Year Two presented logistical issues in arranging as many as needed for effective reporting.

Year Three has been appreciably easier, and we were able to do two focus groups with young people, two with staff and another two with PCFs. Individual interviews with young people, staff and community members were done ad-hoc during an event for one organisation to better suit their provision. The demographic makeup of each focus group and interviewees directly reflected that of all provision communities involved in Valuing Life this year.

This year, some data from Year Two focus groups has been 'carried over' into this evaluation due these groups having been completed within the time-frames of both Year Two and Three provision.

3.0b Surveys

Over the three years of the evaluation, we have had significant difficulty in gathering quantitative data via the use of surveys.

At launch, the evaluation team at Goldsmiths designed a survey for both young people and parents/family members to complete, which would measure change through their engagement with Valuing Life. These surveys were conceived in line with the impact indicators of the programme which are defined in the co-signed Service Level Agreement between Goldsmiths and the Young Brent Foundation.

In Year One, the surveys were not embedded consistently by projects so we were unable to gather sufficient data from these. In Year Two, all projects completed surveys with young people and two with PCFs. These surveys were designed to be completed twice by respondents, once at the beginning of engagement and another at the end to effectively measure 'distance-travelled.' However, a lack of consistent completion meant that all respondents only completed the survey once.

Following feedback and reflection on Year Two, Goldsmiths worked in collaboration with Valuing Life management and delivery partners to re-design both the young people's and PCF surveys. These were intended to more accurately assess impact in union with the evolving aims and measures of the programme. Both of the surveys only needed to be completed the once, to better fit with session facilitation for organisations. The new surveys were also designed to enable the evaluation to aggregate comparable data spanning the three years of Valuing Life and to form a more complete understanding of the overall impact of the programme. A tailored survey was also designed in collaboration with one organisation that would better reflect the needs of their provision community whilst still enabling comparative analysis.

This year, we have received a mix of both old and newly re-designed completed surveys from differing organisations, as well as the tailored surveys mentioned above. Instructions and copies of the new survey were delivered by Goldsmiths to both Valuing Life management and delivery partners. The mix of surveys does not allow us to draw the comparative analysis as initially hoped. As such, survey data will be presented for Year Three individually and, where possible, some comparisons have been made between this year and Year Two results.

4.0 FINDINGS

This section will firstly outline findings from surveys received from four organisations involved in Year Three of Valuing Life. This section includes surveys from both young people and parents, carers and family members.

Secondly, this section will cover findings from focus groups and individual interviews with both young people, PCFs, staff and other community members. This section is categorised into three core themes that emerged from groups and interviews.

4.0a Surveys

The following two sub-sections outline the findings from surveys completed by young people and parents, carers and family members engaged with the Valuing Life programme in Year Three.

4.0.a.1 Young People

The Year One evaluation was unable to accurately assess quantitative data from young people due to low take-up of surveys across projects. Year Two was further unable to compare surveys gathered with the previous year, however these provided valuable insight into some elements of the impact of the programme.

Year Three has presented similar challenges, as differing surveys were used by each organisation and as such cannot be compared against the previous two years. The inconsistency over the three years of the evaluation does not enable us to draw the wider comparative analysis of impact that was initially planned. However, the surveys from Year Three do again provide a picture of the ways in which Valuing Life delivery has supported changes in the respondent's lives throughout the Year Three delivery period.

In Year One, we received 19 usable responses to surveys. In Year Two, 165 usable responses. In Year Three, 115. The responses this year generally show over-proportionate positive impact and attainment in comparison to last year.

This year of the evaluation report, we present the survey findings under sub-headings relating to the point of impact and associated indicators outlined as success measurements for the programme. This is because the differing surveys mean we are not able to create overall percentages encompassing all responses per organisation. For some of the following

findings, we report only the findings from the newer surveys as they provide a more accurate reflection of impact.

Some sub-indicators for each of the five 'impact' success measures have been de-prioritised by Valuing Life and have therefore not been included in the following section.

Impact 1: Increase personal agency and self-worth

This impact was measured with questions pertaining to self-belief in creating personal and social change, and trust in the self and others.

Respondents were asked to choose areas in their lives in which they felt able to make a change *before* engagement with their respective project and which they felt they could change *after*. The following areas that could be chosen were: *personal wellbeing; experience of school/education; future career and success; family, friends and other relationships, and feeling safe*. The old surveys only asked this question regarding which areas respondents felt they could change at the moment of completing the survey.

Overall, the most chosen area in which young people felt able to make change following or during engagement was 'Future career and success,' across all organisations. This is the same as in Year Two. The constancy of this survey result may reflect the 'forward-thinking' that was embedded in Valuing Life, and the efforts of delivery organisations to generate opportunities and foster attainment in education and employment for young people.

In the survey measuring *before* and *after*, the results show an increase in project participants' sense of personal agency. An average 10% more respondents chose all five areas they felt they could make change in their lives *after* engagement. 44% of respondents overall chose additional areas following their engagement.

The majority of young people across all organisations reported both high and increased feelings of trust in themselves, in others and a perception that others from outside of their friendship group could trust them. The questions based on 'trust' were designed to represent *impact indicator 1:2: young people feel they trust themselves, others and feel trusted by others*. Year Two respondents to the survey also reported high trust which may represent a dedication to the Valuing Life pedagogy of nurturing safe and accepting community spaces amongst delivery organisations. This is explored further in 40.b.1.

Impact 2: Reduce number of short term and permanent exclusions

We were unable to access data regarding to young people's engagement in education and whether or not connection to Valuing Life supported an increase or decrease in this. However, the survey sought to understand whether the young people self-reported changes in their educational attainment and attendance.

The majority of respondents (at 68%) reported improved grades since their engagement with a Valuing Life project. Attendance stayed relatively stable for most young people, however about one-third reported improved attendance.

This is similar to the results from the Year Two survey, with most young people sharing improved grades despite the disruptions to their education during Covid-19.

The increase in educational attainment and attendance is a very positive sign that Valuing Life has supported young people during a very difficult transitional period in their educational journeys.

Questions regarding teamwork were included in the survey to measure for *impact indicator 2:3: young people have the ability to work collaboratively and productively with others.*

The majority of young people shared they 'enjoyed working with other people to achieve a task,' with most stating they enjoyed teamwork *more* after engagement with Valuing Life. This positively reflects a commitment within Valuing Life organisations to encourage and foster young people's friendships and support for one another.

Impact 3: Improve economic sustainability for young person and their family

This impact was measured through various questions. One of which asked respondents to report whether they were involved with any extracurricular activities that would support their personal and professional development. It would also provide an overview of whether young people were participating in civic action, which aligns with one of the key aims of Valuing Life project (8: *increase civil action and participation among young people in Brent*)

Most young people, on average, were involved with extracurricular activities, with the most common four being: *Supporting other young people e.g., as a mentor or helping your friends; School Council; Social action, charity projects and/or other fundraising activities,* and, *other community activity.* There was room for improvement here however as 36% of young people were not involved in any activities during or post-engagement.

Impact indicator 3:3: young people take on roles and obligations within activities was assessed using a question about whether respondents took on leadership roles in various aspects of their lives, such as at school or at home. The majority of young people reported that they engaged with leadership '*very often*' and '*sometimes*' and that they did so more following participation in their Valuing Life project. Raising aspirations for leadership is vitally important, particularly for young people living, learning and working within disproportionately deprived communities such as those in Brent.

Impact 4: Improve physical wellbeing and mental health

This impact was one of the most significant and important for Valuing Life across all three years of its delivery. As such, many questions were used in the surveys to measure for this which are outlined below under the sub-headings for this impact.

4:1 Young people feel safe and secure

Young people reported overall a high sense of safety at home and in their local area. We found from focus groups and interviews that there are concerns about safety in Brent and this is something that each partner organisation has striven to address. One organisation under Valuing Life in particular (*Wembley Football*) has been dedicated to reducing instances of 'postcode rivalries' and has seen positive success in supporting the building of rapport between young people from different areas, to enable a greater sense of safety and security for all in the community.

Similarly, another question examined the respondents' confidence in travelling both within and out of their local area. Again, the majority of young people reported high levels of confidence that had heightened following their engagement with the Valuing Life projects.

Related to this, a tailored survey for one organisation (*Springboard Youth Academy*) showed that 91% of young people felt that Springboard Youth Academy had helped them to generally build their confidence.

4:2 Young people feel a sense of purpose, achievement and contribution

This indicator has been adapted slightly over the three years of Valuing Life, to include a broader sense of emotional and mental wellbeing that extends beyond the above markers. In the newer survey, 72% of young people reported that their respective projects had supported them to explore and understand their emotional wellbeing and mental health.

4:3 Young people feel included and have a greater connection with their community

To measure for this indicator, from the tailored survey for *Springboard Youth Academy*, 91% of young people felt that they had made more friends since attending the project. This question was used in lieu of a question in the standard survey regarding improvements in relationships and communication with family.

The vast majority of young people reported that their relationships and communication with their family was '*Very positive*' both during and after their participation in Valuing Life. Year Two and Three of Valuing Life placed a significant importance on facilitating conversation and connections with parents, caregivers and family members involved with the various delivery organisations. The above survey result is higher than that of Year Two, which may reflect success in the efforts of Valuing Life to engage entire families in its supportive provision.

Impact 5: Reduce substance misuse in child and/or family

This impact is one that has been de-prioritised as Valuing Life has progressed. This is due to the inherent difficulty in identifying and assessing for changes in this particular area.

40.a.2. Parents, carers and family members

Valuing Life's approach was defined by holistic, healing-centred youth work that encompasses the entirety of a young person's lived experiences and how these influence

their past, present and future. This approach in practice looks to and beyond just the individual and integrates a core consideration of the role and impact of family, community and society for each young person.

In Year One, it was recommended by evaluators to continue the development and implementation of a more intensive focus on parents, carers and families involved with project under the programme. We have found that this has been very successfully integrated into provision in Years Two and Three.

As referenced to in section 2.0.b long-term relational support and healthy community connections are essential for youth crime prevention and effective provision. This focus lay at the heart of Valuing Life's aims and delivery methods, with two of the key impacts and indicators for the programme focusing on family engagement.

The surveys for parents, carers and family members were designed to primarily focus on the respondents' relationships to their young person or persons. Two organisations this year were able to complete and submit surveys for PCFs. While this does not allow for a very detailed portrayal of the global impact of Valuing Life on this group of participants, it does provide some insight in their experiences.

Overall, the surveys reflected positive experiences of the projects that respondents were involved in. On average, respondents reported '*Very positive*' relationships with their young person/s and 100% across both organisations felt able to support their young person/s to make changes in their lives. This, similar to the high proportion of young people who felt able to make change in their own lives, evidences a positive achievement of *impact 1; indicator 1: young people believe in their ability to create personal and social change*. Support from their family members can enable and motivate young people to generate change.

The most common areas in which PCFs felt able to support change was in *personal wellbeing and family, friends and other relationships*. *Future career and success* followed this up. This reflects the young people's survey, in the latter area being one that they most felt able to change post-engagement with the project. This signifies a positive trajectory towards supporting both young people, their families and wider communities during a current and continuing time of unstable and uncertain employment prospects.

In connection to this, PCFs reported a medium sense of engagement with their young person/s education at 62%. This is still high but in comparison to the markedly high positive responses on other questions, this suggests the presence of a gap between PCFs and schools.

One of the ambitions of Valuing Life was to develop a school's programme that would engage more young people and support networking. In both Years One and Two, this was interrupted by Covid-19 restrictions, however the Goldsmiths evaluation did recommend the development of this for Year Three once these lifted. For future iterations of Valuing Life, this schools programme may improve and support the communication and connection between parents and their young people's educational experiences.

40.b Focus groups and interviews

This section presents the findings from focus groups and individual ad-hoc interviews with young people; parents, carers and family members, and staff involved in the Valuing Life programme across the partner organisations.

We have identified three key themes that stand individually but also interrelate to provide an overall view of the programme and the important contributions it has made to participants' lives.

The themes are as follows:

- A sense of family and community in Brent (within project and in Brent)
- Growth, learning and development
- Peer support, mentorship and progression

The focus groups were designed to gather a general understanding of the ways in which the respective projects associated with Valuing Life were generating effects in various aspects of participants' lives such as at home, in school or the wider local area and community.

To do this, questions were asked relating to this and to the success measurements outlined for impact for the programme. Participants were also asked to choose postcards depicting various pictures that represented their experience with each respective organisation and share their thoughts. We chose to do this for the focus groups to represent the intention and pedagogy of Valuing Life's delivery strategy, namely the focus on narrative storytelling to enable self-expression, compassion and empowerment. Echoing this, this findings section emphasises the '*voices of Valuing Life*,' ensuring quotes and comments from participants are foregrounded in the ways they reflect the experiences of the programme and its successes.

40.b.1. A sense of family and community in Brent

A strong theme that emerged from focus groups and interviews, '*a sense of family and community*' was one that was felt by participants both within their respective organisation and in their local areas of Brent. This was also a key theme in both the Years One and Two. Years Two and Three of Valuing Life integrated a strong focus on building intergenerational connections into the ethos of the programme. In Year Two, project leaders expressed that they felt this focus was of deep importance and that they shared in the vision outlined within the adapted delivery strategy - especially in facilitating healing and communication within families, and the value of this for supporting wider community wellbeing.

In Year Three, it is notably clear that the organisations under Valuing Life have been consistently dedicated to creating community spaces that uphold safety, trust and acceptance. In focus groups and interviews, there was a shared sense of this from participants and that this feeling extended beyond the walls of each organisation and further out into individual lives. This reflects the attainment of *Impact 4: improve physical*

wellbeing and mental health. This impact was significant in Year Two in particular and attention to the integration of this is represented equally in Year Three.

Many participants testified to a feeling of safety and 'family' within their respective projects as these two young people express below:

"I [have] kind of found my second house and of course, my second family. I can easily trust them and share all I have as they did the same to me with kindness and being with politeness and friendly which had a lot of effects on my mental health. Because I really needed some people to be my side and show me the way that I can develop and improve myself in a best way and having the best teachers who acted to me kinder than real parents which i would never forget." (Survey respondent - young person)

"Everything was cold, I was cold and didn't feel anything for anyone even my family. It is now changing; now I am interested in everybody and do not feel as alone." (Focus group - young person 1)

The increased focus on supporting parents, caregivers and family members in Years Two and Three showed not only very positive outcomes via the surveys, but correspondingly this group habitually emphasised the value they felt from their engagement - both for themselves and for the positive impact this had on their relationships with their young people and wider family. This parent below shares how the project they were involved with enabled connections with shared experiences and supported a sense of community:

"This project has been very positive and has been a sense of triumph. I have been learning more about myself and consequently this has been helping me to reconnect with my daughters in a sense of raising two daughters in a different environment to where I was raised. In a way there is conflict and struggles, and to be in a place where there are so many people have the same kind of experience and sharing has been so important for my self-esteem. Especially for the last couple of years that has impacted me so much, not being able to go to my country or my family coming here. You feel kind of lonely sometimes and having this space is giving a lot of support and positive self-esteem." (Focus group - parent 1)

As outlined in section 20.a the borough of Brent experiences significant challenges and has done so acutely throughout the Covid-19 crisis which coincided with Valuing Life's years of delivery. In Years One and Two, delivery partners and project leaders spoke to the importance of nurturing a sense community pride within Brent and generating opportunities that otherwise would not be provided. This year, many of those interviewed expressed their opinions on what is needed within Brent to bolster and improve attainment, achievement and outcomes:

"I think Brent needs a lot more love and care than it's getting, especially towards the youth side of things. We're currently sitting inside what is the last youth centre in Brent, there are now no youth centres in Brent. It's sad, but at least we're still able to use this space for the young people in Brent. I feel we need more of that throughout Brent, because we mainly cover the Harlesden area, but we've done some sessions up in Kingsbury which is closer to one of our coaches. There's a lot of places that need

love and care, and just opportunities, somewhere for the young people to go to."
(Focus group - staff member 1)

"Brent doesn't have something like this. There's nothing like this in Brent. With everything they've been doing over the last couple of years, it's led to this kind of tournament. Which is stretched over a three-week period, usually one day, but having it over a three-week window can affect many more young people. It also shines a spotlight on Brent, that there is a lot going on in Brent." (Interview - Brent community member)

"I think Brent needs more opportunity for people to be upskilled at a more affordable rate. There are opportunities, but I feel like there's many hubs in Brent that you could go to and find out all this information. And a lot of people are really busy; with all the barriers, time, money and travel, it's really hard to seek these opportunities." (Focus group - staff member 2)

"This is free, so anyone can afford it; and dedicating the time, because people are very passionate about football, however they do not have enough money, they can come here because this is free and it helps them. It brings out their true colours...if everyone can meet and learn something new then I think it helps in our future."
(Interview - young person 1)

It is clear from the findings that the project participants, staff and other community members connected to Valuing Life feel strongly for outcomes in Brent and offer significant insight into the needs and wishes of communities in the borough. We have found that Valuing Life responded keenly throughout the three years of delivery to these and consistently provided equal opportunity spaces that nurtured mutual aid, collaboration and a resilient sense of community - all of which greatly reinforced attention to, and attainment of, the core aims and impact indicators for the programme.

40.b.2. Growth, learning and development

A core element of the delivery strategy and of the success measurements over the three years of Valuing Life programme was to encourage continuing growth, learning and development. Both in supporting the expansion of delivery organisations and associated provision but primarily in the support of progress for young people and communities.

"As someone who has had previous immigration struggles: I remember coming to this country and having issues getting settled, and one of the things that happens is you're not humanised. You're seen as a statistic or a problem, and people just forget that you are a child. They're all children. This is a place that really humanises these young people when they come here and they do genuinely feel like we care about them, because we do. Everyone here, the young people and the staff, make such a conscious effort to make them feel as comfortable as possible. I think that really allows us to see such a change in the students...Learning English is important, but past learning English just seeing them blossom and their personalities really come out is the most beautiful things about Springboard." (Focus group - staff member and previous volunteer 1)

One core theme in Valuing Life's delivery strategy for Years Two and Three was *'intercultural, therapeutic practice,'* facilitating connections and relationships within Brent to establish a greater sense of community. This young person below explained how learning about different cultures to their own would benefit them in their future:

"There's a lot of people from different ethnic backgrounds, that have moved here, so if everyone can meet them and learn something new about them then I think it helps in our future. Say if someone is Jamaican for example and they come here, and I talk to them, learn more about them, their culture, their background, then in the future if I meet another Jamaican person I can say, 'Oh, I know this, because I had a friend!' So, it's very helpful I guess in future life...knowing different people, knowing you can help them, communicating is important. Learn more about them. If you don't learn something every day, you're just doing the simplest thing. If I'm just doing two plus two every day, then I won't learn anything. Learning more is very helpful." (Interview - young person 2)

Valuing Life prioritised the attainment of young people through employment and educational opportunities. Achievement of *Impacts 1: increase personal agency and self-worth and 3: improve economic sustainability for young people and families* in particular are reflected in the attention of delivery organisations to personal and professional growth and learning for young people participating.

This staff member and previous volunteer expressed the ways in which their respective project encouraged their learning so that they could progress to paid work within the organisation:

"[It] has actually pushed me out of my comfort zone and had me in these situations where I had to do it. I like this new side of me because I am more confident to do things, like the qualifications and everything I've built are all helping me grow." (Focus group - Staff member and previous volunteer 2)

This parent expressed the ways in which their young person had grown since their engagement with Valuing Life. This young person, who struggled prior to engagement, was since participating in volunteer training within their project:

"My daughter has been here for a while. Before, she wanted to go here, there and everywhere. But now, there's only one place she wants to come to. I was happy with that. As soon as she came here, she was outgoing anyway, but her behaviour, there were certain behaviours I didn't like. So, she started here and when she came home everything was just positive." (Focus group - parent 2)

Various projects and the session facilitated that focused on supportive work with parents, caregivers and family members also enabled reflection on progress in parenting and how this uplifted relationships with young people:

"Every other day I'm thinking about this group when I am talking to my son and I am thinking, 'I must reflect on how I am progressing with him as he gets older, how my relationship with him is progressing as he gets older.' I am in love with this project."
(Focus group - parent 3)

Growth, learning and development were central to Year Three of Valuing Life, particularly with consideration of the model of forwards-thinking work it established within communities in Brent. This staff member shared their thoughts in relation to their respective project and more broadly what is needed in Brent to facilitate continuing positive outcomes for young people:

"How it goes a lot of the time, there's a lot of 'come and go' organisations. [Sport at the Heart] is a 'come and grow' organisation. Whether you're a participant, or a staff member, everyone comes together and they grow. I feel like it's not even an organisation, it's more like a community where everyone's in it together. For it to thrive as much as it does, is about 'there's not one without the other.' It's an amazing experience to be involved in." (Focus group - staff member 3)

40.b.3 Peer support, mentorship and progression

This theme ties-in involvedly with the previous two. Peer support, mentorship and personal progression were notable and profound experiences for participants. Each organisation focused greatly on personal and career development for participants, by sustaining and supporting volunteer skills-building and peer mentor programmes.

Many staff present at focus groups had themselves previously been either a recipient of provision at each organisation or had joined as a volunteer and progressed on to paid work. Supporting young people's interest and investment in their local area and community is of critical importance for improving outcomes for all within Brent.

This key theme: peer support, mentorship and progression, was also present in both Years One and Two of the evaluation. We find that the collective dedication amongst the partner organisations to generate structures of empowerment via opportunity for self and community development has been vital and exceptionally positive. The high priority given to peer support and community building exemplify the dedicated work by all of the project organisations to achieving the specific aims of the Valuing Life programme.

"Yeah, I feel like if it wasn't for [Sport at the Heart] I wouldn't be a volunteer. Because it showed me that I can be confident, and I can really show people that I can be confident." (Focus group - volunteer 1)

It is clear that Valuing Life regarded the young people and families engaged with each organisation to be equal partners in achievement. Project leaders this year and in Year Two spoke of the importance of collaborating with young people in their own development and success:

"They are driving the change with their effort, their hard work. It means a huge amount to us that this does feel like a safe and positive space, and that even after engaging for a short time that it would have an impact like that." (Focus group - staff member 4)

Young people attending the project that the above quote describes expressed ambition to return as peer mentors. Development through the programme into volunteering roles was strongly encouraged by the organisation. Some of the mentors at the time of the evaluation had themselves been a participant on the project and strongly valued having the space in which to bring their lived experience to their support of their peers.

Peer support is linked to the broader approach that Valuing Life took to empower young people and families to take ownership of their narratives by sharing their life stories with others, celebrating similarities and differences and working together towards common goals. This, in combination with the dedication to community development enabled many focus group participants interviewed to attain role-model positions as volunteers, peer mentors and staff.

"I've seen hundreds, thousands even, different people. You'll be walking down the street, and it'll be someone I coached three years ago but I can't remember them and they're like, 'Hey Coach.' So, the trees represent how many people you touch and engage with, and have helped along the way." (Focus group - staff member and previous volunteer 3) (In reference to a postcard with a mountain scene and forest depicted)

The staff member below articulately summarises the importance of the dedication by Valuing Life to cultivate peer support and develop opportunities with Brent:

"I've been involved in a lot of projects as well as being given a lot of opportunities to get my qualifications from here. What does Brent need? I think Brent needs more people to start looking at and taking care of people, and allow people to have second chances. I call this place a second chance, because all those people out there who might not be able to find the right path, this place especially, everyone is so welcoming and, not just aware of your issues, they want to be aware of your issues." (Focus group - staff member 5)

5.0 Conclusion and future recommendations

In the two previous years of the Goldsmiths evaluation report, we have provided recommendations for future practice to be implemented in the following year of the Valuing Life programme. As this year has been the third and final year of Valuing Life, this evaluation tailors the recommendations to instead consider how a potential future iteration of the programme may continue to develop and improve upon the effective and important work of Valuing Life 2019-2022.

Over the course of this evaluation, we have adapted our recommendations with each year as the programme has diverted somewhat from the original aims and strategies of delivery. We have found that these recommendations have been considered and some implemented with success. However, there is room for improvement in future iterations of Valuing Life -

as some very important aspects of the programme were unable to come to fruition, such as the Schools programme.

As stated in the Methodology section we have been unable to draw accurate comparative data for the three years. This means we are limited in our ability to consider the full breadth of impact the Valuing Life programme has had. This is unfortunate, as the data we have been able to collate signifies exceptional achievement by Valuing Life in attaining core aims and objectives - with greater access overall to more extensive and accurate data we could have provided deeper insight and a more concrete evaluation of impact.

A total of 1194 young people and 125 adults (including parents, caregivers and family members) were engaged over the three years of Valuing Life. Strong themes emerged throughout the three-year evaluation that exemplified the dedication, commitment and principles of both Valuing Life and delivery organisations. Family and community in Brent; Peer support, mentorship and empowerment; health and wellbeing in the borough, and an innovative, holistic and unique approach to youth crime prevention have all been the key cornerstones of the Valuing Life programme and the areas of the greatest achievement and success. The data gathered over the years by this evaluation reflects meaningful and effectual improvements and attainment for provision communities. This evaluation concludes that the Valuing Life programme has created a model for accomplishment in the support of youth and community organisations in Brent. With further development and evaluation, this programme could be integrated successfully in the future into the arsenal of the Young Brent Foundation's support of its provision communities.

5.0a. Future recommendations

1. Develop and maintain consistent delivery strategies

The strategy and pedagogy for Valuing Life developed and evolved over the three years of delivery. This was due to a rapidly changing context of needs within Brent. Lessons-learned and new perspectives from management level drove this evolution, which this evaluation concludes has been ultimately very successful in supporting the success of the programme. Future iterations of the Valuing Life programme may benefit from a similar strategy that can equally adapt to challenges.

We recommend that any future delivery strategies are, *prior to launch*, carefully and collaboratively designed to meaningfully reflect the needs, wants and wishes of delivery recipients and partner organisations in Brent, as the newer strategy had done. The voices of the provision communities and delivery organisations in Brent should be centred in development of future projects similar to that of Valuing Life. This will enable a strong sense of common purpose and equal investment amongst all organisations and enable more effective civic participation within delivery communities.

From an evaluation position, the changing delivery strategy presented issues in our ability to accurately report upon impact for the programme. The initial measurements of success were either de-prioritised or phased-out, so we have too adapted alongside the programme.

Communication and logistical difficulties that arose due to fast-changing structure prevented more effective and reflective data collection and analysis.

2. Develop and nurture peer mentorship and professional progression for young people in Brent

As outlined in section 40.b.3 peer mentorship and professional progression have been core aims and achievements for the Valuing Life programme. Staff, young people, community members and parents, carers and family members have all testified to the benefits of peer support, civic participation and career development.

Supporting young people to invest in their own lives and community has been, in their own words, of immeasurable benefit to many participants in Valuing Life. Continuing on this vital work of the programme can offer greater outcomes for individuals, families and communities within Brent - particularly in consideration of the present and future challenges facing the borough.

3. Create and sustain networks between organisations in Brent

The development and improvement of communication networks between youth and community-based organisations in Brent was a key theme in Years One and Two, and a consecutive recommendation by this evaluation in these years. We found that delivery partners were unaware that other organisations were engaged under the Valuing Life umbrella, or had little to no contact with others. Project leaders for organisations shared that they felt it would be of 'immense benefit' to have the opportunity to collaborate and network with one another - and that this would crucially enrich their provision.

In future projects, it is recommended that youth and community organisations in Brent have the opportunity for this networking and cross-collaboration.

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