

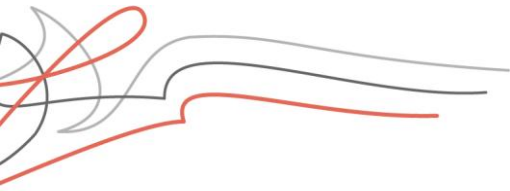


## Youth in justice:

Young people explore what their role in improving youth justice should be

Owen Cook – Space Unlimited

March 2015



## Foreword

At the Centre for Youth & Criminal Justice (CYCJ) we are committed to involving young people in improving youth justice services and supports. We believe that changes to youth justice based on the experience and knowledge of young people along with practitioners, policy makers and researchers, have the greatest potential to achieve the best outcomes.

However, we were uncertain of the best way to involve young people in improving youth justice services. We also didn't know whether young people would be interested in doing this and what it would look like to do this well. Therefore, we commissioned Space Unlimited to work with young people who were involved in, or at risk of becoming involved in, youth justice services. We asked them to work with the young people to explore their interest in being involved in improving youth justice policies, practices and systems and what this involvement should look like.

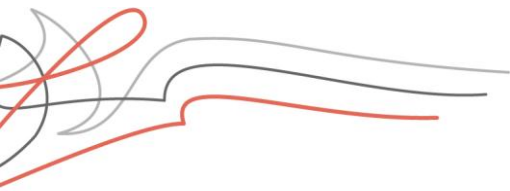
We have learnt much from this process but we also think there is considerable learning for others interested in involving young people as active partners in change.

We have listened carefully to what the young people have said and heard loud and clear their experience of being consulted with but their views then being ignored. This report documents the first stage of a process, and at this point some young people felt they have contributed all they wanted to and have moved on to other things. Others want to continue a relationship with CYCJ and work with us to improve things, and we've identified a couple of concrete issues to focus on improving together.

The young people involved in this process have already changed things. You'll read in this report about youth justice professionals who've had their views challenged by the young people, and who have been inspired to think further about how they involve the young people they work with. In Brogan's Vision you'll also see that the project has also influenced the young people, and built their confidence in expressing what would improve things for them.

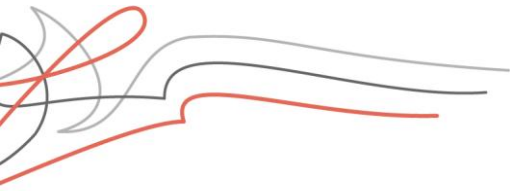
The young people we've met through this project have inspired us. We are grateful for their time, energy and commitment to helping improve things for others. The young people involved in this project have often not had the best experiences of youth justice services so it's been humbling to see how much they want to change things to ensure the next generation of young people have a better experience. We look forward to working with some of them to do just that.

Claire Lightowler  
Director, Centre for Youth & Criminal Justice

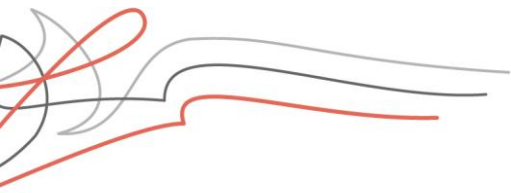


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## Our approach

### Background to the Enquiry

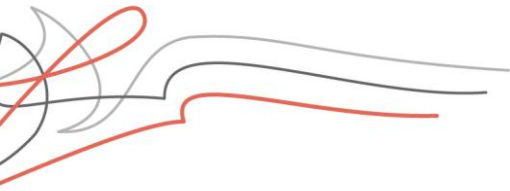
The Centre for Youth & Criminal Justice (CYCJ) established this piece of work in order to understand how young people could become active participants in shaping improvements to youth justice policy, practice and research.

CYCJ commissioned Space Unlimited to work with a diverse range of young people, engaging them in discussing their experiences, their ideas for change based on those experiences, and their thoughts on the shape of an on-going role for young people like themselves.

### Who we've worked with

We worked with three separate groups of young people:

1. The first group was accessed via 'Moving On Scotland' (a partnership service delivered by Action for Children and Barnardo's)
    - The service typically works with young people aged 16 to 21. All of the young people who participated in this project were aged 18 plus.
    - They are from the Inverclyde area...
    - ...with quite in-depth experiences of youth justice services including the courts, police, social work, secure educational facilities and institutions like Polmont Young Offenders and Barlinnie Prison.
    - We started working with this group in May this year, and after a break reconnected with them in October.
  2. The second group was accessed via the Through-care service in Dunbartonshire.
    - They range from 17 to 25 years old.
    - They are from the West Dunbartonshire area, with most being from Clydebank.
    - This group had no experience of secure institutions such as Polmont, however they had experienced children's panels, throughcare, social
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work, and a range of other youth services around foster care and children's homes.

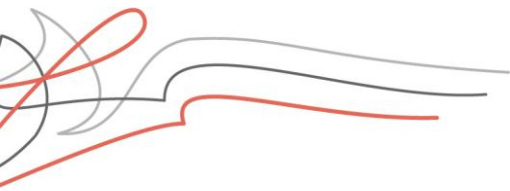
- We started working together in April this year, and again, took a break after several weeks' work, reconnecting in October.
3. The third group of young people was accessed through Aberlour Youth Point in Glasgow.
- They range from 13 to 19 years old.
  - They are from the Elderpark/Govan/Ibrox area of Glasgow.
  - This group has had limited experiences with youth justice services, occasional interactions with the police, children's panels and social work being the primary services involved. They also have some experiences around foster care, adoption services and a range of youth services.

Our aim at the outset of this project was to bring a group of young people together to work, diverse in ages, experiences, geography and background. We hoped that by bringing together this group, we would more quickly gather an understanding of the range of experiences and the possibilities for a group like this to work together to change youth justice services.

Unfortunately, there were a number of challenges to gaining access to young people with these experiences and backgrounds. This meant that the groups met for the first time in November 2014 to share their ideas and experiences, before then engaging with stakeholders to share their views and ideas, one week later.

### How we've worked

We know from experience that bringing groups of young people together to work means: helping them to create a safe space in which to be honest and open; building their trust in us and each other sufficiently that they are happy to work together; helping them to understand the subject matter and their importance in addressing it; and, creating some shared experiences and understanding within the group. In order to do this, we felt it was important to work towards our ultimate goal by supporting these



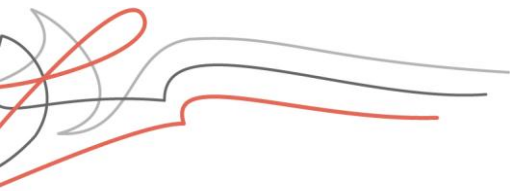
young people to ‘speak about what they know’ first. As such, the work with all three groups had three points of focus:

- What are your experiences of Youth and Criminal Justice Services?
- What are your ideas for change in these services?
- How should young people (yourselves or those like you) be involved in informing/making ongoing change in these services?

## The process

We worked with the three groups, developing their thinking and their leadership on the project between April and November, and then beyond. The approach is outlined below:

Stage of Work	Throughcare, West Dunbartonshire	Moving On, Inverclyde	Aberlour Youthpoint, Govan
Relationship building	1 session, May 2014	2 sessions, April 2014	2 sessions, September 2014
Identifying and sharing experiences	5 sessions, May – July 2014	5 sessions, May – August 2014	4 sessions, September – October 2014
Reflecting and learning			
Ideas for change and future involvement			
Preparation for stakeholder meeting	1 joint session with all groups together, October 2014		
Stakeholder meeting	1 joint session, November 2014		
Follow-up meetings to explore interest	1 session, December 2014	1 session, December 2014	1 session, November 2014
Onward involvement and action	This is still developing as a part of an ongoing relationship between the CYCJ, stakeholder organisations and the groups of young people – more detail is provided later in the report.		

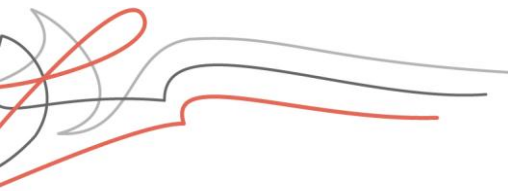


## Some experiences in brief

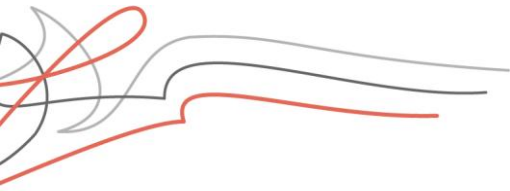
The young people across all three groups took time to build trust and to open up about their experiences. To protect that trust, these experiences are not detailed but offered as more general, themed information, to give some sense of the conversations that we had during the project.

Foster Care	Positive experiences related to the treatment the young people felt they received from the foster family, how they helped them, the belief that they showed in the young people and the strength of the on-going relationship, which in some cases continued after formal arrangements ceased. Negative experiences concerned perceptions of severe inequality to non-fostered family members, a sense that their carers were only 'in it for the money' and that those funds were not spent on the young people, and concerns over the welfare of other siblings who are placed elsewhere, sometimes with contact between them being blocked.
Children's Homes	Issues here seemed to concern two things: first, a sense of being 'placed into neglect', in an environment that offers none of the support and love of a family and is seen to fail the young people in educational contexts also; second, the attached stigma and judgement that comes with being 'one of those bad kids who've been put in a home'. Some of the young people did refer to being surrounded by other young people in a similar situation (people you have something in common with) as 'both a good and a bad thing'.
Children's Panels	These seem to be a mostly negative experience for the young people we spoke with. They described feeling judged, ignored, not listened to, sometimes barely even addressed when in the room, and talked about being excluded from the process and not understanding it.
Police	Most of the young people seemed to feel that the police were a service simply best avoided, talking about being stopped and searched, sometimes repeatedly throughout the day, and the sense of injustice and alienation that this breeds in the relationship. A big issue also seemed to be the perceived inconsistencies in police treatment of young people, and



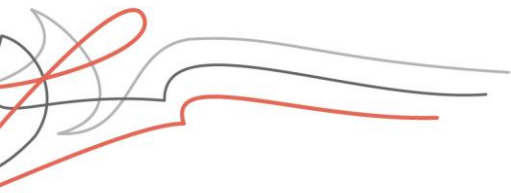


	the fact that meeting the 'rare good guy' doesn't change your opinion of the rest.
Social Work	Young people from across all three groups described very mixed relationships with their social workers. Some said the social worker was highly attentive and caring (in one instance almost becoming over-bearing), making sure the young people were well informed and supported. Some experienced virtually no relationship at all, or a negative one, in which the social worker was perceived not to care and not to be approachable. They put it down to 'the luck of who you get'.
Throughcare	The young people who had worked with the Throughcare team had nothing but praise for them. They said that they felt the adults that worked with them repeatedly went above and beyond their professional commitments in service of the young people that they were working with, and often maintained long-term relationships even after they had moved on from being direct service users.
Courts	Those with experience here described the process as a series of 'rapid fire judgements', from being in the cells, to seeing the social worker, to meeting your legal advisor and on to the courtroom. They felt lost and unsupported by all those they came into contact with during the process.
Legal services	The biggest issue the young people described here was that someone who 'doesn't know you, doesn't care and usually has only just met you for five minutes' was representing them. They question the set-up and timing of these services and how much effort is invested in the relationship.
Third sector organisations (Aberlour and Moving On Scotland)	The consistent high praise of these two organisations seemed to come from a sense of having a genuine and meaningful relationship with the people delivering the service. Where those people stuck with the young people through the hard times and the good, where they question and challenge behaviours, but don't judge actions, and where they believed in the young people's potential and future.



## Insights and learning from young people's experiences of youth justice services – how it feels to them?

- Young people from all three groups described their experiences as **isolated interactions**. To them, it feels like a series of disconnected experiences where services are not integrated, or sharing knowledge and understanding.  
*“Nah man, none of them talk to each other...the police, the courts, the social...you end up having to tell them all the same things. And worse than that, one of them tells you one thing is gonna happen, something else does, but you never see them again to ask them about it!”*
- **Personal relationships** with the people delivering the services are critical to the experience that the young people have, but the quality of these is very variable.  
*“This guy, Craig, he’s a cop, but he actually came along to the youth club to meet all the local kids, and he came on our residential trip with us and worked with us for a couple of days. We got to know him, and that he was alright, and we didn’t even think of him as the police, he always chats to us when we see him – I nearly gave him away when he was under-cover once! – But then they moved him somewhere else...I don’t even know the names of the new guys...they’ve been around a couple of years.”*
- **Consistency of service/interactions** from front-line delivery staff is highly important to the young people – they talk of not knowing what to expect each time they work with someone new – and they have many experiences where this consistency is not present, even within the same team.  
*“I don’t get why, when your Throughcare worker, or your social worker is off or away, why don’t they just let you wait for them to come back before your next appointment? They make you go and meet someone else, who doesn’t know you and who, most of the time, doesn’t seem that interested because they won’t be working with you again anyway. They never do anything with what you tell them, they don’t help you, and anything that needs to happen ends up waiting till your one is back, so what’s the point?”*
- A feeling of **‘being judged’** pervades many of the young people’s experiences with youth justice services. This can be due to:
  - The **format** of the interaction



*“Well, I was in this panel and there were just three of them sat there judging me, talking about who I was and what would happen to me as if I wasn’t even there”*

- The way it is **conducted**

*“Obviously right, stuff happened with my family, but this social worker I’d never met before came in and sat down and just started asking me all these questions. It felt dead weird and I didn’t understand why they were asking them. She basically wouldn’t talk to me unless it was answering her questions.”*

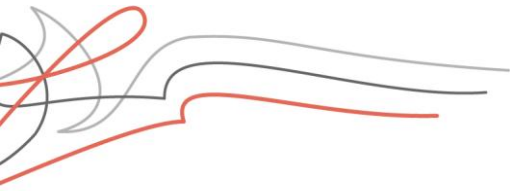
- And, **who** conducts/is involved in the interaction

*“Why is it that, when you’re going through panels or the courts, or anything where decisions are getting made about you, your life, you’re never listened to...and they don’t seem to talk to people who know you well and actually work with you every week. Why can’t a responsible adult, from a service – like Johnny and Julie – why can’t they be the one who talks about your character and stuff.”*

- The most positive accounts of youth justice services we have heard had one thing in common – individuals. The young people could name (and did repeatedly) every individual, within all the services that they interacted with, that they felt had helped positively influence their lives. These accounts related to:

- **Belief** in the young person;
- Being **there for them during their worst spells** as well as better ones;
- Helping them **understand their choices**, why they are where they are in life, what they can do to change that, and what help is available.
- A sense that they have gone **‘above and beyond’** their job and that they ‘actually cared’.

*“I’d never really thought about why I kept on ending up inside again, after the first time I just thought that was me, that was my life. But when I got out, my mate told me about Moving On (Scotland) and he dragged me down here. I worked with them for a while, but then I got myself locked up again...anyway, the guys from Moving On turned up at court to speak for me and then they worked with me the whole time I was inside...I couldn’t believe it man. They really helped me see the choices I was making and they made me believe I could do things different.”*



## What role would young people like to play in changing policy, practice and research – where are they most engaged?

### Policy

Many of the young people we worked with did not initially connect with the concept of them influencing ‘policy’ directly. In fact, many of them didn’t know what ‘policy’ really meant. When we explored this a little further it became clear that their real interest seemed to be in changing *practice* at the local level, and allowing others to learn what they could from those changes to practice, in order to deal with the policy aspect.

At this stage, for most of those we’ve worked with, their enthusiasm is based on working locally to change the way things are done to, and with, young people like themselves – changes that they might be able to see and hear happening in the not too distant future.

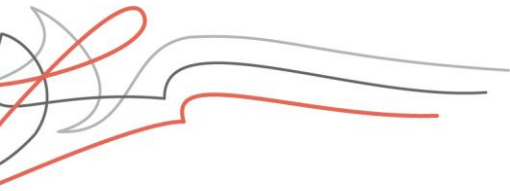
*“Can we not just do our bit, for our bit, and other people who do their work around this stuff can see how well it works (or not), and they talk to us about it, then they can make the policies?”*

However, for those who grasped the concept of policy, the prospect of being able to have a wider impact on the lives of other young people, to make things better for future generations, was motivational – this became more pertinent after meeting the stakeholders at the November meeting, and in subsequent action.

### Practice

Young people are interested in being involved in changing services that they have experienced first-hand. They do not tend to feel qualified to offer thoughts on things they haven’t experienced, nor do they seem interested in understanding other services as concepts and offering thoughts/feedback.

*“Well, whoever was in the group, whether it was just us lot, or if you got other people in there, we’d all have to be talking about services we’ve used because that’s what we know, that’s maybe where we could help.”*



They are motivated by connecting with other young people who have had similar experiences, or different experiences of the same services, because it helps them realise they aren't alone and that a lot of other people are going through similar things.

*"I'm so glad you're here (another young person), because my only experiences of Social Workers have been negative, and most of the people I know would say the same. So hearing about your positive experiences has just opened my eyes a wee bit to the idea that there are good ones out there, and maybe more could be like that."*

They are engaged by (and sceptical of) the prospect of access to decision-makers who can help make change happen.

*"I've chosen this image (blurry, unclear picture of a man) to show how I feel right now. It's how I see these 'stakeholders' that we might meet. They could be getting clearer as time goes on, as they get closer to us and as things happen, which would be amazing...but then again, it might just be a mirage and they aren't really there at all and nothing happens, it's all for nothing."*

They are keen to 'give back' to those services that have helped them.

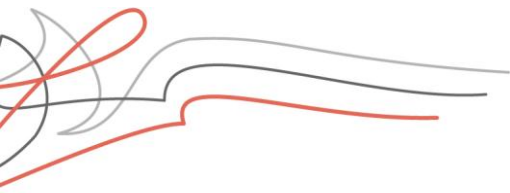
*"The guys, like Douglas and that, at the Throughcare team just go above and beyond on everything man. They're always doing stuff to help you that's not really their job, working all hours...you can tell they really care and they help you get your own life together so much. If we could support them somehow that'd be awesome, because then they could do the same for the next lot of young people coming through."*

They want to help other young people have better lives and opportunities than they feel they have had.

*"The thing is, I can see now all the bad decisions I was making. I was on the wrong path and I just kept going down it. It took a lot of work but once I understood that there were other choices I could make, other paths, I could start to set goals for myself and work towards them...the energy and effort I had to put in to stick with it and achieve my goals, that was the price I had to pay. That's what I talk to a lot of other lads about, I use myself as the example, because if they can see it's possible and you can help them set a goal that means something to them...well, they might just turn things around."*

## Research

There also seemed to be some disconnect with the idea of being involved in 'research'. Initially we struggled to get more information on why they were averse to being involved



in research, however a conversation between a facilitator, a Throughcare worker and a young person revealed that they had been involved in four different, but very similar, pieces of research for PhD students from universities in the Glasgow area. All of which felt like they gave the young person no real benefits and which changed nothing practical, as far as they could tell.

Conversations we've had since with other youth workers show that this sense of 'over-consultation' is actually quite common for this cohort of young people – and that it proves to be quite detrimental to levels of engagement over time.

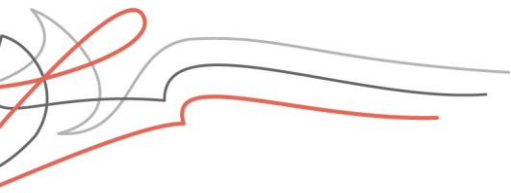
*“Look, is this actually going anywhere? That's what's important to me. Are people going to listen to us and change stuff as a result...otherwise why bother wasting our time talking about it all, again?”*

A clear message from the young people in all three strands of the work has been that, repeatedly, they are told that the work they are doing will be on-going, that it will have an impact. And, repeatedly they find the work stopping or being ineffective.

*“They all say that, it's a chance to change things, to get involved. But they all stop. They all disappear. How is this (work) any different?”*

### Some practical thoughts from the young people

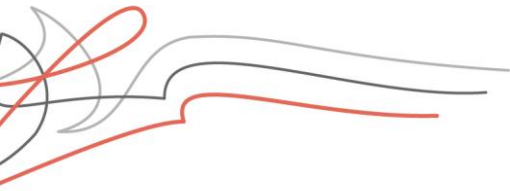
- To change the way stop-search is done or recorded by the police, the young people suggested a central database that the police could connect or radio into with names and find out: if a young person had already been stopped and searched that day/week/month; how many times; and, what the findings were – that way they could stop delaying innocent young people and doing unnecessary searches – possibly building more trust and relationships too.
- An annual engagement event with young people and services present to get feedback and ideas in a face-to-face environment, including reports on what's changed year-to-year at the start.
- A 'summer camp' group that work together on specific issues and services during the school holidays, rewarding young people for taking part and showcasing the changes made.



## Enabling young people to participate in shaping improvements in the future

### Challenges

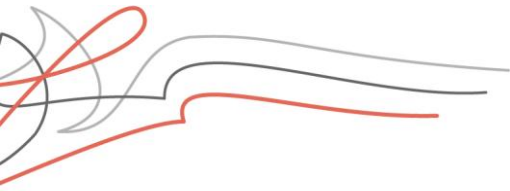
- Challenges of **recruitment** – Some services can act like gatekeepers to the young people they work with, sometimes due to a feeling of responsibility to ‘protect’ the young people, and possibly due to a fear of criticism that this work could have brought to light. This can make recruitment a labour intensive process, and can mean time and space for opening out dialogue is squeezed, and continuity over time with the same group, is tricky to achieve.
- Challenges of **engagement** (initially) – There are at least two important factors here:
  - When young people are struggling with issues such as substance misuse and chaotic lifestyle etc. this type of activity is not a priority for them
  - The impact of over-consultation over time, and it makes it highly important to get beyond consultation to possible solutions and action (where the young people help to shape practice first – perhaps through action research, that in turn shapes policy and practice for the future). The enquiry process needs to be an active one, not simply a reflective/consultative one.
- Challenges of **retention** – The young people we worked with on this project were all involved in transitions of one kind or another, and the changing nature of their personal commitments created some challenges in the continuity of our conversations with them. We lost several young people during the course of the project as they moved on to get jobs, college courses and volunteering placements – all ultimately positive destinations.
- Challenges around **age** – Differently aged (and experienced) young people have a wide range of commitments (school, work, probation, job centre sign on) which can be hard to plan around in finding a suitable time for everyone in the group. Also, gaining ‘access’ to young people can prove incredibly difficult if trying to work with younger or more vulnerable individuals.



## Thoughts on the process

- The importance of **going to the young people** in first instance, meeting them on their territory and in an environment they're comfortable with, until a relationship and commitment have been built.
- The importance of **decision-maker visibility** early in process, both to set the scene appropriately for the young people – which service and what aspects and challenges they might work on – and in order to reassure them that their time will not be given in vain.
- The importance of **getting beyond consultation** to possible solutions and action – drawing on the young people's desire to influence/help shape practice first, they could embark on supported action research that in turn shapes policy/practice for the future. Motivation hinges on seeing change happen.
- The importance of **having shared/common experiences** to draw on, especially if the group members do not know each other at the outset. One method being to only focus on one service at a time, allowing a 'deep dive' on the group members' different experiences in order to ensure the most balanced viewpoint possible as a starting point, then continuing into ideas for change/improvement and the young people's role in achieving it.

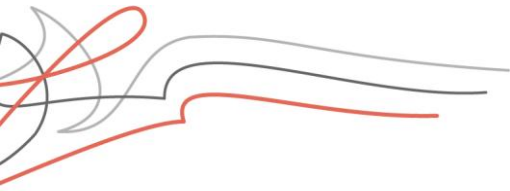




## Young people's ideas for change and their own role

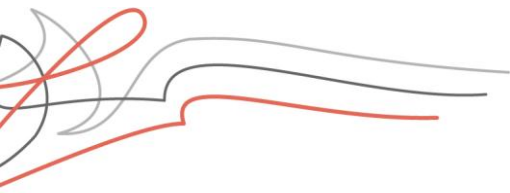
The following are ideas the young people identified as possible opportunities for them to play a leadership role in changing 'practice' specifically:

- **Offering a peer support service in Throughcare (and possibly other services too):** The group in Clydebank suggested forming a voluntary organisation consisting of people like themselves who had worked with Throughcare and social work. They, as the more experienced young people, would guide others, new to using these services, through what they can and can't do for you. Helping them to know what they can expect, what they shouldn't put up with, where else they can go for support, and which experiences to get involved with in order to get the most out of the service.
- **Offering a new service focused on helping young people with vulnerable and criminal backgrounds to understand the journey they have been on and the choices that they have made:** One young person from the Moving on Scotland group in Inverclyde (who is now employed as a practitioner) has started designing his own programme, with the help of his peers, to challenge and support young people to understand their past choices and to set meaningful, motivational goals for the future. He hopes to someday pilot the programme with young people like himself, driving changes in both behaviour and lives by helping people understand themselves.
- **Organising a kind of 'services/youth club':** The group in Elderspark/Govan are keen to build better relationships with service providers and feel they can do that if delivery staff were willing to come to them. They suggested a kind of youth club where different services take turns coming along and getting to know the young people that they are supposed to support and interact with, in their own environment. They felt this would build a good relationship and foundation for then continuing to interact with a focus on improving the services. They were particularly keen to improve young people's experiences of being in Children's



hearings, this being an issue they have experience of, and suggested this as the first possible focus of their involvement.

- **The young people in Elderpark/Govan discussed their own willingness to work with the CYCJ team to improve services. Their proposals included:**
  - Having staff members come out to meet them on their terms first, possibly at their youth club.
  - Getting to know each other, including a walk round of the area they live in.
  - Provision of transport up to the city centre for sessions.
  - Sessions to be timed at around 5/6pm to allow for school, college courses and working days to be finished.
  - To work with the same person/people each session.
  - Food and refreshments to be provided – suggestions included tea and biscuits, and possibly pizza if providing dinner.
  - The young people also suggested that the group start small, perhaps just the five/six of them, but that it grows through their recruitment – i.e. after a set amount of time, they each get to invite in another person (a pattern that could also be repeated in order to maintain or grow group numbers in future).
  - They also recognised that they would not be able to speak for the views of other young people, but stated they would be happy to act as an intermediary – setting agendas/questions with the CYCJ team and then going out to speak to other young people themselves to gather wider ideas/opinions.
  - In return for their involvement the group discussed three key things that they felt they would need in order to maintain their motivation and interest:
    - Growing their own skills and confidence in working with others, in professional contexts and possibly more formal training around the work they undertake.
    - Developing their CVs and prospects for their futures/careers.

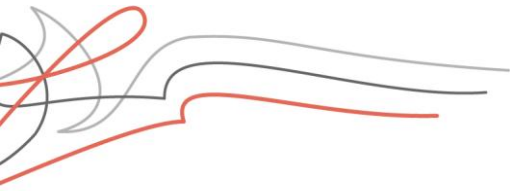


- Enabling real change to happen, both on the local/service based 'practice' and, if possible, on the national/policy level – especially for inclusion on their CV.

## Action since the Stakeholder meeting

Following the meeting of young people from all three groups and the stakeholders from various services, there have been a number of developing strands of action:

- The 'Two Paths' (working title) programme for young people with vulnerable and/or criminal backgrounds, aimed at building young people's understanding of their choices and their journey is under discussion for possible development with Action for Children, led by the young person who came up with the concept, potentially supported by Space Unlimited, and possibly with CYCJ playing an independent evaluation role.
- Young people from the 'Moving On Scotland' group were present at, and contributed to, the Scottish Government's youth justice strategy development meeting on January 23, 2015. They've indicated an interest in being further involved in shaping the redrafting of the youth justice strategy and we are exploring possible roles and opportunities.
- Young people from the Aberlour Youth Point group have met with staff from the Scottish Children's Reporter's Administration to talk through their ideas about improving the experience for young people attending Children's Hearings, with another meeting planned in March 2015.
- Representatives from Police Scotland are sharing their learning from meeting the young people to influence the attitudes and minds of their colleagues.
- Representatives from the stakeholder meeting are aiming to develop a rounded assessment of how the service provided by Polmont Young Offenders institution might have changed since this group attended it, and how it might still need to change in the future to better serve the young people that go there.



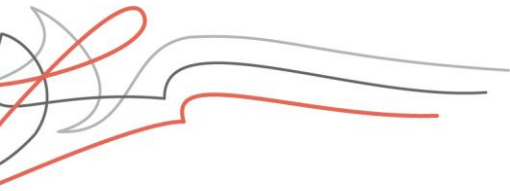
In addition to the above changes and action, the young people themselves recognised that perhaps the biggest initial impact of this work has been on the attitudes and beliefs of some of the people involved – in both themselves and the stakeholders – and that real change often begins with a personal change like that.

## Some final words of thanks from Space Unlimited

This project pushed Space Unlimited into new territory, allowing us to work with young people, organisations and practitioners with experience in youth and criminal justice services. However, without key individuals and organisations being willing to work in partnership with us, we would not have been able to undertake this work. In particular, thanks must go to: Shaun and Joe at Action for Children; Johnny and Julie at Aberlour Youthpoint; and Douglas and Mike at West Dunbartonshire Throughcare.

During this project, we have sometimes asked the young people to share information about their experiences which required courage to do so. We've consistently been surprised and moved by the open and candid way they've shared both their stories and their insights, and, while identities are protected in this document for confidentiality, we would like to say a huge thank you to the truly special young people we've met in Greenock, Govan and Clydebank.

Lastly, we would also like to offer our sincere thanks to the Centre for Youth & Criminal Justice for believing in the approach we proposed and choosing to work with our team. The Centre's insights and connections have enabled this project to reach further and deeper than we imagined possible, while providing a genuine opportunity for the young people involved to effect change that is meaningful to them – the core goal of all our work.



## Appendix

### Stories of change

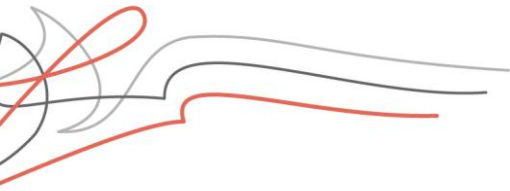
#### Brogan's Vision – Young person, Aberlour Youthpoint

I came along to the event, well, I was kind of roped in at the last minute, but hey, I was there. We met loads of people from all different places, other people that had experiences of youth justice services and people who worked for those services. Most of them seemed pretty nice and interested in what we had to say.

I chatted to a guy called Tom for a long time. Tom works with the Children's Panels, reviewing cases and deciding what should happen with young people in certain situations... He was really interested in what I had to say, in my experiences of going through the panels and what I thought about changing that process so that it's better for kids. He called it 'Brogan's Vision' which was pretty cool, and seemed to be saying that he wanted to see the changes through.

The next day I had to go to a Children's Panel and I took my experience with me to the meeting. When they were asking about what I'd been up to recently I told them about being involved in this project, and about the meeting with everyone the night before. They were interested and asked me some questions about it all, so I told them – I want it changed, that it's not right the way it works right now. That young people should be supported, maybe by other young people or by youth workers who know them best, to know what to expect, to put their perspective across and to challenge things that feel unfair or wrong in the panel meeting.

I told them that it's not right that they know everything about me from my school stuff, the social workers report, from being able to ask me loads of questions that I *have* to answer, and that I know *nothing* about them. They seemed to agree, so said that I could ask them questions, so I did. I asked them about their work, what they do with their time,



who they are, where they come from...I felt great that I'd told them and that I got to find out about them.

At the end of the panel, one of the young reporters who was there asked me for my number because they wanted to get me involved in joining a meeting with them. Also, it sounds like Tom really wants to make changes happen and there's a chance that me and some of the other girls will get to work with them to make it happen.

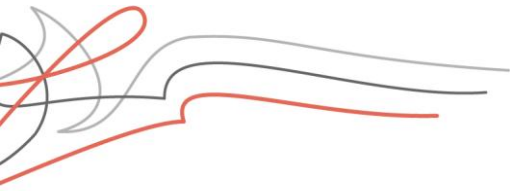
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### Shaun Murray – Practitioner, Moving On Scotland

My boss, Joe, put me onto this project because of my views and experiences of social work, residential care and secure facilities. When it started I had high hopes of change happening in the system because the Centre for Youth & Criminal Justice (CYCJ) were involved. I really wanted to see different services putting more interest into residential care and what happens to the young people who end up there, before they end up somewhere else. It already feels like a little of that is, gradually, happening.

For me though, the changes have already started, like in my day-to-day work with young lads at Moving On Scotland (Action for Children and Barnado's). The other day I was working with a boy from Paisley who's been with us for the last few years. He said to me that he wanted to better his Maths qualification and get his forklift license; he's got a long-term goal and a plan to get there. Instead of just telling him where to go and what to do, I asked him "What are *you* gonna do about it? What are *you* going to do first?"

The difference is, before this project I used to do more things *for* the lads I work with, now I'm there to ask the right questions and make the right prompts, helping them to do things for themselves and guiding them on the way. I learnt that you don't want to be the enabler that they rely on – so many of us working with these guys fall into becoming a crutch, or safety net – doing things *for* people and creating that dependency, which doesn't help them in the long run.



Getting to meet with the stakeholders, then, to be invited to speak to decision makers at the Scottish Government in January and the Parliament in February, made me think that people are really listening. I even made contact with one of the prison chiefs who might be able to get me involved with changing the way things happen in places like Polmont Young Offenders.

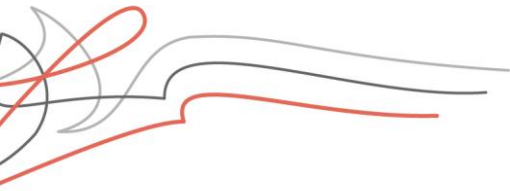
I've also got ideas for a programme to help people like me think about where they want to get to and to learn to take action and responsibility for it themselves. I've wanted to do that idea for years, but always questioned my thought processes and myself. Now, through this programme, the work we've done together and the conversations I've had, I know I need to do it and I know it'll help other young people with experiences like mine.

I really hope that this is going to grow and continue and that it becomes another branch on my career path. I want to experience these other branches and eventually become a decision maker myself, it's a bit like, if you've got a solution, don't hold off from talking about it and trying to make it happen until you hit the top. I think, as long as I keep my eye on it, I hope I can make it happen while I'm on the way up.

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### Julie Craig – Youth Worker, Aberlour Youth Point

We were a little unsure what to expect from this project but, I always encourage our young people to take an interest in matters that might affect them now or in the future, and I consulted with them, and some of the young people wished to 'give it a go'. The initial sessions were in the young people's own space, which was invaluable as, when time came to gather with the other participating groups, our young people were comfortable with Space Unlimited and had a trusting working relationship. I think this meant they were able to fully participate in the stakeholder meeting, using that trust to build a rapport with the guests who came to meet them.



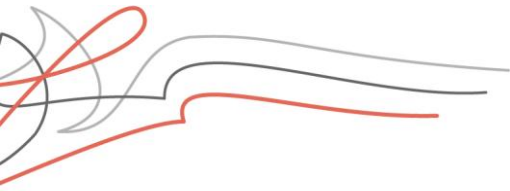
On the night of the meeting I remember being particularly affected by one of the stories from the boys who had been housed in a secure residential unit. They spent more than two years there, going to school and college programmes, Monday to Friday, from 9 till 4, and left with zero certificates! This was surprising and shocked me, however I am of the hope this was raised with some the right people and that they might be able to help the young people make some changes happen.

Whilst being apprehensive initially, I have fully embraced the idea of the young people taking part in this work, as I know they are giving a valuable contribution to various services in the Youth Justice System, while developing themselves along the way. I also learned from the facilitator's way of engaging and communicating with the young people. It was a pleasure to watch; at times when subjects were of a dark nature, their way of keeping it light and still being able to get the information that was needed was of great importance to me as an observer.

I believe the project has given Youthpoint's young people ownership of the issue and valued their opinions, to the point where they are making real changes to practice at the Children's Panel, making the process less traumatic for other young people involved. Our group of young people is more than happy to have a continued involvement with more opportunities set to come from this in the future – one of which is their continued involvement in engaging with the Children's Reporters as well as networking events with stakeholders directly involved in Youth Justice Services.

Being a partner in the work has been of real benefit to us as an organisation too. Our new connections to: the Centre for Youth & Criminal Justice – helping our funders see the relevance of the work we're doing and the impact on the young people; the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration – meaning our young people can directly influence communications intended for young people like themselves, their parents and their carers; and, to the Children's Panel – meaning that our staff will receive training around young people's rights and how to prepare them to attend a panel – allowing us to better support the young people who work with us – and that our young people can lead and





see change happen in an area that has profoundly affected their lives. We've even gained a few volunteers to come along and help with our youth work and street work.

We'll be looking for future opportunities to do further partnership working and would encourage other youth based organisations to do the same as it has been, and with a little luck and hard work, will hopefully continue to be a great experience for us.

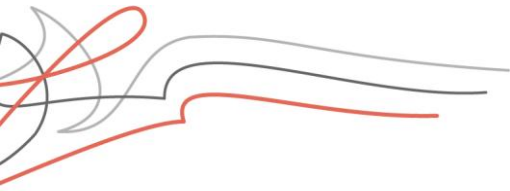
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Tom Philliben – Senior Operational Manager, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration

I got involved in the project as a member of the executive governance group for the Centre for Youth & Criminal Justice (CYCJ). As a group, we wanted to get the young people's feedback and input about how they could inform our work plan for the coming year; to hear what they would say about how they could contribute and how we could engage them in the future, hopefully in a more substantive conversation where they feel comfortable to contribute to other meetings and events in future. I wanted to get to know them and hear what they had to say because, at this point, we were strangers to them and we didn't know how they saw their engagement with us and how they could help.

During our meeting, it became clear that the young people's views and experiences of residential, secure services and particularly of Polmont Young Offenders Institution contrasted quite starkly with the messages that I've been hearing, which made me wonder about the connections between the intent of the services and the successes as experienced by the young people themselves.

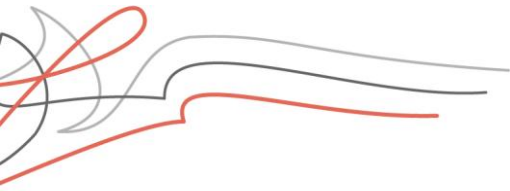
They also had great ideas about things that could be improved in a number of settings. And although I was meeting them primarily as a member of the governance group for CYCJ, I was also keen to hear about their experiences within the Children's Hearing System.



In Children's Hearings in particular, they described an environment where they felt alone, unsupported and sometimes judged, by the 'strangers on the other side of the table'. For me as an individual, it was good to be reminded that folk at the other end of the service might not experience it the way that we would hope – it shocked me the extent to which they felt structurally excluded from the process. It's a long time since, other than at set piece events and conferences, we've had direct input from young people currently experiencing 'the system'. Overall, I took the message that the young people want to be engaged in developing improvements to youth justice services, but they want it to be 'real' and making a difference, not lip service.

Following on from the initial CYCJ meeting, I arranged for the young people to meet up with the relevant staff in SCRA, to try and ensure that the ambition of the young people to have their voices heard and to make a difference, could be fulfilled. We set up a meeting a couple of weeks ago when the young people came in and we talked about their contribution, about how we could better communicate with young people, parents and carers, and about what makes them anxious around the Hearing process and what would help with that anxiety. Further meetings are anticipated and we are asking them for their ideas, we're getting them to review our communications and tell us what works. The modern apprentices here at SCRA have already been reviewing things and presenting their findings to our board, unedited, and we can show internally that that's made a difference. Our aim is to show that this group will also make a difference. Our next meeting is set up for March 2015.

Some key learning for me was that the young people didn't know they had certain rights around the hearing system, which meant they felt disengaged and dis-empowered. And, the people who do the most effective work with them, who are with the young people all the time – like the youth and street workers at Aberlour – aren't formally trained around children's rights and the hearing system either. In order to ensure that these workers can better support the young people in future – to have their voices heard, to feel supported in the actual hearing, to feel better informed and advised – we're going to do some training with the Aberlour team, which we're hopeful will have a long lasting impact.



My only worry is that there is a sense that approaches and ideas can be fashionable and unfashionable, and that right now it's deemed essential to talk to young people and to listen, but what if this falls off the agenda somehow? What if the young people no longer engage, let's not raise an expectation of engagement and of being able to make a difference that then fades away. In my role I am able to directly influence SCRA and CYCJ, so I can ask questions about the progress we are making on this important aspect of developing our services, to try and avoid that possibility and make best use of the advice and ideas that young people have contributed.

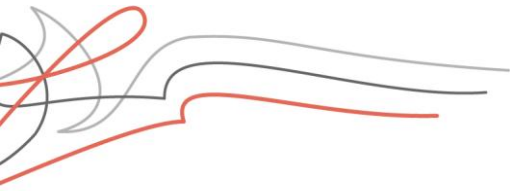
Finally, it was refreshing to reaffirm through discussion and conversation that young people continue to place a great value on the creation and maintenance of a trusting and consistently supportive relationship with the key professionals in their lives as being critical to moving forward positively in their lives.

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Superintendent Lesley Clark – Police Scotland, Professional Advisor to the Scottish Government

I found coming to the evening event with the different groups of young people extremely energising. I was able to solicit first-hand information about some issues that impacted on young people, which I then shared at a subsequent workshop with my colleagues. In addition I found the experience really worthwhile and believe this group form a solid opportunity for effective engagement to take place on a range of matters.

I know logistics are an issue but I would like to hear from other young people from different parts of the country to contrast and compare experiences with those that I heard from this group.



The formula for this work is innovative and should be commended and developed, and could compliment other activity that Police Scotland have recently undertaken, like developing a Youth Advisory Panel through Young Scot, involving 18 young people.

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Jane Kelly – Team Manager (Job Share), Moray Criminal Justice Team

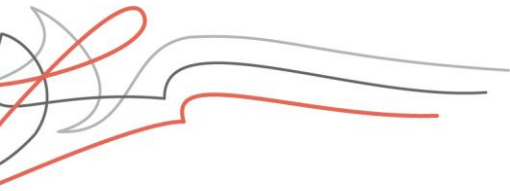
I found the contribution of the young men from the Action for Children 'Moving On' project very powerful, in terms of their willingness to be involved, share their life stories, and their confidence in articulating their experiences. They are clearly committed to improving services and engaging with other young people.

It was depressing to hear how, in spite of our best professional efforts, the young people that were present have yet to see or experience change in the care and custody settings. I was troubled by their perceptions that services were lacking in: preparation for them to move to independent living; commitment and investment in their education, purposeful training or skills development; and, vision or belief in their futures.

It concerned me that some of these young people reported:

- Being put in a secure setting for their own care, then being scared of the people who were there for serious offending, leaving them feeling unsafe in their 'home'.
- Being committed to courses and programmes only to either: receive a photocopied, made up 'certificate' that holds no meaning in the 'real world'; or to have the establishment lose or fail to forward certificates and qualifications.
- Being in jail, spending time in work parties where they did not view themselves as doing any actual work and not having opportunities to talk about their offence or the background to their behaviour.

I sometimes worry that some of the young people we meet at participation type events or conferences are repeatedly talking about their lives for the benefit of social workers

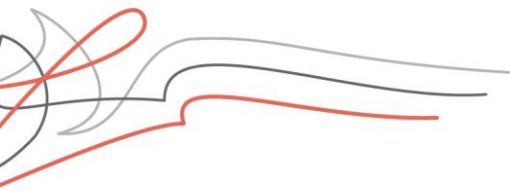


and other professionals without their input being linked to some kind of positive outcome – it would therefore be great to harness their contribution in a meaningful, longer term way. For example, it would be good to see their experiences and views being linked into the Champions Groups or wider strategic planning so that they can make a lasting contribution to the reintegration and transitions agenda.

I could see the young people from the Moving On Scotland project contributing to the development of the Throughcare map and they'd also be in an ideal place to do a national leaflet or video resource for young people appearing in Court or going to custody for the first time – this is much needed and was mentioned in the 'Pathways in and out of custody' report. The Moving On Scotland project is possibly a template for best practice around this type of work and something which I'd like to investigate further.

They young people I met had become engaged in the project in a sensitive and supported manner. I'm pleased that Space Unlimited and CYCJ are committed to a programme and period of engagement which is purposeful and aims to improve services and impact upon wider policy and practice.

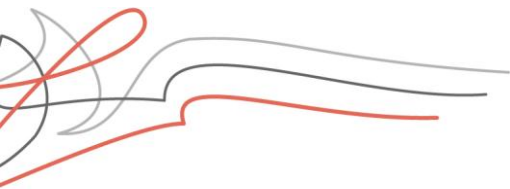
I was also struck by another young woman's experience of being repeatedly rejected from training and employment opportunities in the social care sector because of her criminal record – this really is something we should try to influence – I don't know if there's work going on in terms of incorporating Community Payback Orders and other recent developments into the revision of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 but a renewed discussion on when convictions become 'spent' or no longer relevant would be useful. She clearly felt the offences committed before the age of 16/18 were holding her back even though she had since matured and demonstrated positive changes in her life.



## Young people's evaluation responses

### Evaluation Capture Form - CYCJ 'Aberlour Youth'

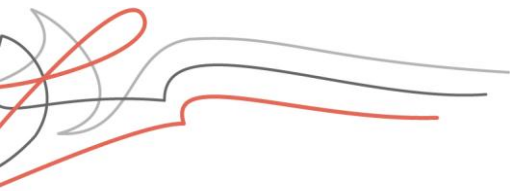
Outcomes	Quotes
Young people have been able to use their ideas and strengths and are more confident in their abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can now speak in a group and on my own to get my point across.</li> <li>• I spoke out at a children's hearing, which had a positive input for me.</li> </ul>
Young people have new skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have gained more confidence skills because I can speak to more people now.</li> <li>• I feel more confident in sharing my opinions in a group even if I think it sounds daft.</li> </ul>
Young people recognise that this is useful for future work and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have learned to work as part of a team.</li> <li>• Speaking to adults who want to listen so it changed my opinion on most adults, also this project made me feel part of a team.</li> <li>• I have experiences some people have needed.</li> <li>• Being able to speak out and express ideas.</li> </ul>
This has been a positive learning experience for me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We got to work with the moving on project, also I have found out that young people feel the same as I do about certain situations.</li> <li>• Adults are now interested in our thoughts.</li> <li>• Stakeholders care about our thoughts and are willing to change.</li> </ul>
I got insights of value to my work or organisation	
[More] Young people and adults have committed to helping to bring the ideas to life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some young people joined the group after a couple of weeks.</li> <li>• One of the stakeholders now thinks differently.</li> </ul>
I am more confident in my capacity to bring about change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am more confident that people are actually listening.</li> <li>• I feel confident that YP's voices will be heard and action taken</li> <li>• I feel more confident about this because we were prepared to get our point across.</li> </ul>
I am acting differently in the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have become more confident in the classroom because I have met new people outside of school and it has built</li> </ul>



Outcomes	Quotes
[classroom/ at work/ in the community].	<p>up my confidence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I think this has changed the way I act in classroom/ work because I am becoming more open to talk about my opinions.</li> </ul>
There have been real improvements in relationships between the young people and adults involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive partnerships between young people &amp; adults.</li> <li>There have been improvements because the young people and adults worked together to achieve the same goal.</li> </ul>
Positive change is happening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People are listening to our opinion, which shows me people are positive about changing the things we feel strongly about.</li> <li>People now think differently from the meeting at CYCJ.</li> </ul>
There have been some surprising or unexpected things that have happened as a result of our work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The young people changed the view of a stakeholder.</li> <li>Great feedback from what we have been informed.</li> </ul>
We are confident that we have listened to and valued the opinions of everyone involved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes because when we got to talk to the stakeholders an idea from everyone was shared.</li> <li>Everybody is entitled to their own point of view of the discussion and the project and they listen to our idea.</li> <li>Someone has listened.</li> </ul>

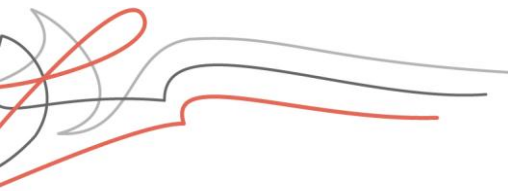
### Evaluation Capture Form - CYCJ 'Moving on Scotland'

Outcomes	Quotes
Young people have been able to use their ideas and strengths and are more confident in their abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The programme I'm designing – it's using my ideas</li> </ul>
Young people have new	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I am now recording everything in my meetings by writing it down, &amp; I use the energy quadrants model from our</li> </ul>



Outcomes	Quotes
skills	project with other lads too.
Young people recognise that this is useful for future work and learning.	
This has been a positive learning experience for me	
I got insights of value to my work or organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I value it as a user, there's an awful lot of work for the success rate – it's a lot to invest.</li> <li>• It teaches you to question what you used to do, my career, my bigger picture – let's do it rather than just think about it.</li> </ul>
[More] Young people and adults have committed to helping to bring the ideas to life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A 'side step' programme</li> <li>• This was a pilot course, we met others in it</li> </ul>
I am more confident in my capacity to bring about change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have been involved in the past – I've talked at meetings but I'm loving saying stuff on PSP Justice. The change I'd like to bring about is not have a Polmont – or to start with, have single cells, not double.</li> <li>• Prison is for adults not children. It's about getting some people behind us. A few years' time, I'll have done my bit to try &amp; change it.</li> </ul>
I am acting differently in the [classroom/ at work/ in the community].	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed my outlook on my community</li> </ul>
There have been real improvements in relationships between the young people and adults involved	
Positive change is happening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definitely – the director came back to meet the boys &amp; set possible meeting dates.</li> <li>• You came back &amp; dragged me out my bed.</li> </ul>





Outcomes	Quotes
There have been some surprising or unexpected things that have happened as a result of our work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• That all the groups intertwined. All calling on &amp; saying the same things, it means people listen.</li><li>• It's not just a lip service.</li></ul>
We are confident that we have listened to and valued the opinions of everyone involved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SU brought a team in &amp; that helped build the relationships between me &amp; the boys.</li><li>• A lot of understanding, when we met the suits they were very inquisitive &amp; questioning. Really involved – they actually cared &amp; it brought my defences down – a couple of years ago I'd have let my mouth do the work.</li></ul>