

Smiles for Miles Base Project



Final Evaluation Report

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Acknowledgements

Ďakujem všetkým, ktorí pomohli s projektom

Thank you to everyone who helped with the project!

When evaluating services for children and young people, they need to engage in the process in a manner that does not disrupt their experience of the service provision. Particularly as the often small charities providing essential services have multiple funders simultaneously requiring evaluation. A balance needs to be struck. I am grateful to the Smiles for Miles Base Project partners who supported my presence in observing and experiencing children's participation and provided a safe environment where children and young people were able to engage with my inquiries both directly and indirectly. I am grateful to every child and young person who contributed to this evaluation process.

The fullness of my understanding of the impact of the coordinated service delivery model that underpins the Smiles for Miles Base Project would not have been possible without the contributions of its partners. These are busy providers, meeting the complex needs of children and supporting their staff teams in that process. Additionally, they manage the precarity created by a lack of reliable funds to support children's needs, which requires them to seek funding to keep the provision available continually. I appreciate the transparency and trust during interviews that enabled me to understand the challenges and benefits of coordinated delivery for individuals and provider organisations.

Finally, Voluntary Action Rotherham employees working within the remit of the Children, Young People and Families Consortium worked tirelessly to motivate and inspire. Their unique vantage point within the project provided a unique perspective that helped create opportunities for alliances to grow. Further, their commitment to monitoring and collating evidence of the impact of a dynamic and multifaceted project alongside project partners is to be commended.

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Foreword

I want to thank Dr Donna Peach, the author of this evaluation and all partners involved for their support, enthusiasm, and contributions to the tremendous success of the Smiles for Miles Base Project, its learning and evaluation.

Thanks to players of the National Lottery, £493,047 awarded from the National Lottery Partnerships Yorkshire and Humber fund provided a fantastic opportunity for member organisations of the Children, Young People and Families Consortium to deliver on a mission of working together to achieve the best possible voluntary sector contribution to improving the lives of children, young people and families in Rotherham.

The Smiles for Miles Base Project powerfully demonstrates the impact that can be made when like-minded voluntary sector organisations work in co-production with children and young people and maximise the power of collaboration and coordination to deliver the right activities and support in the right place and at the right time. The project also highlights how when organisations and communities are well-connected, services made available to children and young people are more responsive to their needs, voices and lived experiences and, therefore, produce greater impact.

The success of this project is a testament to the desire of delivery partners to work together and their willingness to adapt provision in response to the needs of children and young people. The project dared to dream and innovate without restriction or conformity with the status quo, and as a result, it not only realised what is needed now but what is needed in the future.

The connectivity of organisations facilitated by the Consortium is a powerful vehicle for collaborative learning, collective understanding and transforming of ideas into realities beyond that which can be achieved by single organisations in isolation. The concept of organisations journeying together embodies a camaraderie and an 'added value' that cannot be bought 'off the shelf' or be quickly replaced and, therefore, provides the opportunity to develop capabilities at a much deeper level both as service providers and within the communities and populations which access that provision.

I believe that joint-consortia projects such as the Smiles for Miles Base Project will pave the way for national learning and the implementation of more sustainable working models which are rooted in collaboration and meet needs in the most impact and cost-effective ways possible. I am incredibly proud of all delivery partners for their incredible achievement of outcomes. I want to commend their commitment not only to providing what children and young people had expressed that they needed or wanted to experience throughout this project but also their ongoing commitment to proactively anticipating and preparing for what will be needed in the future.

Ashley Leggott

Strategic Coordinator of the Children, Young People and Families Consortium

Executive Summary

The Smiles for Miles Base Project (SfM) had a collaborative infrastructure that was led by Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) as a member organisation of the Children, Young People and Families Consortium (the Consortium). This innovative project delivered a dynamic service provision, which is vital to transform delivery beyond governmental registry and regulation¹. Within the SfM project, the innovation was visible at a micro level and meso-level. At a micro-level, VAR enabled its partners to adapt their resources to meet the changing needs of children and young people. The structure facilitated an immediacy in identifying needs and responding to the feedback of children and young people. At a meso level, SfM supported organisations to collaborate, not only extending their service but also developing new offers for children and young people in Rotherham. Finally, the Consortium assisted its partners in organising, adapting and building resilience as they, in turn, faced challenges from wider social and economic factors².



The project was conceived in collaboration with the Different but Equal Board, a network of young people in Rotherham from different backgrounds, cultures and identities. SfM secured funding for two years which enabled partner alliances to be developed and promoted genuine leadership to meet the needs of children in Rotherham aged between 8 years and 19 years of age. Additionally, SfM was inclusive of people up to the age of 25 years if they had special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). Launched in October 2021, SfM found the deprivation experienced by children and young people in Rotherham was exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis. Despite the increased challenges,

¹ Appe, S. (2015) Government Mapping of the Third Sector: A Government Innovation for regulation and Coordination? Perspectives From the Third Sector, *International Journal of Public Administration*, 38:10, 724-733, DOI: [10.1080/01900692.2014.956896](https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2014.956896)

² Parker, L. D. (2023). Third sector crisis management and resilience: Reflections and directions. *Financial Accountability & Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/faam.12379>

SfM has enabled the development of partner alliances, which reduced barriers to engagement by tailoring service delivery to specific needs.

This 'right support, right place, right time' approach encouraged collaborations that delivered a multitude of bespoke services to children individually and in groups. Each partner contributed their wealth of experience and the immense trust they shared with their communities, creating the foundation that facilitated children's seamless access to other provisions. The SfM project was able to merge and combine services to provide both tailored and dynamic support that included 1:1 sessions by referring children within internal and external services. That proved to be of particular importance when children and young people experience individual, social and structural barriers to mental health services³.

Over the last two years, SfM partners demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability in navigating the persistent challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis. Their collective efforts resulted in a network of 3799 customised interventions and activities, benefiting 2497 children and young people across Rotherham.



Figure 1. The suite of provisions provided by the Smiles for Miles Base Project

The coordinated approach led by VAR empowered SfM partners to effectively deploy resources, optimising service delivery timing and minimising duplication. This approach enhanced effectiveness by streamlining referrals and access to tailored

³ Radez, et al., (2021). Why do children and adolescents (not) seek and access professional help for their mental health problems? A systematic review of quantitative and qualitative studies. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 30(2), 183–211. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-019-01469-4>

services, embedding sustainable impact in individual outcomes, partner development, and Consortium cohesion. The consortium provided training in Excel and Canva to upskill the staff team of some partners to assist with data collection. Additionally, partners held four workshops where they could share practice skills and knowledge, including bid writing, partnership working, data collection and management systems. These workshops enabled the SfM partners to develop their ability to signpost within the project. The VAR coordinator role was co-produced in part by these workshops and other partnership meetings, helping to increase the capacity of the project to signpost internally. The coordinator developed trusting relationships with the SfM partners which facilitated honest conversations which enabled changes in service delivery to be made to adapt to the changing needs and desires of the children and young people.

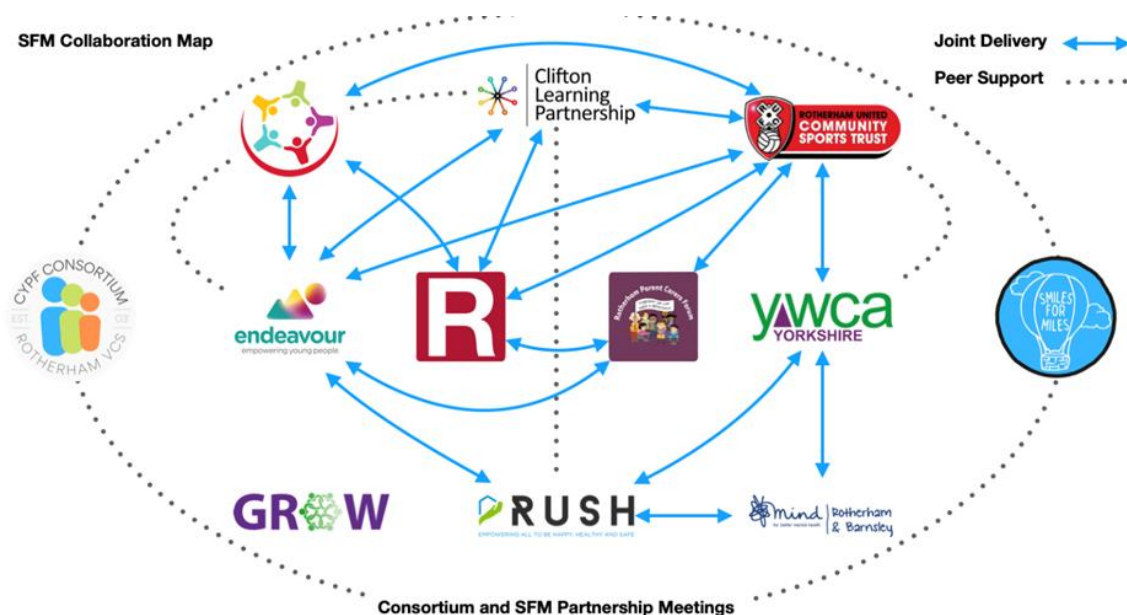


Figure 2. SfM Collaboration Map

This innovative approach provided an affordable model that can sustainably adapt to meet specific, changeable, universal and unidentified needs. This model has the potential to expand and target the needs of the Local Authority's and Integrated Care Board's key health, social and educational ambitions for children and young people in Rotherham. However, fostering capacity building within the voluntary sector necessitates sustained investment to effectively its economic and social value over the medium to long term.⁴

⁴ Agyepong, I. A., Godt, S., Sombie, I., Binka, C., Okine, V., & Ingabire, M.-G. (2021). Strengthening capacities and resource allocation for co-production of health research in low and middle income countries. *BMJ (Online)*, 372, n166–n166. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n166>

The project aimed to achieve a spectrum of outcomes for children and young people across 5 main areas;

- 1) Health and Wellbeing,
- 2) Economic Achievement,
- 3) Personal Enjoyment and Development,
- 4) Community and Societal Contribution and
- 5) Safety and Support.

Surveys conducted with children and young people engaging with SfM unveiled their perceptions of its impact, including significant improvements in mental wellbeing, emotional resilience, confidence, safety, aspirations, peer relationships, and reduced isolation.

90%	Improved mental wellbeing ⁵
86%	Improved emotional resilience ⁶
83%	Increased confidence, self-esteem and self-worth ⁷
83%	Improved safety in local communities ⁸
75%	Increased aspirations ⁹
71%	Reduced isolation and loneliness ¹⁰
71%	Improved ability to build healthy peer relationships ¹¹

Table 1. Survey Responses of Children and Young People Engaged in the SfM Project

The evaluator conducted a comprehensive analysis, incorporating quantitative and qualitative data from various sources. As depicted below in Figure 3, the evaluator's thematic analysis revealed three overarching themes that captured the ambitious scope and impact of the SfM project: Coordinated Tailored Support, Effectiveness, and Sustainable Impact, each supported by specific subthemes. These themes underscored the project's success in delivering tailored support and effective provision, emphasising the importance of flexibility in youth services. Notably, addressing mental health needs emerged as a prominent focus, with SfM succeeding in reducing barriers and facilitating support for children and young people. Future initiatives should prioritise mental health support, intersectional discrimination awareness, family involvement, outdoor activities, and continued education and

⁵ 373 of 415 SfM CYP surveyed.

⁶ 273 of 317 SfM CYP surveyed.

⁷ 344 of 414 SfM CYP surveyed.

⁸ 190 of 229 SfM CYP surveyed.

⁹ 227 of 301 SfM CYP surveyed.

¹⁰ 178 of 250 SfM CYP surveyed.

¹¹ 187 of 265 SfM CYP surveyed.

employment assistance to build upon SfM's successes. The insights gleaned from the SfM project should inform ongoing efforts to empower and enhance the well-being of Rotherham's children and young people, ensuring a resilient and inclusive future for the community.

As depicted below in Figure 3, the evaluator's thematic analysis revealed three overarching themes that captured the ambitious scope and impact of the SfM project: Coordinated Tailored Support, Effectiveness, and Sustainable Impact, each supported by specific subthemes.



Figure 3. Smiles for Miles Base Project's three superordinate priorities

Coordinated Tailored Support: Entailed a Base and Basket structured model of partnership working facilitating connections and adaptable responses to meet the diverse needs of Rotherham's children and young people

Effectiveness: Manifested through the provision of early intervention services and relationship-based practice, which is known to enhance child development and attainment.

Sustainable Impact: This was realised through supporting children and young people to recognise their potential, support their ambition and ensure their valued contribution was recognised. In doing so, the project fostered a sense of belonging and expanded what is experienced as meaningful spaces and connections.

Underpinning the SfM project was an ambition to build the capacity, resilience and ambition of children and young people in Rotherham. Its design was creatively conceived to nurture individuals and repair harm while extending their perceptions of what they could achieve. Their baseline was children who had not attended activities outside their communities and whose social experiences were limited. The SfM project supported young people in managing mental health issues, anxiety, and personal challenges, leading to improved well-being, self-worth, and socialisation. Importantly, the SfM partners also worked to reduce the ableist barriers to sport experienced by children and young people with disabilities.

The SfM project partners, alongside the children and young people of Rotherham, delivered a co-produced community-based multifaceted service. The entirety of its success could not be adequately articulated, even in 63 pages. Together, they have designed a collaborative third-sector infrastructure that has the foundational trust and expertise of established charities. Upon this, the Consortium has creatively supported the expansion of those primary providers and transformed what they can offer young people. That has allowed them to collectively support meeting children's needs providing the right support, in the right place, at the right time. Despite their success, the level of need remains high, and SfM providers report having to introduce waiting lists. Future reliable funding would enable this vital work to continue.

Introduction

Smiles for Miles (SfM) is a pioneering social innovation initiative¹² led by Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) as part of the Rotherham Children, Young People and Families Consortium (the Consortium). Since 2003, the Consortium has brought like-minded Voluntary and Community Sector organisations together to raise standards, build resilience and work collaboratively to improve the lives of children, young people and families in Rotherham and surrounding areas. The Consortium and partnership organisations identified the growing incidence of social, emotional and mental health needs for children and young people in Rotherham. The SfM project was designed in collaboration with the Different but Equal Board, a network of young people in Rotherham from different backgrounds, cultures and identities.

Adopting a community empowerment model, SfM used its two-year funding to develop innovative alliances to meet the needs of children in Rotherham. The children and young people were aged between 9 years and 19 years of age, or 25 years if they had special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). The size and complexity of the SfM project was significant. It delivered a varied range of services and activities throughout the 110 square miles that constitute the Metropolitan Borough of Rotherham. The complexity of needs identified by the Consortium was extensive. The innovative design of the SfM project meant it was adaptable to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis, which enabled it to provide inclusive specialised services in a timely manner.

The Context of Rotherham

The Indices of Deprivation (2019)¹³ reports that deprivation in Rotherham has increased, with a key driver being health and disability. The impact of deprivation impacts healthy life expectancy and the likelihood that those in deprived communities will live with poor health. It is against this backdrop of loss and deprivation that the SfM project partners exist to help bridge the impact of deprivation. Notably, one SfM Base partner, Clifton Learning Partnership, is in Rotherham East, which experienced the highest level of deprivation in the Eastwood and East Dene areas¹⁴. The percentage of people with no qualifications in Rotherham East is 42% compared to the Borough's average of 29%; crime and anti-social behaviour are also above the Borough's average.

¹² Polman et al., (2017). Classification of Social Innovations for Marginalized Rural Areas, Deliverable 2.1, Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas (SIMRA)

¹³ [Population – Rotherham Data Hub](#)

¹⁴ [Appendix One Indices of Deprivation 2019 Maps.pdf \(rotherham.gov.uk\)](#)

Recognising the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is important because the baseline of need upon which the SfM bid was written had regressed as children and young people emerged post-COVID-19 with additional complex needs. During the year 2020, Rotherham experienced more deaths than births, with 18% of deaths being related to COVID-19¹⁵. However, over the last decade, Rotherham's population increased by 3.3% (Census Data, 2021)¹⁶ to 265,800, of which 30,900 are aged between 10-19 years old. Rotherham has a higher number of neurodivergent children, with 26.20 per 1,000 compared to the England average of 17.97 identified as autistic, which equals approximately 1,640 children of all ages living in Rotherham.

The efforts to meet the complexity of need and deprivation of this increased population are constrained by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's (RMBC) £200 million budgetary cuts since 2010¹⁷. Therefore, the success of the SfM project rests on the tenacity and determination of these non-profit organisations that are filling the gaps in the public safety net¹⁸. Undoubtedly, the post-pandemic landscape brought additional complexities, including the worst cost of living crisis in forty years, creating a poverty epidemic that further entrenches health inequalities for children¹⁹, with increased concerns about the impact of prolonged economic hardship on adolescent health²⁰ and people's life expectancy²¹.

The SfM Project Partners

SfM consisted of VAR as the lead organisation and 11 member organisations that were structurally arranged as either *Base* or *Basket* providers to provide a range of services and activities. In the first six months of the project, the three bases were JADE Youth and Community, YMCA and Clifton Learning Partnership (CLP). During the last 18 months of the project Rotherham United Community Sport Trust increased its involvement in the project and merged its Basket of provision with CLP to replace that provided by YMCA. Thus, the data refers to RUCT and RUCT 2 to distinguish the scope of their involvement. The remaining seven *Baskets* were provided by YWCA Yorkshire, Rotherham and Barnsley Mind (RB Mind), Rotherham Parents Carers Forum (RPCF), Rush House, GROW, Rotherham Open Arts Renaissance (ROAR) and Endeavour.

¹⁵ [Deaths involving COVID-19 by local area and socioeconomic deprivation - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/deaths/covid-19)

¹⁶ [Rotherham population change, Census 2021 – ONS](https://ons.gov.uk/population/censusdata)

¹⁷ [Residents asked for views as budget pressures persist – Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council](https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/news/Residents-asked-for-views-as-budget-pressure-persists)

¹⁸ Beaton & Dowin Kennedy (2021) Responding to failure: the promise of market mending for social enterprise, *Public Management Review*, 23:5, 641-664, DOI: [10.1080/14719037.2020.1865438](https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2020.1865438)

¹⁹ Iacobucci, G. (2023). "Epidemic levels of poverty" are harming young children, UK health visitors warn. *BMJ (Online)*, 380, 139–139. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.p139>

²⁰ Green, M. J., Stritzel, H., Smith, C., Popham, F., & Crosnoe, R. (2018). Timing of poverty in childhood and adolescent health: Evidence from the US and UK. *Social Science & Medicine* (1982), 197, 136–143. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.12.004>

²¹ Castello-Climent, A., & Domenech, R. (2008). Human capital inequality, life expectancy and economic growth. *The Economic Journal (London)*, 118(528), 653–677. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0297.2008.02136.x>

Table 1. summarises the provision each SfM project partner contributed.

However, the unique way in which the Consortium and SfM-related roles within VAR facilitated the project meant that project members not only extended what they provided to children and young people in Rotherham but were able to create timely and new service provisions that extended the impact of the project. Table 1 summarises the contribution from each SfM partner.

JADE

They provided open-access youth club sessions for Juniors (7-11-year-olds), Seniors (12-19-year-olds) and young people with SEND in the Dinnington area of Rotherham. Through these sessions, young people will have access to a trusted adult and a wide range of positive activities, such as music production, games consoles, community garden, sports, food and drink, arts and crafts, community gym, themed project work, trips, holiday lunch clubs, residential and outdoor activities. They also delivered advice drop-ins for young people and outreach and detached youth work.

YMCA Rotherham

Provided weekly youth clubs for LGBT+ young people and access to a trusted adult who will provide 1-to-1 support and help young people access other opportunities. They also delivered advice drop-ins for young people, outreach and detached youth work. During the first year of the project, they worked closely with Clifton Learning Partnership as their satellite base to deliver additional youth clubs and positive activities.

Clifton Learning Partnership (CLP)

They provided open-access youth club sessions for young people in conjunction with YMCA Rotherham, using themed, environmental and outdoor activities. They also provided holiday lunch clubs and activities and access to a trusted adult who offered 1 to 1 support and help young people access other opportunities.

Rotherham United Community Trust (RUCT)

They provided children and young people with six-week courses of sports sessions and tournaments across various locations, with tournaments bringing everyone together from all the sessions. The sessions will support young people to become active and physically fitter and promote community cohesion.

RUCT2 extended their original provision to include greater collaboration with CLP.

<p>YWCA Yorkshire</p> <p>Provided a range of small group programmes and workshops designed to help participants develop self-help and wellness techniques To understand power dynamics and coercive control in relationships and gender inequalities, including how those inequalities impact and shape beliefs and behaviours. They helped strengthen personal resilience and informed decision-making to secure a future that is free from abuse.</p>
<p>Rotherham and Barnsley Mind (RB Mind)</p> <p>They provided mental health and well-being support to young people who were identified as needing additional support through 1:1 counselling using person-centred therapy and support. They also delivered group sessions covering topics such as life skills, developing coping strategies, improving awareness and understanding of mental health, and providing therapeutic-type activities such as creative writing, arts, crafts and photography.</p>
<p>GROW</p> <p>They were engaged with individual young women to establish their individual needs and build a support plan to enable them to set achievable personal goals. Delivery adopted a trauma-informed approach and stabilisation techniques to enable the individual to begin to understand their feelings and trauma responses and how they can express their needs within their family unit, school, and wider services.</p>
<p>Rotherham Parent Carer Forum (RPCF)</p> <p>They delivered counselling sessions for young people with special educational needs. Also, fun, weekly support group sessions for children who have a sibling with SEND to allow space and time for them to ask questions, share worries and feelings and develop coping strategies to deal with challenging behaviour from their sibling, and, more importantly, meet other young people who face similar issues.</p>
<p>Rotherham Open Arts Renaissance (ROAR)</p> <p>They provided a range of creative activities from ceramics, drawing, laser cutting and printmaking, supporting a group to develop and design a project, for example, transforming public space, writing a play or producing a film.</p>
<p>Endeavour introduced young people to outdoor activities such as canoeing, climbing, caving and hill-walking. The activities were designed to help young people to develop the skills they need to face their problems, tackle issues head-on and succeed where they may have previously failed including empowering young people to conquer their fears, express themselves, and trust and respect others.</p>

Table. 1. Summary of the contribution from each SfM project partner.

JADE is a well-established youth and community centre situated in the Dinnington area of Rotherham. It is a BASE member of the SfM project and a crucial partner in both its breadth and depth. JADE provides a wide range of support for children and young people and is a key conduit to link their beneficiaries with SfM project providers. Described by some as ‘a living room in the middle of the community,’ JADE occupies a former school building in Dinnington. The Dinnington population statistics of 2020 report there were 1503 children aged between 10 and 19 years²², in which case JADE is providing services to at least 39% of the community’s children. That figure will be greater when compared against the figure for children within the 9-16 years age range.



During the project, I had multiple opportunities to observe activities at JADE and to talk to the children and young people about their experiences of engaging with SfM partners. Observations included JADE’s junior open-access youth club, a girl’s group and a senior open-access youth club. What they deliver is quite remarkable and based upon the strength of relationships they have with children and families in their community. Supporting its innovative leadership, JADE benefits from a highly experienced and skilled staff team. Each Thursday, across the space of four hours, the ‘living room’ goes through multiple transformations to support the needs of different groups of children.

As waves of children pass through the daily design of the provision, the expert team facilitates a wide range of needs within each age group. Children can choose how they want to inhabit the space with a wide variety of indoor and outdoor activities. Boundaries are maintained to ensure the space is safe and protected for each group of children while supporting their ability to be expressive. Such ‘cultures of participation’ have been shown to sustain an experience of inclusion during other experiences of disruption and resistance²³.

²²https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/yorkshireandthehumber/wards/rotherham_/E05008936__dinnington/

²³ Nolas, S.-M. (2014). Exploring young people’s and youth workers’ experiences of spaces for “youth development”: creating cultures of participation. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 17(1), 26–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2013.793789>

Ever mindful of being responsive to the changing and post-pandemic heightened needs of their children and young people, JADE has provided an onsite counsellor and a sensory room. They have begun to deliver counselling sessions to children and young people during the last year. Additionally, JADE has fully embraced the opportunities afforded through the SfM project partnerships and reports that 90% of their children and young people feel happier and have improved mental health.



YMCA Rotherham is part of the well-established YMCA White Rose group.

As part of the SfM project, it collaborated with the Clifton Learning Partnership (CLP) to support a community of Roma, Slovakian and Eastern European heritage children and young people who live in the economically deprived Eastwood Village area of Rotherham.

The YMCA recruited a project worker who was new to the town and, following the closure of services during the pandemic, had the additional task of reopening the youth club provision provided by the YMCA. That provision opened its doors on the 8th of March 2022 following work completed to develop re-engagement with young people in the area. YMCA intended to build upon the re-establishment of the youth provision and to develop the inclusion of LGBT+ youth in the area. YMCA was a significant partner in assisting the re-engagement of children and young people from the Roma community.



YMCA, with the support of CLP and other SfM partners, were able to quickly assess that their SfM provision required adaptation to respond to the different needs of Roma children following the pandemic. Regrettably, the YMCA was unable to retain sufficient staff to maintain its commitment to the SfM project and withdrew at the end of year one. However, the design of the SfM project facilitated the ready engagement of other partners, such as Rotherham United, to deliver outside activities that engaged the children in an environment in which they were familiar.

Clifton Learning Partnership is a dedicated and compassionate charity that has gained the trust of the uniquely positioned Roma and Slovakian populations in Rotherham. It provides an inspiring range of support to ensure that every child and family in its community has the best chance to succeed. CLP adopts a community-centric approach, believing that it takes a community effort to nurture and uplift children and young people. They create safe and engaging spaces for young people through youth clubs, promoting positive interactions and personal growth. In addition to educational guidance and emotional support, their commitment extends to addressing the essential needs of those in the community.



The CLP Eastwood Pantry initiative ensures families have access to essential food items. The warmth of the relationships shared between the CLP staff, the children, and their family members is evident and should be understood differently from that of their white British counterparts.

RUCT brings a breadth of activity and flexibility that has been key to the success and sustainability of SfM during its first year. They have been instrumental in supporting the Bases YMCA and CLP during the interruption created by staff vacancies and the specific needs of the children and young people in what is one of the most economically disadvantaged areas of Rotherham. The social standing of RUCT serves

“Playing football will help us stay away from bad people.”

to make visible the work of the SfM partnership as community leaders such as the Mayor of Rotherham and COUNCILLOR Tajamal Khan are available to support their events. The town's sense of belongingness to its football club enables RUCT to

cross boundaries and build relationships across communities. I have been impressed by the value base underpinning its approach, highlighted by the co-production of its activities with children and young people. 29 The inclusion of sport in the SfM project promotes both health and social benefits. While these might not be measurable on a project meeting the needs of a broad and diverse population, the evidence of its benefit is readily apparent in the research literature.



The fact that RUCT exists as a means of supporting the football club's commitment to the people of Rotherham demonstrates to the community a desire for inclusion and an indication that they are seen and valued²⁴. It flattens the societal hierarchy and raises the expectations children can have of themselves, of adults and organisations. Sport provides opportunities for children to explore leisure and expand their ambitions for the activities they can enjoy as part of who they are²⁵.



Rotherham United has experience supporting the LGBTQ+ community, supporting young individuals during the transition and collectively with their symbolic rainbow laces campaign. They launched their LGBTQ+ and ally support group in December 2021. RUSCT has an inflatable football pitch they can bring into the community,

which includes rainbow laces and flags. That facilitates one of the principal aims of the SfM project to improve the inclusionary symbolism of space and place for those who (visibly or not) identify as LGBTQ+. It provides an opportunity to extend the benefit of the football club's broad appeal by creating a safe space for incidental education and conversation. A study that adopted a 'living library' approach²⁶ found safe conversational spaces a useful method for reducing prejudice toward Roma and LGBT+ communities. These inclusive activities are increasingly important against the backdrop of exclusionary social narratives that can impact individual well-being.

Rotherham Parent Carers Forum (RPCF) was established in 2009. As part of their SfM contribution, they deliver counselling sessions for children and young people with special educational needs. The SfM funding enables them to continue supporting children up to the age of 25 years and siblings up to 18 years. In a living demonstration of the inclusion of neurodivergence, many of the team



²⁴ Grunke, M. (2020). "We Need to Give Every Kid the Chance to Play": An Interview With Adam Rosales1 About Giving Back to the Community and Keeping Disadvantaged Children and Youth Grounded Through Baseball. *Insights on Learning Disabilities*, 17(2), 147-

²⁵ Diaz-Hernandez, A., & Lazcano, I. (2022). "I drew myself playing football with the clouds and the sun": qualitative research methods to explore children's leisure experiences in disadvantaged contexts of less economically developed countries. *Leisure Studies*, 41(3), 372–388. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2021.2006276>

²⁶ Orosz, Bánki, E., Bóthe, B., Tóth-Király, I., & Tropp, L. R. (2016). Don't judge a living book by its cover: effectiveness of the living library intervention in reducing prejudice toward Roma and LGBT people. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 46(9), 510–517.

members have a family member who is neurodivergent. That lived experience corresponds with the number of autistic children in Rotherham being higher than the national average. Being part of the consortium is a relatively new experience for RPCF. They provide a safe environment for siblings to share their worries and feelings and meet other young people who face similar experiences. As part of their internal evaluation, children can author a book about their experiences. These will be sampled during the second year of the SfM project providing consent has been achieved as part of the independent SfM evaluation. RPCF takes a child-centred approach to their work, and it was heartening to see their willingness to adapt processes to meet the needs and wishes of the children and young people.



YWCA is an established provider in Rotherham. Changes in staffing following the pandemic meant the leadership for SfM was new to Rotherham, and further personnel changes occurred in the summer of 2022. Although these changes create challenges, they equally create opportunities. One example was provided by a team member who had recently had the opportunity to put her training into practice by transitioning from support to a lead role in the delivery of one of their programmes.

The YWCA leadership noted the advantage of being part of a consortium when personnel were from outside Rotherham, as it quickly facilitated opportunities to develop relationships with partners.

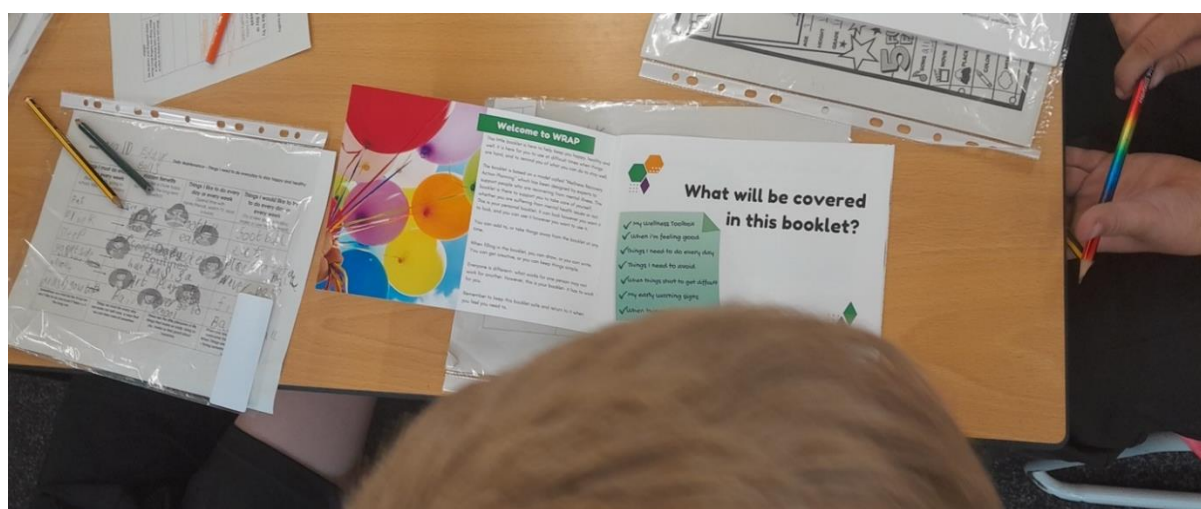
YWCA has put these relationships to good effect in identifying groups of children who will benefit from their varied provisions. For example, they have identified the potential to deliver their Wellness Recovery Action Planning programme (WRAP) to a group of boys aged 14–16 years old. WRAP is a programme developed to respond to mental distress that has been found to impact views about recovery positively²⁷.

Since its early inception to support adults defined as ‘mentally ill’, it has been adapted for use with broader populations. Indeed, as part of the SfM project, YWCA has been delivering WRAP to children and young people aged from 8 years old supporting their mental health, emotional health, confidence and wellbeing.

²⁷ Keogh, B., et al. (2014). “We have got the tools”: Qualitative evaluation of a mental health Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP) education programme in Ireland: Recovery and WRAP education. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 21(3), 189–196. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpm.12068>

YWCA has adapted their delivery to suit the needs of children and young people, hosting individual sessions when needed in addition to their group work. The best endorsement is the ‘word-of-mouth’ recommendation from young people who had been on the programme that saw a primary school reach out to see if YWCA could deliver for their children. Although we know there is a cohort of primary-aged children, who were not negatively impacted by the initial covid lockdown in England²⁸. There is also evidence of the inequality children experienced in education during the pandemic expected to deepen the gap between poorer and better-off families²⁹. YWCA is perfectly positioned to understand that gap via its support of young and often isolated and vulnerable parents.

The YWCA approach is to encourage and empower children and young people to develop the knowledge and skills that support their experience of healthy relationships. Their group programmes are designed to support relational independence, and they have demonstrated an ability to engage children and young people across genders is impressive. YWCA had identified an interest in developing their work in primary schools, which supports the recent statutory requirement for the delivery of relationship education³⁰. Research to understand primary school-aged children’s experience of education regarding harm and abuse is still limited. The second year of the SfM project provides an opportunity to contribute to that knowledge base.



²⁸ Gilligan, C., Sresthaporn, N., & Mulligan, A. (2022). COVID-19 and mental health of primary school children: Comparison of 2019 and 2020. *Child Care, Health & Development*, 48(6), 891–894. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cch.13001>

²⁹ Andrew, A., Cattan, S., Costa Dias, M., Farquharson, C., Kraftman, L., Krutikova, S., Phimister, A., & Sevilla, A. (2020). Inequalities in Children’s Experiences of Home Learning during the COVID-19 Lockdown in England. *Fiscal Studies*, 41(3), 653–683. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-5890.12240>

³⁰ Farrelly, N., Barter, C., & Stanley, N. (2022). Ready for Relationships Education? Primary school children’s responses to a Healthy Relationships programme in England. *Sex Education*, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2022.2052834>

GROW is a Rotherham-based charity that has supported girls and women for thirty years to examine and emerge from experiences of trauma safely. As part of the SfM project Grow provided 1:1 counselling and wellbeing sessions for those aged between 12 and 19 years of age. To meet needs in the right time and space, GROW travelled to JADE and used their meeting space. The impact of the pandemic initially impaired attendance at the start of the SfM project, with sessions being cancelled as girls and women are disproportionately responsible for the caring responsibilities for those unwell in their families. However, they were able to nurture good attendance and saw a steep increase in referrals during the lifetime of the SfM project. Creatively, GROW used its established MySELF project-related outcome measures to demonstrate consistency in the effectiveness of its provision. Their participant responses to the SfM survey reflected 100% effectiveness in improved well-being and self-worth and a 75% increase in emotional resilience.

RB Mind contributed to the SfM project by delivering person-centred well-being activities. These sessions empowered children and young people to become emotionally resilient and supported them to achieve their future ambitions. RB Mind conducts a robust in-house evaluation of the benefits of its services to children and young people. An example of their impact is in the case study of a young person whose self-esteem was so low that he did not like to look at himself in the mirror; by the end of the summer, he had begun to build friendships and return to college. A key to reducing barriers to improving mental health and well-being is RB Mind's willingness to engage with young people in a manner which builds trust.

The collaboration between RB Mind and Rush House characterised an approach steeped in understanding that the transition into a counselling relationship should itself be person-centred. Thus, they combined to empower young people to engage in a therapeutic process who were unable to envisage themselves doing so. Young people were provided with space to explore sensitive personal experiences that reduced their sense of isolation and empowered them to understand their experiences in a wider context. The nature of that work was exceptional and groundbreaking reducing stigma and nurturing a future resilient self. The ability to realise new aspects of self at this stage of mid-adolescence can expand perceptions of future potential and ambition.

Rush House celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2023, which is a testament to its ability to consistently adapt to meet the needs of young people in Rotherham. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Rush House became an AQA centre to enable their young people to develop the structure and skills that would provide a firm foundation for their future ambitions.



That adaptation was in evidence from the first year of the SfM project. Their success in empowering young people to gain employment and engage with education has created the challenge of how to support access to external services that run on weekdays from 9 am-5 pm. Like barriers faced by the young people at YWCA who find childcare a barrier to access, there is scope for services to reflect on how and when to provide for this adolescent age group. Rush House delivers a wide range of activities as part of its SfM commitment. By far, the most popular activities are those related to education, employment and training (EET). There is scope for Rush House to consider how they might adapt their valuable knowledge and skills to younger and more diverse populations in Rotherham whose education and employment prospects are limited by disadvantage.



Providing AQA support led to greater independence and resilience, 'taking knockbacks and coming back'. Whilst this was not part of our "hard outcome" delivery when we planned our SFM input it has become a vital part of the wider outcome delivery that we have achieved by working so closely with those referred.

Rush House

Endeavour is a charity that embraces education and adventure to provide opportunities for children and young people to develop. Its approach provides another exciting contribution to the SfM project. An outdoor learning environment presents unique opportunities that can transform the way in which children and young people perceive themselves and their engagement with the world³¹. However, being in an unfamiliar setting can be unsettling. The SfM partners recognised the benefit of their children and young people engaging with Endeavour and having opportunities that broaden their experience. The trusting relationships between the SfM partners and the children aided engagement with Endeavour, who found children and young people expressed interest in participating in activities they had never tried before. Interestingly, Endeavour introduced novel expectations for the children to safely engage in adventurous pursuits, which provided opportunities for children and young people to negotiate an understanding of exploratory risk and resilience.



³¹ Dingle, M. (2006). Knowing our place : a perspective on the contribution of outdoor education and its relationship with the outdoor recreation industry. *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education*, 10(1), 54–57. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03400831>

The presence of ROAR in the SfM project is transformative in its unspoken inclusiveness and diversity; it is a constant reminder of aspiration and expression of self. As Rush House notes, the factors underpinning the success of their young people's ventures into education and employment lie in the scaffolding of their self-confidence, resilience and ability to imagine a life beyond what they experience currently. ROAR presents a vehicle for the conception of the individual, community and urban regeneration; its collaborative activities with SfM partners provide opportunities to engage and critique their environment³². They are a constant reminder of our humanity and our need to be human.



The Troll Festival is an amazing example of this. ROAR's partnership with Thurcroft Creatives positions them at the start of Rotherham's activities in becoming the first Children's Capital of Culture in 2025. However, the contribution of ROAR is embedded in its very presence and the endless possibilities of its impact. Our engagement with art is subjective and a reminder of the limits of evaluation of our ever-becoming self.



³² Keene, T. (2021). The Shadow Database: Activism, Art, and Aspiration within Urban Regeneration. NMC Media-n, 17(2). <https://doi.org/10.21900/j.median.v17i2.767>

Emerging from the pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic delayed the intended commencement of the project, which was launched in October 2021. Soon afterwards, further government restrictions were placed on social movements, including a work-at-home policy, to help restrict the spread of the omicron variant. During the pandemic, the landscape of needs for children and young people had worsened, which was evidenced by an increase in anxiety and depressive symptoms³³. Although the pandemic impacted all children, the effects were often worse for adolescents, girls, and those with neurodiversity and chronic physical conditions. Emerging research on the impact of the pandemic on children's and young people's mental health should also consider the existing barriers those from ethnically and racially minoritised populations experience in accessing services³⁴.



It is important to understand what 're-engagement' means for the different SfM Base partners and their communities. For example, Clifton Learning Partnership had enjoyed well-established relationships with their community of people from Roma and Eastern European heritage. Following the pandemic in 2021, they found themselves walking the streets to rekindle links and conversations and reignite the trusting relationships they had shared. CLP adapted their provision, including the creation of an outdoor classroom.

JADE continued to provide support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, as it began to reinstate its full provision, it recognised the unmet needs of children and young people during the pandemic.

³³ Samji et al., (2022). Review: Mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and youth - a systematic review. *Child Adolesc Ment Health*. 27(2):173-189. doi: 10.1111/camh.12501. Epub 2021 Aug 28. PMID: 34455683; PMCID: PMC8653204.

³⁴ Edbrooke-Childs et al., (2016). The association between ethnicity and care pathway for children with emotional problems in routinely collected child and adolescent mental health services data. *Eur Child Adolesc Psychiatry*. 25(5):539-46. doi: 10.1007/s00787-015-0767-4. Epub 2015 Sep 7. PMID: 26345326.

For example, a child entering their service post-pandemic could be aged 11 years rather than 9 years, thus missing two years of developmental support they could otherwise have received. That gap in supporting child development further compounded the impact of the pandemic on the presenting needs of the children. Thus, an increase in anti-social behaviours was observed in addition to a higher uptake of the activity sessions. JADE responded to these complex needs by recruiting staff to ensure sessions were delivered safely.



Additionally, they have created smaller target groups to improve engagement with young people. Despite the impact of the pandemic, JADE continued to provide a range of activities that assisted its ability to scale up its activities quickly once social isolation restrictions were removed. In the first six months of the project, JADE made 46 referrals to internal partners, which was 72% of reported referrals.

The first year of the project saw SfM partners required to plough additional time and resources into crucial re-engagement activities with their communities following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions between July 2021 and February 2022. In addition to rekindling those crucial trusted relationships, SfM partners observed the increased needs of children and young people. They found many children and young people required additional support to scaffold their educational and social development. The dynamic nature of the Consortium facilitated multiple transformations in the organisation of SfM partner resources to provide a flexible and targeted response to needs in a timely manner. This approach co-constructed an ecological system of local provision and interaction that is inextricably linked to the development and well-being of Rotherham's children and young people³⁵.

³⁵ Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives. *Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 22 (6) (1986), pp. 723-742, 10.1037/0012-1649.22.6.723

Methodology

The evaluation methodology used quantitative and qualitative data to examine engagement, effectiveness, costs, value for money, impact and lessons learned. SfM partners provided quarterly data returns evidencing their effectiveness and bi-annual expenditure reports evidencing the costs and value for money of their service provision. Interviews with partners explored the objectives and delivery of their provision with a focus on both benefits to children and young people and the strengthening of project partner relationships. Case study data was provided by all partners, which highlighted the impact of the provision. The independent evaluator observed numerous activities across the two years of the project, talking to numerous children and young people about their experiences of SfM activities both individually and in groups. Interviews took place with internal stakeholders, including full-time and sessional practitioners, across the two years.

- Attendance Data
- Case Studies
- Categorical Data
- Financial Data
- Impact Reporting
- Interviews
- Narrative Reports
- Observations

Qualitative data included narrative reports and case studies that each partner submitted biannually. The evaluator completed in-person and telephone interviews with all project partners. Additionally, multiple in-person observations of activities across all Bases and several Baskets were completed over the life of the project. The written qualitative data was analysed for themes across the aims and objectives of the project, providing experiences from those delivering and receiving services. That analytical process was complemented by qualitative observation, which enabled the evaluator to capture the complexity of the experience³⁶ of SfM by independently observing the emotions, attitudes and perceptions of children and young people, and those facilitating the activities. Finally, quantitative data was collated on a quarterly basis by VAR and was designed to represent the size and complexity of the project. The data measured numerous service user categories, project activities and outcomes, which are presented in the next section.

³⁶ McKechnie L. E. F. (2008). Observational research. In Given L. M. (Ed.), *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (pp. 573–577). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Three Overarching Themes

This report details the project's performance against three overarching themes, highlighted by the evaluator's thematic analysis, as depicted below in Figure 3. Three A B C subthemes were identified that support and encapsulate the broad range of ambitions that underpinned the SfM project design. This thematic framework well-being used to structure the report, providing qualitative evidence gathered through independent observation and interviews in addition to submissions from the SfM partners.

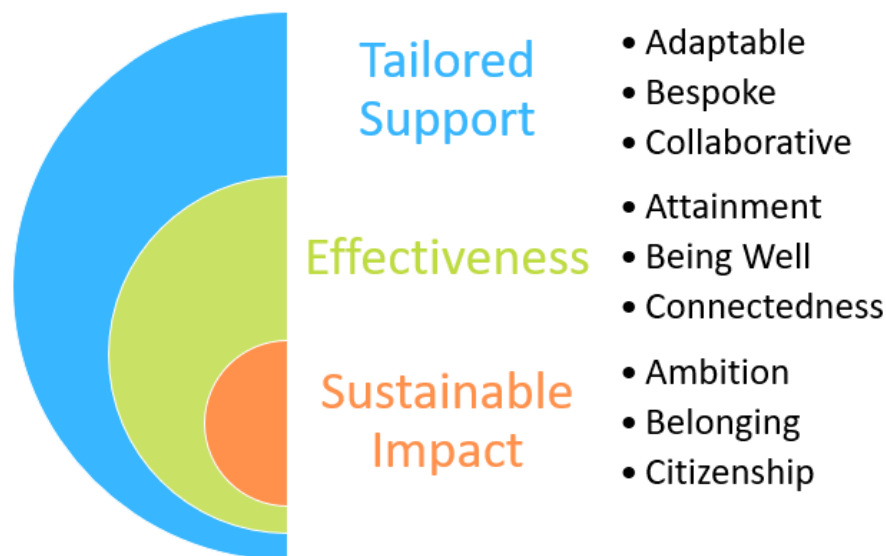


Figure 3. Smiles for Miles Base Project's three Overarching Themes

Coordinated Tailored Support:

It entailed a Base and Basket structured model of partnership working, facilitating connections and adaptable responses to meet the diverse needs of Rotherham's children and young people.

Effectiveness:

Manifested through the provision of early intervention services and relationship-based practice, which is known to enhance child development and attainment.

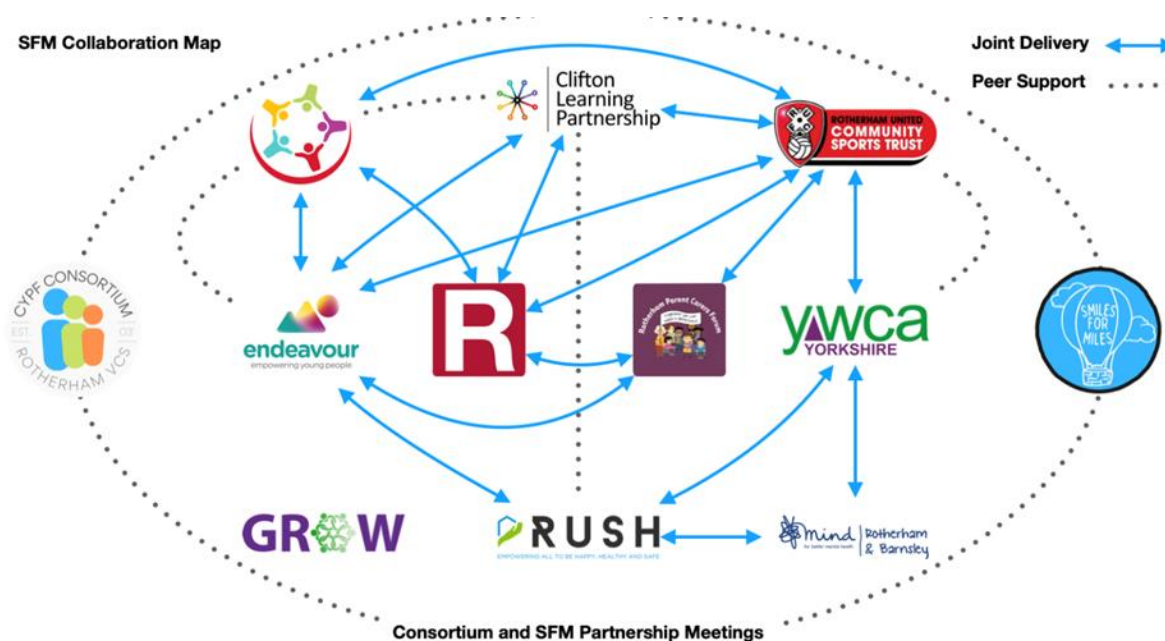
Sustainable Impact:

It was realised through supporting children and young people to recognise their potential, support their ambition and ensure their valued contribution was recognised. The sustainable impact fostered a sense of belonging and expanded what is experienced as meaningful spaces and connections.

Coordinated Tailored Service Delivery

Adaptable - Bespoke – Collaborative

The lead organisation, VAR, coordinated a collaborative governance structure that promoted cooperation between the SfM partners and helped tailor the collective service delivery of the SfM project. Additionally, the SfM project innovation was visible at a micro level and meso level. At a micro level, VAR enabled its partners to adapt their resources to meet the changing needs of children and young people. The structure facilitated an immediacy in identifying needs and responding to the feedback of children and young people. At a meso level, SfM supported organisations to collaborate, not only extending their service but also developing new offers for children and young people in Rotherham. Finally, the Consortium assisted its partners in organising, adapting and building resilience as they, in turn, faced challenges from wider social and economic factors³⁷. In doing so, it has strengthened the third-sector infrastructure in Rotherham by helping them to adapt to meet children's and young people's needs and wishes with a sense of immediacy.



The right support, in the right place and at the right time approach encouraged collaborations that delivered a multitude of bespoke services to children individually and in groups. Each partner contributed their wealth of experience and the immense trust they shared with their communities, creating the foundation that facilitated children's seamless access to other provisions.

³⁷ Parker, L. D. (2023). Third sector crisis management and resilience: Reflections and directions. *Financial Accountability & Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/faam.12379>

The SFM project was able to merge and combine services to provide both tailored and dynamic support that included 1:1 sessions by referring children within internal and external services. That proved to be of particular importance when children and young people experience individual, social and structural barriers to mental health services³⁸.

RB Mind is able to pick up referrals from the SFM Coordinator and make an instant judgement as to whether RB MIND should lead and pull Rush House in later or vice versa. We seem to have pitched this right for a number of individuals and coordinated our response well.

Rush House

A significant adaptation within the project occurred in its early stages when several SfM partners reported the unmet needs of younger children and the additional impact that could have on the ability of their older siblings to engage in supportive activities. This dynamic was particularly visible in the Roma community, where siblings traditionally socialise together, and older children have a responsibility to care for their younger siblings. However, other SfM partners also reported interest from younger people for access to well-being services, especially from RPCF for counselling and

"Counselling has given me a safe space to talk, I feel heard more confident, and I really enjoy coming."

YWCA for their WRAP program. In response, the SfM project lowered its age range to include children from the age of 8 years. There is no internationally recognised definition of adolescence. The United Nations International Children's Education Fund suggests early adolescence ranges between 10 and 14 years of age³⁹. However, the National Youth Agency⁴⁰

(NYA) recognised that in contemporary society, youth work should be inclusive of children and young people from age 8 years to 25 years to assist their global development.

By lowering the age range to 8, it enabled older young people not to have to look after younger siblings. There were also some cases where if the younger sibling was unable to attend, then a 13 year wouldn't be able to attend as parents preferred them to do things together.

VAR

³⁸ Radez, et al., (2021). Why do children and adolescents (not) seek and access professional help for their mental health problems? A systematic review of quantitative and qualitative studies. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 30(2), 183–211. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-019-01469-4>

³⁹ The state of the world's children 2011. Adolescence: An age of opportunity. [SOWC-2011.pdf \(unicef.org\)](https://www.unicef.org/sowc2011)

⁴⁰ [Youth Work – NYA](https://www.nya.org.uk/)

There were multiple examples of practice across the SfM project where partners adapted their service to provide a bespoke experience for an individual child or young person who would otherwise not have their needs met. For example, partners were able to negotiate the inclusion of 1:1 support rather than group attendance for those whose anxieties prevented them from participating in group activities.

Due to the flexibility of the project, we have been able to lift and shift our delivery and reach the wider community of Rotherham.

RUCT

There were occasions when one partner supported a child from another partner to enable them to benefit from the service provision of a third partner. What was vital was the continuous feedback partners had with children and young people as they co-produced the service delivery that suited their varied needs.

Partnership working has been key to being able to offer opportunities to young people – some of the things may not have been delivered had the ‘working together’ not happened.

VAR

SfM was required to maximise the benefit of its resources. Offering group-based provision can assist in meeting the needs of a greater population but some find attending groups a barrier to receiving services. Both modalities are effective, however, research⁴¹ suggests individual models can have better outcomes both in the short and medium terms. One SfM partner reported the challenge for their cohort of children and young people to commit to structured provision and the benefits of co-producing the provision with the young people the service is intended for.

We found that partners who are non-prescriptive in their offer and who work with our young people to design and organise their offer to them have a much greater success rate in terms of engaging and achieving outcomes. It is very difficult for our young people to commit to six-week programmes. The more informal the activity seems, the greater the chance of success.

JADE

⁴¹ Melero, S., et al., (2021). Effectiveness of group vs. Individual therapy to decrease peer problems and increase prosociality in children. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(8), 3950-. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18083950>

The extract below reflects that a young adult was able to voice their anxiety about attending a therapeutic group and engage in a discussion about his needs. His preference for an individual session was responded to and delivered in a way that other young people who might prefer an individual session but had not expressed that view could also have that opportunity. This co-production demonstrates that within the same resource, SfM partners provided for and adapted to a range of young people's needs in a manner that clearly responded to what the young person requested.

“a young adult wanted to support but didn't feel comfortable attending the group; as partners, we discussed splitting the time we offered into half of its group drop-in and then the other half booking out 1:1 time for sessions. The young people liked it when they had activities to do, so we included this in our delivery of groups.”

RB Mind & Rush House

Another example of SfM providers collaborating to provide a bespoke service to a young person was described by a staff member at Rush House. The expression of a softer approach suggests one without barriers that enable rather than restrict. The safety net they created reflects the fragility of any aspect of a young person's life when they are reliant on a substitute familial structure. That highlights the importance of flexibility in youth provision. Future programs should consider the unique needs of each young person.

A young person struggled to engage with the EET program and needed a softer approach with SFM and some 1:1 tailored support. Engaged with 1:1 and some group sessions in small groups and was signposted to MIND for support and signposted to parenting classes. The outcome was the young person was able to maintain relationships housing and acquired a part time job as well as continuing with education and training support.

Rush House

On other occasions, it was the longevity of the service that needed to be adapted to an individual's needs. On these occasions, partners explored other funding options to ensure a child's needs were met seamlessly. On one occasion, the SfM partner accessed other internal funding to extend their provision to a young person to ensure the continuity of service required to meet their needs. At other times, the service provided by SfM was time-limited, such as the attendance on the WRAP programme. The WRAP programme is, in part, designed to encourage young people to identify their needs. After the programme, the SfM partner discussed the next steps with the young person, who agreed to a referral to be made to an external agency.

These actions demonstrate the level of trust that is evident between children, young people and SfM partners and serve to increase their engagement and participation with wider services.

*"After WRAP, I knew I needed additional support,
so RUFC made a referral to CAMHS."*

Young Person, YWCA.

The relationship-based model of collaboration between agencies for the benefit of the children changed the perceptions of the concept of referral. One SfM partner did not perceive engaging with one of their established external partners for the benefit of SfM children and young people as a referral. Instead, they brought that partner into their SfM group's work and provided a service to them that extended the original provision.

"We haven't made any referrals to other organisations as such, but following on from conversations with some of the young people, we reached out to our friends at Mesmac to come and run a workshop with the young people around sex education. That was great for the group, and they seemed to take a lot from the session."

RUCT2

The collaborative partnerships strengthened the reach of the SfM project with internal and external partners disseminating knowledge of its activities to children in school via other community links and social media platforms.

"The success of this session has been down to our collaboration with Kiveton Community Sports Park and Astons Neighbourhood team. Both partners have supported the session by signposting young people (to us) and sharing our delivery across communities, schools and social media."

RUCT

In addition, partners were able to use their previous success as a springboard to the successful delivery of their SfM deliveries.

“Due to the success of our previous boxing sessions in partnership with Unity Boxing we are booked in to start delivery of a new boxing session at Saifs Boxing gym in Canklow. We hope to see the same success and engagement as the previous provision.” RUCT



VAR supported Rush House staff to develop confidence in their ability to work with a young person aged 13 years, which was below their usual experience of working with those over the age of 16 years. The support of the SfM partnership to help extend organisational boundaries to work collaboratively to bridge gaps in service provision is progressive. Having interviewed young people from their experience of engagement with other SfM partner providers is seamless as it is anchored to their sense of belongingness to Rush House. Thus, engagement with RB Mind, YWCA and Endeavour has a familial sense to it.

The coordinator seemed to grasp who the partner agencies were very quickly, their offer and their ethos and used this to full capacity when screening referrals. That particularly helped with some of the referrals we had that required at least one other organisation to be involved. The support offered was seamless, timely and coordinated.

VAR

The SfM partners valued the multi-organisation design of the project gave them. These working relationships were further enhanced by the regular partnership meetings convened by VAR. The interdependent model of the SfM project enabled partners to cement and expand their collaborations with an agility that is a sign of the resilience of the third sector.

Being part of Smiles has allowed us to be a part of some fantastic multiagency of services in the Rotherham area. I feel that from this, we have built some great connections and have some great partnerships working on the horizon to support young people in Rotherham. That has further been cemented when attending partnership meetings to build on these connections. From these

meetings, I have some meetings planned with RUSH house Rotherham and Barnsley MIND to look at developing some support sessions which include some of our specialism and equally some of theirs which will also support our service user group.

YWCA

With the support of VAR leads and partners, the project created opportunities for the Basket providers to engage with children from populations with whom they were unfamiliar. This process created an opportunity for learning for both providers and young people, which is depicted in the extract below. The providers, RUCT, report this as a major setback when they perceive a lack of commitment from the children and young people.

One major setback within the first few weeks of delivery was the behaviour of the young people. This was happening at the end of sessions as they were leaving the facility and heading to the MUGA (located behind the CLP building). We acted upon these issues by cancelling the following session, and this was to highlight to the young people that there had to be consequences for their actions. There haven't been any further issues of this nature in recent weeks.

RUCT2

RUCT2 responded to the setback by identifying and analysing needs to decide the way in which they could adapt to meet them. The extract below is an example of good practice in identifying the way services need to adapt to be responsive to needs and reduce barriers for children and young people.

During the early stages of the programme, we had issues with developing a bond with the young people; this was down to various issues, including age group split, timings of sessions, etc. As a staff team, we sat and discussed at length any changes that we felt needed to happen to support the project. Since we made the changes, we have been able to work with the young people attending the sessions in smaller groups to understand better what they want.

RUCT2

The context for the above challenges is revealed, in part, in the extract below. It highlights the intersectional barriers experienced by some children, which can compound their inability to access services. Signposting is built on ableist and privileged assumptions that individuals can move between services without risk. The SfM partners worked creatively to develop attachments between service providers and children and young people. That process enabled them to support children in building new trusting relationships not only with unfamiliar people but also in new spaces and places. These become transferable skills that will be discussed later in the sustainable impact section of this report.

Signposting some young people to other services has brought barriers, for example, young people not having transport to access other provisions in the area. If CLP staff haven't gone with them, they haven't attended some provision—one example. Young people want to play football. This activity is an offer at RUCT, and young people won't attend unless CLP staff take them.

VAR



Effectiveness

Attainment - Being Well – Connectedness

A primary focus of the SfM project was the delivery of early intervention services recognised for their significant impact on child development and educational attainment. An objective was to see tangible improvements in children's development and educational achievements achieved by implementing evidence-based strategies that create a nurturing environment to foster the well-being of children and young people. Several subthemes emerged from the qualitative data, including improved education and career attainment, physical and mental health well-being and strengthening connectedness.



The relationship between children being physically and mentally well and their educational attainment has been of significant interest for a number of years⁴². It is recognised that poor health and social relationships negatively impact a child's ability to learn. While these structural issues are prevalent, the solutions should include the views of children and young people. Indeed, the Children's Commissioner's review of the subjective well-being of children's mental health needs in England (2017) promotes children's ability to be engaged in the way their needs are met. The impact of social isolation following the COVID-19 pandemic⁴³ was present throughout this project. This impact was a national concern that led the Department for Education to

⁴² Rumor, P. C. F., Heidemann, I. T. S. B., de Souza, J. B., Manfrini, G. C., Durand, M. K., & Beckert, R. A. T. (2022). Reflections of the social determinants of health on school children's learning. *Revista Da Escola de Enfermagem Da U S P*, 56, e20220345–e20220345. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1980-220X-REEUSP-2022-0345EN>

⁴³ Samji, H., et al. (2022). Review: Mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and youth – a systematic review. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 27(2), 173–189. <https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12501>

launch its Promoting and Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools and Colleges Programme (2021)⁴⁴.

Targeted mental health support was delivered by SfM project partners Rotherham and Barnsley Mind (RB Mind) and GROW. As schools became aware of the SfM project, they began to make referrals for children who were experiencing anxiety. In response, Mind was able to provide early intervention to support the children, schools and their families. Schools reported visible changes in the children who presented as less anxious and more confident in themselves. Notably, school staff found children to have developed the interpersonal skills to engage in conversations about their emotions. Another learning point was the collaboration with schools to facilitate children's attendance at Mind, allowing children to leave school earlier on those days. That accommodation enabled Mind to meet the children's needs in a timely manner rather than needing to create a waiting list for appointments only outside of school hours. It also maintained consistency for children during term and non-term time.

RPCF focuses on providing a therapeutic space where children and young people can explore their sibling relationships and support their future adult psychological well-being⁴⁵. Children who have a sibling with a disability could experience thoughts and feelings they are unable to express sufficiently. Therefore, the provision of a safe and trusted space where they can share and examine their feelings is important to their capacity for empathy⁴⁶. As part of their SfM project engagement, RPCF collaborated with ROAR, who introduced artist Teresa Sayner (@teresasaynerart) to expand the children's creative practice experience. Art therapy, when combined with nature-based activities, has been shown to have benefits for stress and self-esteem for non-disabled siblings of children with disabilities⁴⁷.



⁴⁴ [Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/promoting-and-supporting-mental-health-and-wellbeing-in-schools-and-colleges)

⁴⁵ Milevsky, A. (2018). Theoretical and Clinical Foundations of Siblings in Therapy: Use of Parental Context in Adult Sibling Discord. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 46(5), 437–453. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01926187.2018.1558423>

⁴⁶ DeVries, D., & Sunden, S. (2019). Bibliotherapy with children who have a sibling with a disability. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, 32(3), 135–155. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08893675.2019.1625147>

⁴⁷ Kang, S.-J., Kim, H.-S., & Baek, K.-H. (2021). Effects of nature-based group art therapy programs on stress, self-esteem and changes in electroencephalogram (Eeg) in non-disabled siblings of children with disabilities. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(11), 5912–. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18115912>

Such examples are of art in a deductive form reduced to create achievable individual activities that can be harnessed for particular and transitory needs. That is important as research suggests an engagement with the arts can reduce the cortisol levels of children impacted by disadvantage⁴⁸. Brown et al. (2018)⁴⁹ also demonstrated the advantage of art with preschool children from economically low-income families in developing their readiness for school. The initial 6 weeks of creative practice were so successful a further six were commissioned. Teresa explained that she embraced the children's neurodivergence, ensuring an inclusive approach that evoked fun while supporting children to stay comfortably on the periphery of activity until they felt able to join in.

My daughter loves coming here; she has been asking all through the summer break when it is going to start again. She really missed it.

RPCF Parent

RPCF recognise the value of being able to scaffold new activities within the safety of a trusted and familiar environment, especially for neurodivergent children. The creative practice sessions included introducing Zen Doodles which encourage the making of patterns within existing shapes that Teresa reports were popular. Artistic activity can help support relationships using non-verbal cues⁵⁰, and Teresa described the developing trust children had as they began to engage with her. Emerging studies suggest there are benefits of using creative practice to increase the social and emotional needs of neurodivergent children⁵¹. Teresa was able to extend the creative activities to develop collaborative engagement between the children. There was space for shared laughter and several children complemented each other's contribution to a shared creative art activity. Teresa sought advice and guidance from the parents to adapt her engagement style to their child. Parents advised her the activities she created were accessible for them to introduce at home, providing opportunities for them to engage with their child's development through creative activities⁵².

"Counselling has given me a safe space to talk, I feel heard more confident, and I really enjoy coming. "

Young Person, RPCF

⁴⁸ Brown, E. D., et al. (2017). Can the Arts Get Under the Skin? Arts and Cortisol for Economically Disadvantaged Children. *Child Development*, 88(4), 1368–1381. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12652>

⁴⁹ Brown, E. D., et al.. (2018). The art of Head Start: Intensive arts integration associated with advantage in school readiness for economically disadvantaged children. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 45, 204–214. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2017.12.002>

⁵⁰ Marshall-Tierney, A. (2021). Therapist art making as a means of helping service users with anxiety problems. *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 26(1-2), 47–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454832.2021.1918193>

⁵¹ Thayer, F., & Bloomfield, B. S. (2021). An evaluation of a developmental individual differences relationship-based (DIR®)-creative arts therapies program for children with autism. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 73, 101752–. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2020.101752>

⁵² Park, J. E. (2021). Effectiveness of creative arts-based parent training for parents with children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 76, 101837–. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2021.101837>

YWCA has been a contributor to developing and maintaining relationships with SfM partners. I attended an Easter event at their base in Rotherham, along with other SfM partners and external partners. The event provided the young people who use YWCA services a natural environment where conversations could elicit opportunities to engage in other events, such as football or to work with RUSH to develop their curriculum vitae. The atmosphere was positive and community-based; there was a focus on simultaneously supporting a community of young parents and their children while scaffolding the prospects for individuals.

The SfM project provided an opportunity for Rush House to rekindle its relationship with YWCA as the two organisations emerged from the pandemic. They enjoy reciprocity that has seen Rush House staff support YWCA young people with curriculum vitae development and interviewing skills. In turn, YWCA has delivered their WRAP programme, which has further consolidated the resilience support for young people at Rush House. Young people were supported in pursuing education, training, and employment opportunities, helping them achieve their goals and develop resilience.

"I am at College! I tried to get into a local college, but they were not ready until September, and I was so fed up with this that it was a long wait. We went to another college, and you helped me get a place. I am feeling better about myself, and I am making friends. I love college."

Young Person, Rush House

The relationship between Rush House and SfM partner RB Mind has been impactful. The depth and richness of a safe space to explore the experience of trauma relating to events such as pregnancy loss/miscarriage are ground-breaking and vital. A longitudinal study based on females aged 10 years and above in Denmark reports that 23.1% of females will experience at least one pregnancy loss⁵³. The UK government has introduced the National Bereavement Care Pathway to assist practitioners such as midwives in responding to the needs of those bereaved⁵⁴. This sensitive and complex subject area should not be underestimated and there remains a lack of knowledge about a life event experienced by almost a quarter of prospective parents.

⁵³ Lidegaard, Ø., Mikkelsen, A.P., Egerup, P., Kolte, A.M., Rasmussen, S.C., Nielsen, H.S. Pregnancy loss: a 40-year nationwide assessment. *Acta Obstet. Gynecol. Scand.* 2020; 99: 1492–1496

⁵⁴ Littlemore, J., & Turner, S. (2019). What Can Metaphor Tell Us about Experiences of Pregnancy Loss and How Are These Experiences Reflected in Midwife Practice? *Frontiers in Communication*, 4. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2019.00042>

One young person has been identified as ‘gifted and talented’, so a member of staff is looking for additional funding for the young person to have 1-1 lessons so that he can perform at Eastwood Fun Festival in his local community. Had these sessions not taken place, the young person’s talent may not have been identified.

CLP

That was, in part, visible during a discussion about the engagement with Endeavour. It was reported that Endeavour required a mature degree of sensible behaviour to support young people safely in outdoor activities. That expectation was supported, and the young people enjoyed a day in the Peak District. Another benefit of that collaboration was the provision of appropriate outdoor walking clothing by Endeavour, which serves to reduce a barrier to such activities if other services do not have a budget for the right equipment. As mentioned before, there is evidence that nature-based activities can help improve well-being. The young people also conveyed how such outings also served to extend the geographical and environmental boundaries of their experience of being in the world. Endeavour had a positive impact on a young person who was initially reluctant to engage with the outdoors. Their mood and outlook improved, and they started discussing ways to access outdoor activities independently. In survey responses, the majority of children reported increased environmental awareness and a willingness to access nature.



The young people said that they do feel like they have pushed themselves and built confidence in the activities, as well as making friends. They feel that the experiences have had a positive impact on their lives. The group have started to ask for activities that they never thought they would want to do, such as canoeing. That shows how much the young people have developed personally, as well as developed trust in others.

Endeavour

The risk of girls being permanently excluded from school is an issue of increasing concern—those at risk of exclusion experience multiple challenges. Often, there is a correlation between children’s mental health and exclusion⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ Tejerina-Arreal, M. et al. (2020). Child and adolescent mental health trajectories in relation to exclusion from school from the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 25(4), 217–223. <https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12367>

Recent research⁵⁶ suggests girls are being excluded at a rate exceeding their male peers. This population experiences isolation and can have increased vulnerability to significant harm. Responses are effective when they are democratic and understand the challenges as systemic rather than individual⁵⁷. Developing opportunities for them to build their social skills and self-esteem is vital, and in the below extract, JADE provide an example of the support they gave to their girl's group.



Our girl's group are a group of girls who have been at risk of exclusion throughout their school life, they are now year 11s and are due to sit their GCSEs. Their aspiration to engage in education has been extremely low, alongside their predicted grades. However, through our work raising their confidence and aspirations, on the run-up to sitting their GCSEs, they have decided to turn their group into a study group. To support this, and at their request, we have bought in specialist speakers who are supporting their learning around Shakespeare when an inspector calls and other key elements of their GCSE studies. That has been delivered informally and engagingly to remove the barriers they face to education. As requested, they are due to attend the Lyceum Theatre on the run-up to their exams to watch when an inspector calls. None of them have ever been to a theatre before, and they are really looking forward to the trip.

JADE

⁵⁶ Clarke, E. (2023). Voices from the edge: Girls' experiences of being at risk of permanent exclusion. *British Educational Research Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3956>

⁵⁷ Daniels, H., Porter, J., & Thompson, I. (2022). What counts as evidence in the understanding of school exclusion in England. *Frontiers in Education*, 7, 1–7.

Following feedback from a young women's group, GROW also developed an evening well-being group that would be a 'safe space' for them. Similarly, Rush House identified the potential to develop emotional resilience in this population and sought additional funding from SfM. The outcome was that by supporting the development of friendships between peers in this group, they began to socialise away from the group.

Such is our success with the Girls group and those SMF clients who are attending that we are now applying for additional SFM funding to support the Girls group to continue and support a wider cohort across the SFM basket.

Rush House

The SfM project was founded on democratic principles that integrated the views and experiences of children throughout, and evidence of that was brimming during each evaluative observation. However, low self-esteem can be hidden from the public gaze, and it needs trusting relationships to be revealed. The approach to young people at Rush House reflects their understanding that the transition into a counselling relationship should itself be person-centred. Thus, they have empowered young people to engage in a therapeutic process who were unable to envisage themselves doing so. An example is provided below, where a young person needed trusting relationships to access specialist support that enabled him to return to education.

This young person's self-esteem was so low he did not like to look at himself in the mirror, but by the end of the summer, he had begun to build friendships and return to college.

Rush House

Sustainable Impact

Ambition - Belonging - Citizenship

This section of the evaluation report will present the evidence of the SfM project partner activities being mindful of the United Nations Sustainable Development (UNSD)⁵⁸ Goal 3, “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”, and Goal 4, “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. While recognising the ambitious goals of the United Nations require Governmental and International collaboration, that should not diminish the life-enhancing learning opportunities the SfM project has delivered to 2497 children and young people in Rotherham over the past two years. Importantly, the scope of sustainable impact has to be supported by continuous investment.



Underpinning the SfM project was an ambition to build the capacity, resilience and ambition of children and young people in Rotherham. Its design was creatively conceived to nurture individuals and repair harm while extending their perceptions of what they could achieve. Their baseline was children who had not attended activities outside their communities and whose social experiences were limited. On occasion, what might appear to be an everyday occurrence was a whole new social learning experience for a child.

*One young person had never eaten out before;
it was a new experience for them.*

Endeavour

⁵⁸ SDG Actions Platform | Department of Economic and Social Affairs (un.org)

Having limited opportunities for a wide variety of social experiences is not a measure of individual talent and possibility, and the SfM project activities provided opportunities to highlight children's abilities.

“One young person has been identified as ‘gifted and talented’, so a member of staff is looking for additional funding for the young person to have 1-1 lessons so that he can perform at Eastwood Fun Festival in his local community. Had these sessions not taken place, the young person’s talent may not have been identified.”

CLP

Recognition for ability and participation is important, and several SfM partners collaborated to create The Millers Challenge event. That event was carefully constructed to be accessible to children and young people of different abilities. Partners supported groups of children from different areas of Rotherham to collaborate in the event. Every aspect of the event was carefully considered and skillfully delivered, ensuring that every child felt included and a sense of belonging.

It was good to observe how children and young people's confidence developed across the day. They were encouraged to feel secure in their abilities and potential to succeed. Many of the challenges in the day were novel to them. Many had a problem-solving pedagogy that required a trial-and-error approach, which encouraged innovative thinking and collaboration. Individual and team tenacity was celebrated, and for example, children whose spaghetti and marshmallow structures failed learned that they could be innovative designers for whom failure was part of the experience of success.

The SfM project program supported young people in managing mental health issues, anxiety, and personal challenges, leading to improved well-being, self-worth, and socialisation. Importantly, the SfM partners worked to reduce the ableist barriers to sport experienced by children and young people with disabilities⁵⁹.



⁵⁹ Tanure Alves, M. L., van Munster, M. A., Alves, I. dos S., & Souza, J. V. de. (2022). The “normal” physical education classes: the ableism facing the inclusion of disabled students. *Disability & Society*, 39(2), 469–484. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2022.2071679>

My lad loves coming to the session every week; he really struggles with mainstream sports due to his disability. He has been made to feel so welcome that he now wants to join the football team.

RPCF Parent

Supporting young people with their mental health and well-being has proved critical to enabling them to remain in education, be that school or college. The percentage of people without qualifications in Rotherham ranges between 29% and 42%. That suggests many of the children engaged in SfM activities could live with adults who have no qualifications. It is important to situate the benefits of SfM in that context and the consistent investment needed to inspire this generation of children and young people to believe they can co-create the future.

The SfM project facilitated community engagement and encouraged parents to become more involved, leading to a safer and more enjoyable environment for children. They have changed lives and instilled hope and ambition to scaffold better opportunities for the next generation. The quote below reflects the importance of consistent relationship-based practice that supports people through cycles of change that take time. As seen below, the secure attachment base provided by a good support worker can have an intergenerational impact.

Thank you so much, but I couldn't have done any of it without Tracy! She has been the most amazing support worker and has been there for me any time I've needed her over the past 2 years! I will miss her so much. I am also very proud of myself and still can't believe that I will actually be going to university. Who would have thought it with what I have been through as a child and as a young mum? I just want to be able to give my daughter everything that I did not have as a child. Stability, love, protection and security that I will always be there for her.

Young Person, YWCA

Another young person and their parent provided feedback on their experience after receiving support from SfM for the young person who was experiencing bullying and struggling with sensory sensitivities, anxiety and anger.

'We cannot thank you enough and feel so grateful to have such an amazing service and the opportunity to have additional paid sessions; both mum and YP have seen and noticed amazing changes in confidence and self-esteem and feel confident that they have the counselling tools required to have a happy and successful future moving forward.

RPCF Young Person and Parent

Once schools became aware of the SfM activities, the demand grew. One example was the uptake in sibling support in school groups offered by RPCF, where demand outstripped provision to the point where they had to introduce a waiting list. Notably, once RPCF engaged with more children who had a sibling with a disability, they began to identify a number of additional needs of those children. Identifying the compounding needs that families who have a child with a disability experience is vital, and RPCF are actively monitoring the needs of those children. A recent review⁶⁰ of supportive provision for siblings of children with a disability advocated the importance of providing support to siblings that included reducing their sense of isolation and having respite from caring responsibilities. Any future funding for SfM should consider extending the provision for the siblings of children with disabilities.

Schools have become very interested in the Sibling Support school groups. That had previously been slow in uptake due to schools being reluctant to bring outside agencies in following COVID restrictions. Still, there are now over 15 schools wanting to sign up and we now have had to introduce a waiting list for this.

RPCF



In addition to schools, some SfM providers engaged with their local councillors, Michael Bennett-Sylvester (East Herringthorpe), Julie Pass (Aston) and Mandy Ardron (Brinsworth) and neighbourhood teams to explore how the SfM provision could facilitate healthy activities which in turn would reduce anti-social behaviour (ASB).

‘The Rotherham Utd inclusion team have been working with Aston and Todwick councillors, the community around Hepworth Drive, Aston, Aston Tara, and Swallownest Baptist Church in supporting families with children and teenagers to engage in physical activity,

⁶⁰ Marquis, S., O’Leary, R., Hayden, N. K., & Baumbusch, J. (2023). A realist review of programs for siblings of children who have an intellectual/developmental disability. *Family Relations*, 72(4), 2083–2102. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12789>

primarily preventing antisocial behaviour within the local community. The team have been encouraging various physical activities, which have included football and boxing; this has given those who have attended an outlet and a focus. The sessions have helped build relationships with the youngsters, and it is intended that a longer-term solution to what activities would best suit the needs of local young people in the area will be found as a result.'

Julie Pass to RUCT

When reflecting on what constitutes anti-social behaviour, it is also important to recognise the vulnerability of children to be exploited. Thus, being occupied in safe spaces is protective as well as developmental. On multiple occasions, the SfM project demonstrated how it balanced the complexity of promoting citizenship with communities that experience social and economic deprivation. Below are quotes from JADE and CLP.

Young people have undertaken a wide range of topic-based project work that supports their ability to engage in their community and make a positive societal contribution, such as citizenship, equality and diversity, and work around ASB. Our LGBTQ group have worked with Endeavour and formed a community matters group, assessing the needs of their community; they produced a wide range of ideas, such as Vape bins, Knife bins, more trees, and green spaces.

JADE

A group of 4 young people sat together and wrote down what they might be doing if the youth club wasn't on; some of the responses were selling drugs, fighting, stealing cars, robbing houses, and bullying people. The same group also stated why they needed funding for football, and the responses were: Keep us healthy, keep parents happy, keep us out of trouble, stop smoking and vaping, keep us happy, and help us with anger.

CLP

"Playing football will help us stay away from bad people."



There were multiple examples of increased community engagement throughout the project. The SfM activities extended the sense of identity and belonging beyond Rotherham. The inclusion of Endeavour, a charity that embraces education and adventure, expanded individual and social skills for all the children and young people who participated with them. Notably, at the start of the project, some children were reluctant to embrace the uncertainty of experiencing unfamiliar spaces. However, once in attendance, most children and young people felt supported enough to overcome fears and anxieties and try new experiences such as indoor climbing. Endeavour offers a variety of activities, which vary in degree of intensity, with a third of young people, mostly aged 12 to 16 years, engaged in abseiling and 23% participating in climbing. The benefits of outdoor pursuits are demonstrated in research findings. For example, a longitudinal study⁶¹ in New Zealand which examined the benefits of activities such as abseiling suggests there is a positive effect on self-efficacy and resilience in moderately at-risk adolescents. Those findings suggest the ability to realise new aspects of self at this stage of early adolescence is likely to expand the future potential and ambition of teenagers.

Throughout the SfM project, it was evident that the adults enjoyed to company of children and young people and vice versa.

⁶¹ Furness, K. (2017). Maximising potential : the psychological effects of the youth development programme Project K. New Zealand Journal of Psychology (Online), 46(1), 14–23.

“I have been working on this project since the beginning, and I can safely say it’s my favourite session of the week. The kids are great; they keep us on our toes, but it’s been really rewarding to see how we’ve built a rapport with them and been able to challenge behaviours and attitudes.”

RUCT Staff

Another highlight for SfM partners was their ability to facilitate opportunities for their children and young people to engage in a wider variety of activities. Below is a quote from JADE.

Highlights for us have been the partnership working and how much this enhances our offer for children and young people. Our young people have access to a wide range of opportunities through endeavours undertaking outdoor adventure activities, team building and environmental projects. RoAR has provided dance sessions for our junior groups and engaged our young people in arts and crafts projects based around Troll Fest and Rotherham United community sports trust, who arranged weekly football sessions outside of our offer to fill gaps in provision for our young people. These activities have helped to grow our children and young people's confidence and self-esteem, develop new skills and improve their mental health and well-being alongside acting as a platform to support our educational provision counselling further and wrap around care.

JADE

The SfM project was rooted in the importance of the child’s voice, and the SfM partners worked hard to support the reintegration of children and young people following the COVID-19 pandemic. That included ensuring children and young people were constantly encouraged to express their views and opinions. This activity took many forms, often with feedback forms and practical ways children could express their wishes. However, the social skills to develop the ability to think critically assess and evaluate their feelings was promoted by the expert skill of the project staff.

The feedback processes allowed children and young people to co-design the activities. It facilitated their engagement with new providers as the SfM partners merged to extend the opportunities available to their cohort. Feedback was often frank and reflective, with children and young people given space to consider their growth and development and that of the partner agencies. A maturity among the children and young people was evident. Partners responded in good time to the feedback. Notably, following feedback from the children RPCF removed the core questions they previously used to monitor their wellbeing. They were providing the young people with a greater sense of agency by doing so.

The children and young people were further empowered to make decisions regarding how funding for the project was spent. That practice supported the children to reflect on what they viewed as value for money when making expenditure decisions.

Money was given to organisations so young people could have direct control over what they wanted to spend the additional money on. Originally, young people had suggested trips as a main priority. However, when young people had the choice of how to spend a set amount of money, they mostly chose to spend it on items they could use again and again.

VAR

However, ROAR experienced some limitations in engagement with children and young people, not extending their interest beyond taster sessions. At times, they were unsure if engagement ideas had come from the young people. That would be an area for development in any future collaborative projects.

There has been a limit to the ability of ROAR to empower and engage. We are not getting repeat workshops. Once the young people have had taster sessions, they do not choose one they liked for a longer sequence of sessions in that media; I don't know why this is; it might be to do with our one-step-removed relationship with the young people. One group has asked for more sessions in flag and banner making, but I don't think this has come from the young people.

ROAR

The involvement in decision-making furthered the sense of belongingness, which was established by each setting and activity being child-focused. There was always the presence of structure and fluidity that seamlessly accommodated a multitude of needs. These permeable boundaries allowed children to feel secure enough to explore new surroundings and co-create their experiences. An example of similar engagement is provided below.

"From the groups that we have delivered, we have always asked for feedback and what the users found beneficial and if there was anything they didn't feel was beneficial. The young people liked it when they had activities to do, so we included this in our delivery of groups."

RB Mind

Unsurprisingly, the SfM project partners experienced challenges. As mentioned previously, one of those was the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and young people. Partners were faced with high levels of complex needs and an unprecedented demand for their activities. Several partners experienced challenges

with staffing, in part due to the precarity of funding for the third sector but also a lack of training and promotion of youth work as a career option.

The main challenges we have faced are meeting the high levels of need and demand we have seen for our activities. Some sessions have seen over 70 young people in attendance. Building staff capacity has been a challenge as recruitment is difficult with a lack of people taking up youth work as a career option and a lack of youth work training on offer.

JADE

As discussed previously regarding RPCF, GROW also found itself having to institute a waiting list which was 16 weeks long forcing them to put a temporary stop on accepting referrals.

The demand for the service continues to be high and outstrips capacity – the waiting now is currently 16 weeks. By the end of next quarter, no more referrals will be accepted to the project; this is to ensure all those still in service receive adequate and quality time to achieve their goals.

GROW

The Reach of the SfM Project

This section will present the descriptive statistics collated during the life of the project. This analysis of the infrastructure of the service provision will be enhanced by qualitative reporting from the partners and the children and young people who engaged in the many activities. The project partners surpassed their target of engaging with 1607 children and young people by 55%. In total, the SfM partners engaged with 2,497 children and young people, which is representative of 8% of children living in Rotherham aged 10 years and above⁶². Collectively, the SfM Bases engaged with 1244 children and young people, with JADE being the largest provider engaging with 821. Additionally, those providing the baskets of support have shown significant reach, with ROAR, RB Mind, YWCA and RUCT collectively providing support to 1253 children and young people.

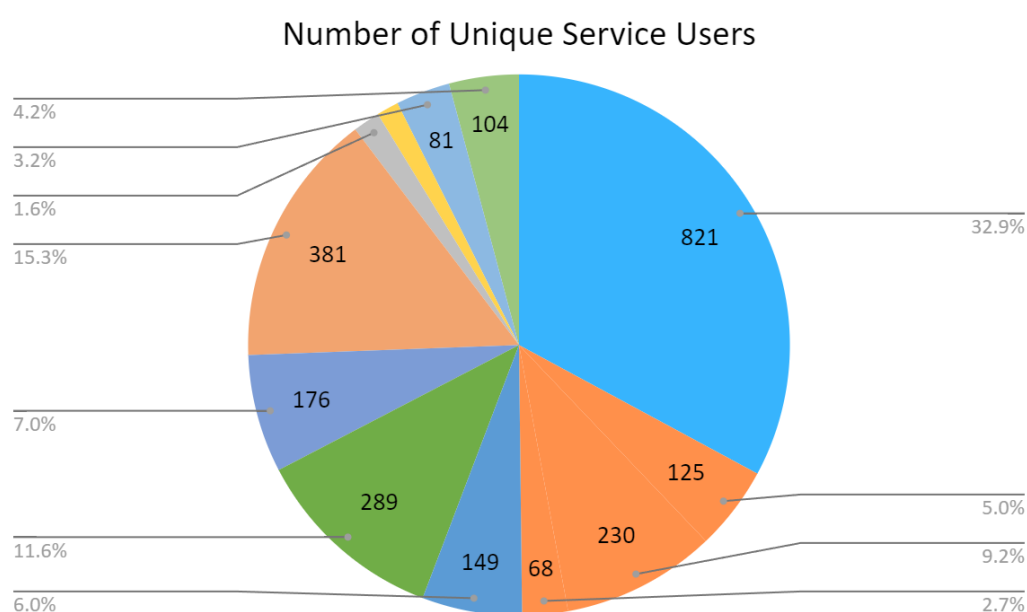


Figure 4. Number of unique service users

The SfM partners' distribution of referrals made and received

Another unique aspect of the design of the SfM project was the ability for partners to refer children accessing their provision to other internal or SfM partner activities. The collaborative Base with satellite design between CLP, YMCA and RUCT2 activated the highest number of referrals. Of the 324 referrals made, only 80 of these were directed to external agencies, reflecting that SfM partner organisations could meet the

⁶² [Population – Rotherham Data Hub](#)

majority of needs beyond their provision. Notably, as the SfM project developed over time, the organisations providing the Baskets of provision also increased the number of referrals made. In total, Basket providers made 142 referrals, with 125 of those directed to SfM partner organisations.

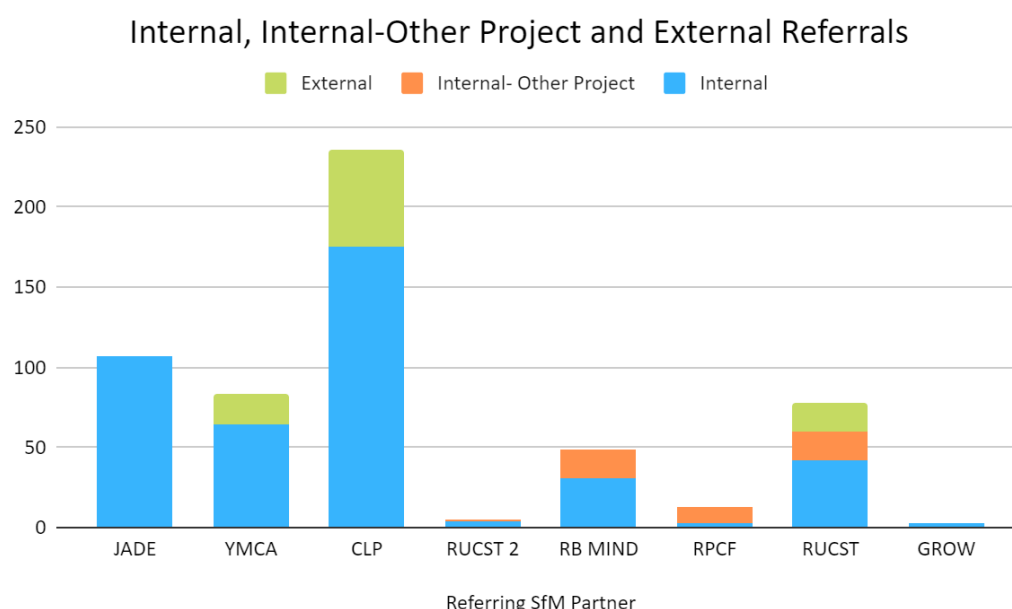


Figure 5. Number of internal and external referrals made

The SfM partners who received those internal referrals are identified in Figure 4 below. RB Mind received the most referrals (177) across the life of the SfM project. The second highest recipient was ROAR with (139) followed by Endeavour (51). During the project, SfM partners gained increased awareness of what RPCF could offer to the young people and families they support. RPCF reported they, in turn, have been able to signpost to other SfM partners and collaborated specifically with RUCT, who provided a venue for them. The Basket of support provided by RPCF contributed to the trauma and resilience services provided by SfM via GROW and RB Mind, thus extending the inclusion and cohesion of therapeutic services for children and young people and their families in Rotherham.

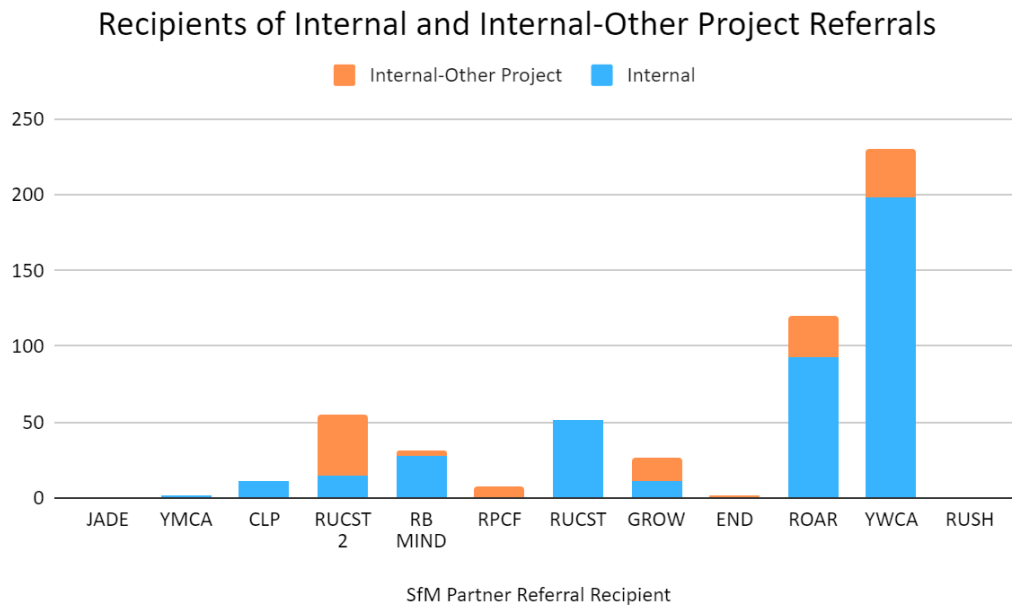


Figure 6. Number of internal referrals received by SfM Partners

Of the 2497 unique service users, 410 (16%) of children and young people accessed more than one SfM provider. By virtue of the design, most of the children accessing additional provisions were evident in the returns from the partners providing Baskets of provision. Notably, ROAR engaged with 159 children and young people, Endeavour with 46, RB Mind 25, RUCT 24, YWCA 15, and Rush House with 11 young people engaging in their provision. The only Basket providers not to attract children from across the project were those with bespoke and targeted provisions, namely, GROW and RPCF.

Number of Service Users Accessing Base and Basket Provision

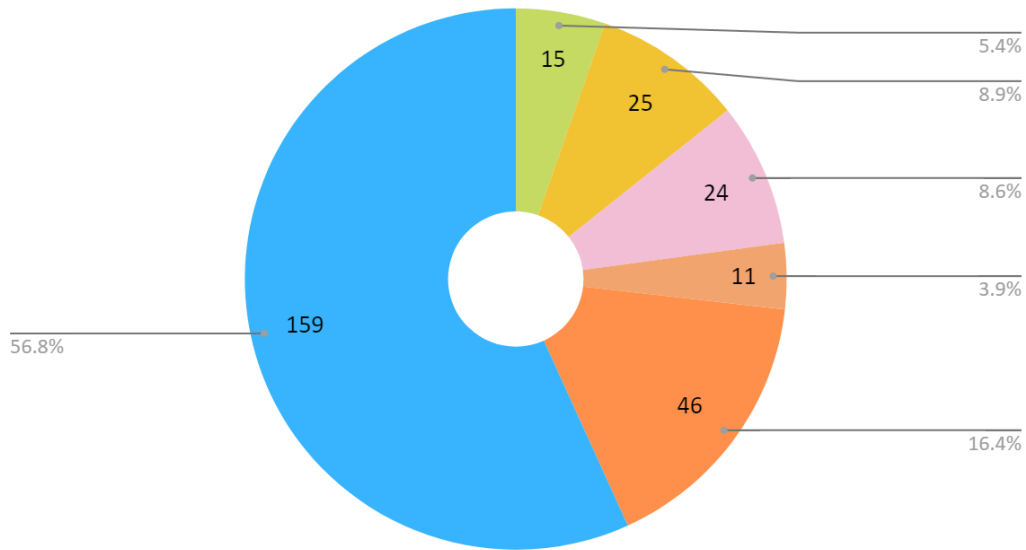


Figure 7. Number of service users accessing Base and Basket provision

Additionally, SfM partners also received 770 referrals from external agencies. The lead recipients of referrals were RB Mind (262), RPCF (124) and YWCA (113), with CLP, RUCT2 and other Baskets receiving the remaining 238 referrals.

Number of Referrals from External Agencies

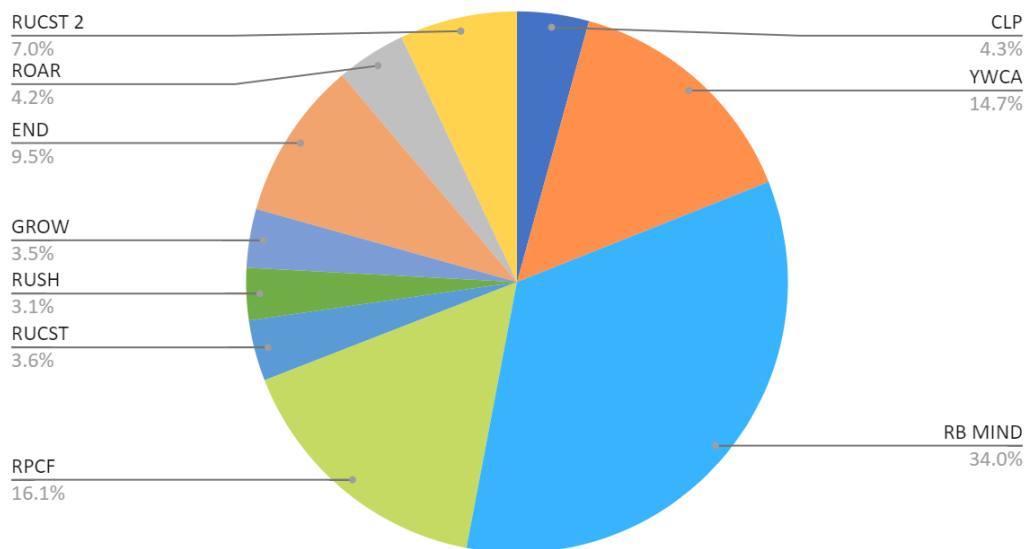


Figure 8. Number of referrals from external agencies

Collaborative working between the SfM partners, Early Help and social services reflected 84% of the project's collaborations with external agencies. Early Help is designed to work with children, young people and their families often when they might be in need of intensive support to address complex needs. Two Bases, JADE and CLP, successfully engaged with the Local Authority's Early Help service. They reduced the barriers by enabling them to develop relationships by delivering joint activities from their premises.

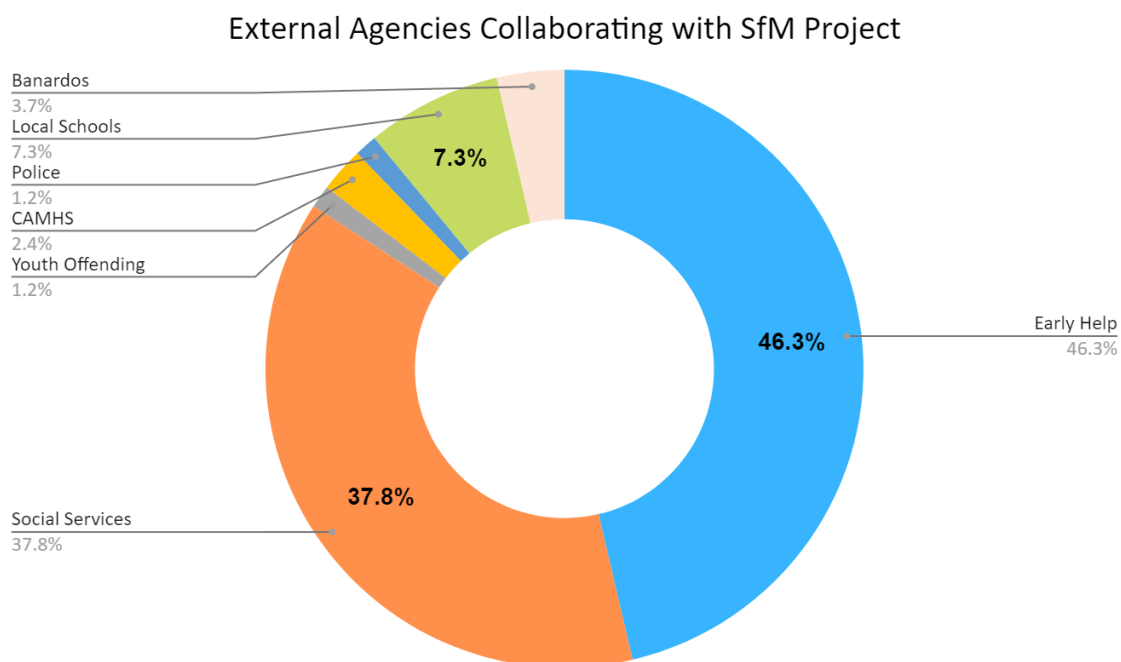


Figure 9. External agencies collaborating with SfM partners

Age of service users accessing SfM partner activities

Young people in high school, ages 12-16, made up 48% of children engaging with SfM partner activities. The second highest age group were 9 to 11-year-olds, who constituted 27% of those attending activities. The data reflects 374 children under the age of nine years and 251 young people aged 17 to 19 years old. Additionally, 50 adults aged 20 to 25 participated in SfM activities.

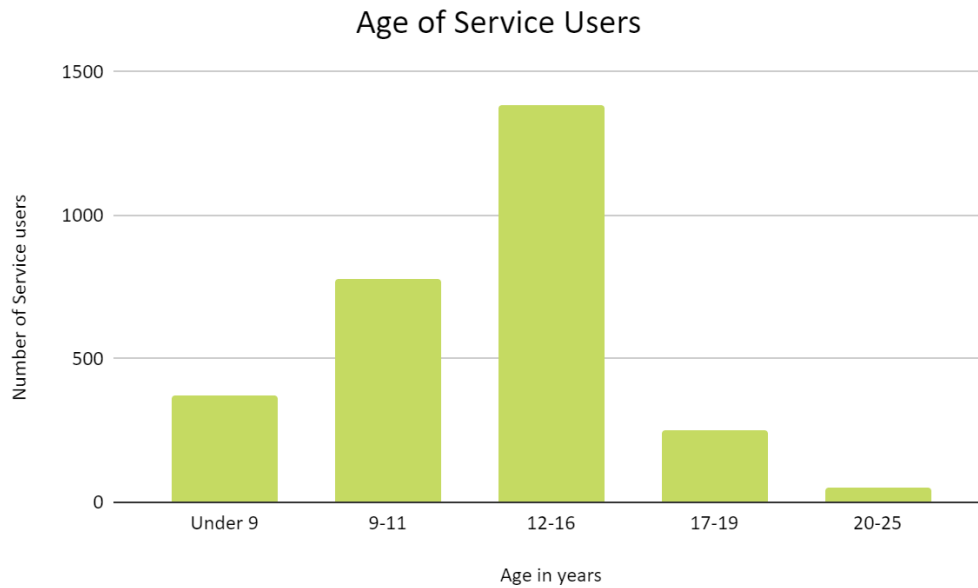


Figure 10. Age of service users accessing SfM partner activities

The gender identity of service users accessing SfM partner activities

The data received reflects that 53% of children and young people engaging with SfM were male, which could be reflective of some of the offers, such as RUCT having to counter a historical imbalance of gender representation in sports such as football and boxing. Thus, children identifying as female made up only 26% of their 501 service users. GROW is a women's only organisation and 100% of its SfM cohort identified as female. At the same time, RB Mind offered a gender-inclusive service, with 41% of SfM service users identifying as male and 58% identifying as female, with 2 children and young people identifying as transgender.

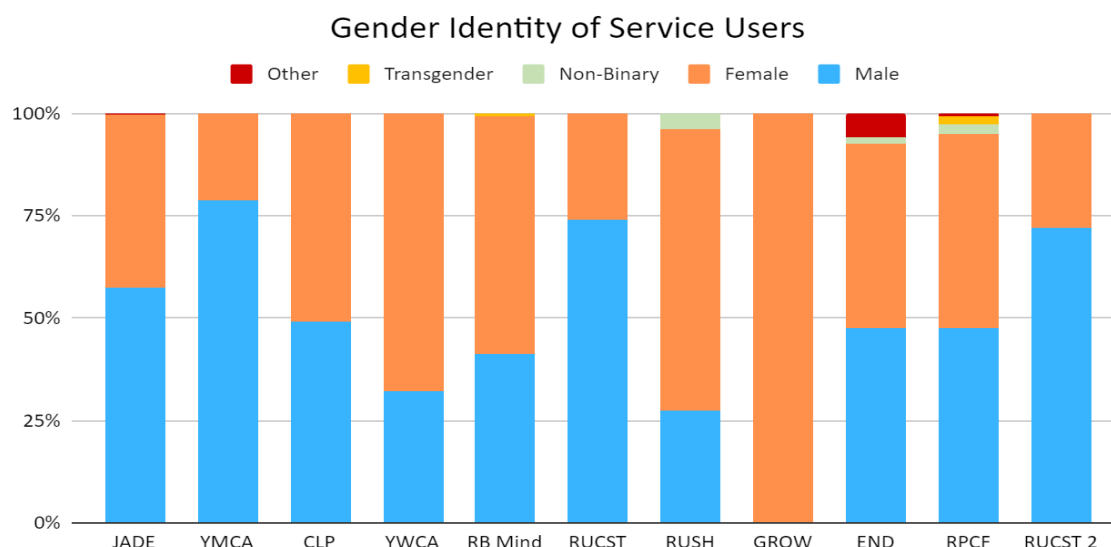


Figure 11. The gender identity of service users accessing SfM partner activities

SEND service users accessing SfM partner activities

Importantly, the SfM project targeted both bespoke provision and the wider social inclusion of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Increasing accessible opportunities is vital to this cohort of children who experience intersectional barriers when trying to meet their health, education and social care needs⁶³. The data received reflects almost 13% of children accessing SfM project partner activities identified as SEND. Figure 12 below provides a visual representation of the visibility of children and young people with SEND across the SfM project. Notably, almost half 47% of children were categorised as ‘unknown’ meaning the reach of the project of children with SEND could be greater.

⁶³ Fernandez-Villardón, A., Alvarez, P., Ugalde, L., & Tellado, I. (2020). Fostering the social development of children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) through dialogue and interaction: A literature review. *Social Sciences*, 9(6), 97-. <https://doi.org/10.3390/SOCSCI9060097>

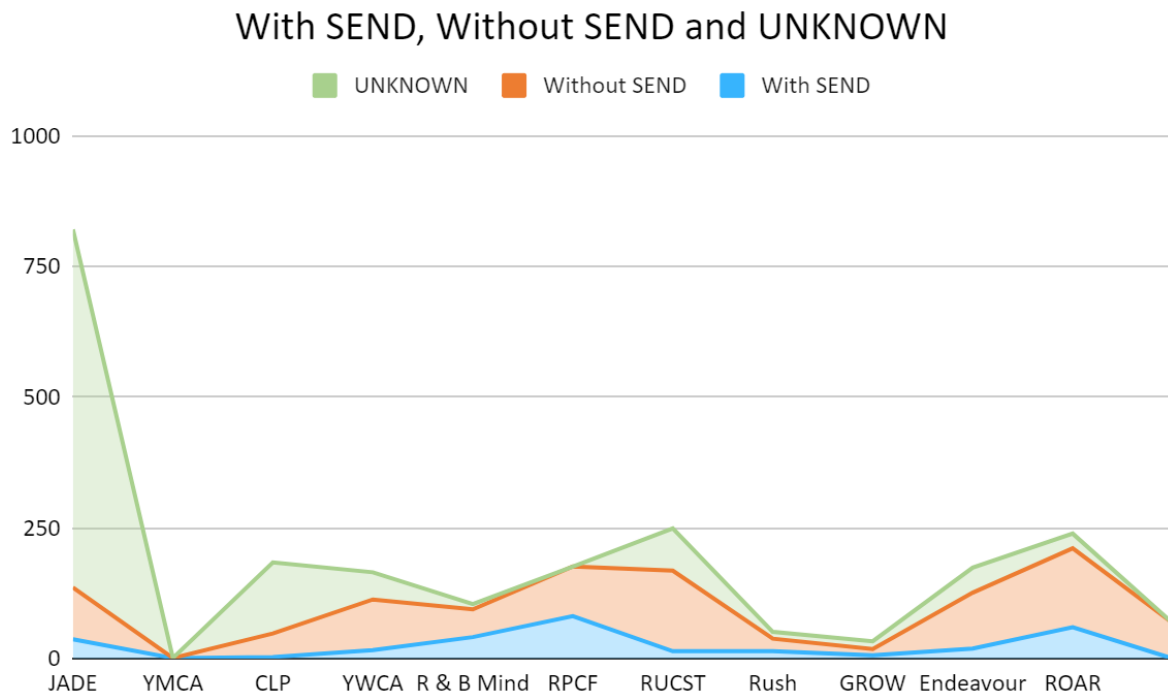


Figure 12. Number of children identified as having SEND needs

Ethnicity of service users accessing SfM partner activities

Data identifying the ethnicity of 2438 of the children and young people attending the SfM partner activities was received. As depicted in Figure 11, more than half of the children, 1662 or 68.2%, attending the SfM partner activities identified as White British. That figure is lower than the general white population of Rotherham, 91% of whom identified as white in the 2021 census⁶⁴, suggesting the SfM partner activities were coordinated to be inclusive of a range of ethnic groups. The second highest ethnic population (14.4%) of children and young people identified as Slovakian. Additionally, Roma and Gypsy, Travellers collectively represented 3.1% of children and young people using the SfM provision.

At the start of the YMCA and CLP collaboration youth work with children and young people from the Roma community is what they conceive and need as a resource. That defined age groups are not readily understood as, at times, siblings cluster together with an older child naturally accompanied by a younger sibling. Recent research⁶⁵ reports on the theory of positive youth development about a specific group of Roma adolescents as part of an edited book published in September 2021.

⁶⁴ [Ethnic group - Census Maps, ONS](#)

⁶⁵ Bačíková, M. (2021). Roma Minority Youth Across Cultural Contexts: Taking a Positive Approach to Research, Policy, and Practice. E- Psychologie (Praha), 15(3), 38–39

In response to the needs of the Roma children, the SfM partners worked together to offer activities that took place outside, thus removing any perceived barriers created by the indoor youth environment of the My Place venue. It is important to note that no defined group is homogenous at that juncture. Research⁶⁶ regarding cultural identities and group membership for Roma youth highlights the importance of the heterogeneity of minority groups. As SfM advances, the development of youth provision for Roma adolescents must continue to be embedded in our current understanding of their ethnic socialisation and identity⁶⁷. That is important as research shows identity can have both positive and negative associations with well-being for Roma adolescents⁶⁸.

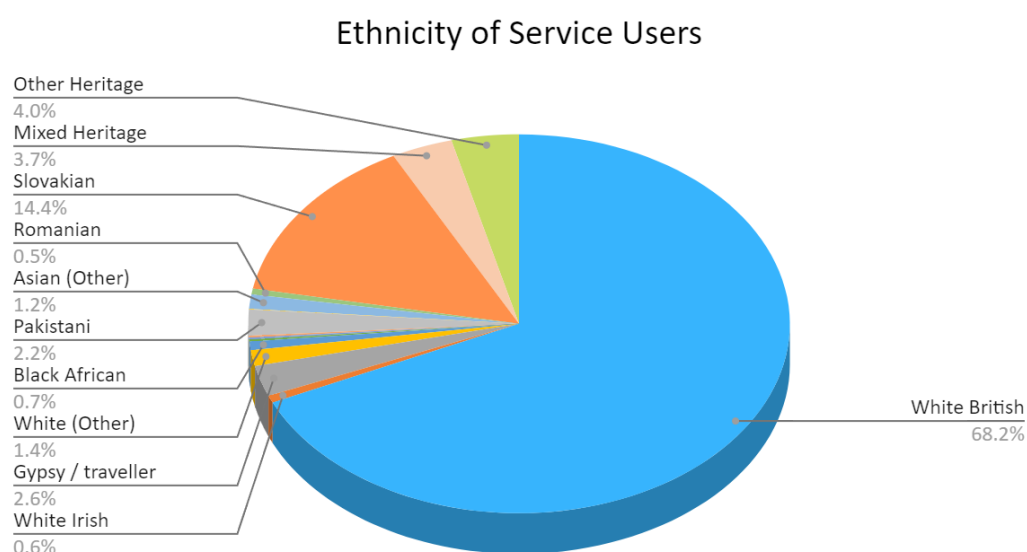


Figure 13. Ethnicity of SfM service users

Number of SfM partner activities

The SfM project was designed to deliver activities that provided the right support in the right place and at the right time. It is important to note the partner activities are not comparable across the project. The provision included early intervention services, youth services, individual counselling, outward bounds, and community art, bringing people together and building strong relationships in and across communities to improve shared spaces and places.

⁶⁶ Levinson. (2015). "What's the plan?" "What plan?" Changing aspirations among Gypsy youngsters, and implications for future cultural identities and group membership. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 36(8), 1149–1169.

⁶⁷ Dimitrova, Johnson, D. J., & van de Vijver, F. J. . (2018). Ethnic socialisation, ethnic identity, life satisfaction and school achievement of Roma ethnic minority youth. *Journal of Adolescence* (London, England.), 62(C), 175–183.

⁶⁸ Dimitrova, van de Vijver, F. J. R., Tausova, J., Chasiotis, A., Bender, M., Buzea, C., Uka, F., & Tair, E. (2017). Ethnic, Familial, and Religious Identity of Roma Adolescents in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Kosovo, and Romania in Relation to Their Level of Well-Being. *Child Development*, 88(3), 693–709.

In total, the SfM project delivered an impressive 3,799 activities, which were 82% higher than the target number of 2086.

Several organisations stood out as delivering a much higher rate of activities than expected. Notably, JADE delivered far more than its target number of activities by 267%, providing 1235 activities above its target. The only provider to deliver less than anticipated was the YMCA, which withdrew before the project was complete. However, the Consortium renegotiated with other SfM partners, including CLP and RUCT-2, who, between them, delivered 155 more activities to more than 238 children and young people than had been expected at the launch of the project.

In addition to the community-based projects, the data evidenced the ability of counselling provider RB Mind to increase its expected therapeutic offer by 75%. Its success was enabled by the engagement of its staff with the children and young people of its SfM partners. Innovative collaborations saw a mixture of individual and group-based interventions, which will be discussed further in the qualitative data analysis section of this report.

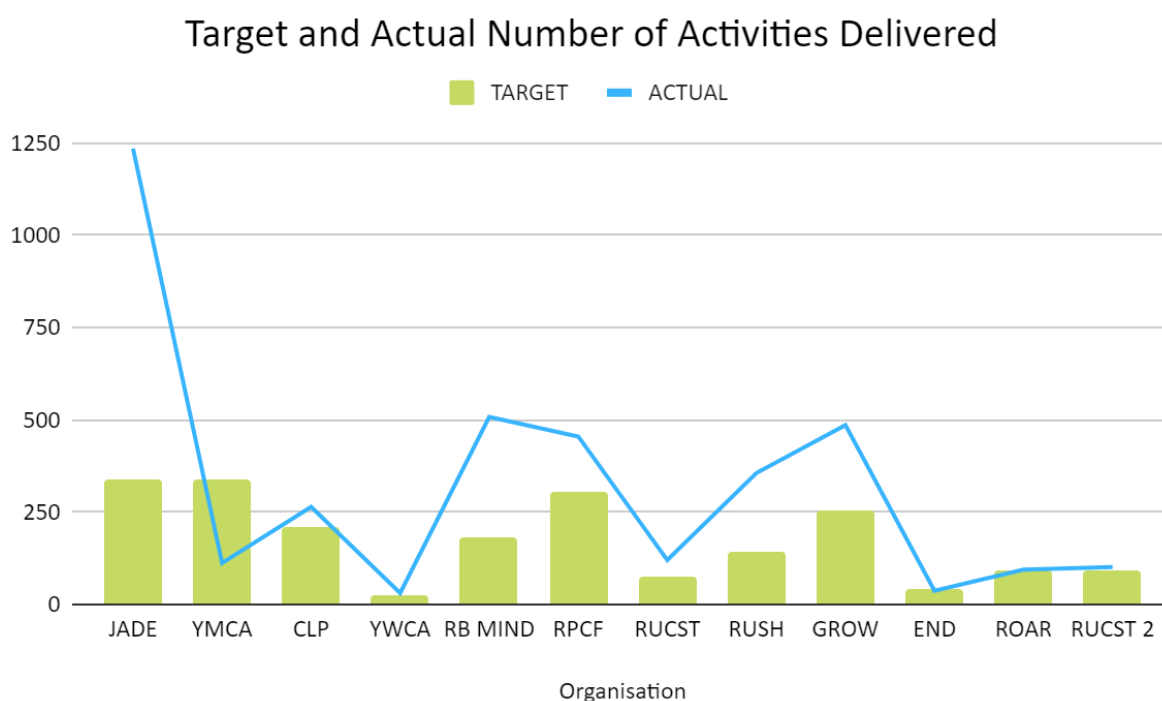


Figure 14. Target and Actual Number of Activities Delivered

Number of attendances within SfM partner activities

It is when we combine the number of service users with the number of activities that the real scope and numerical impact of the SfM project becomes evident. There was a proliferation of activity across Rotherham, with 20,032 attendances across the lifetime of the project. The distribution of the attendances correlates to the number of children reported by SfM partners, with JADE representing 59% of all attendances across the life of the project. The other two bases, combining CLP, YMCA and RUCT2, supported 16% of attendances, with the baskets of provision contributing 25%.

89% said our activities make our community a safer place for children and young people

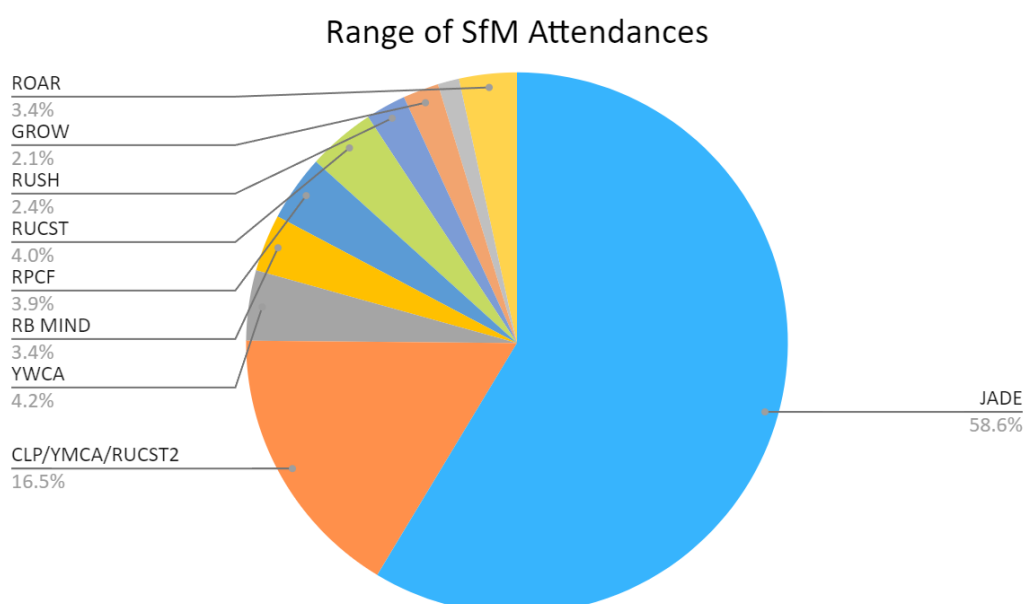


Figure 15. Range of Attendances supported by SfM Partners

Postcode distribution of service users accessing SfM partner activities

The postcode data received for 1556 of those engaging with SfM partner activities provides insight into the geographical spread of activities depicted below. The highest provision is in S25, where the JADE youth and community centre is located. The next highest is S65 which includes residents of Eastwood Village in which CLP is located. The third highest is in the vicinity of RUCT in S61. However, as depicted in Figure 15, the reach of the SfM project spreads across the Eastern Districts of Rotherham.

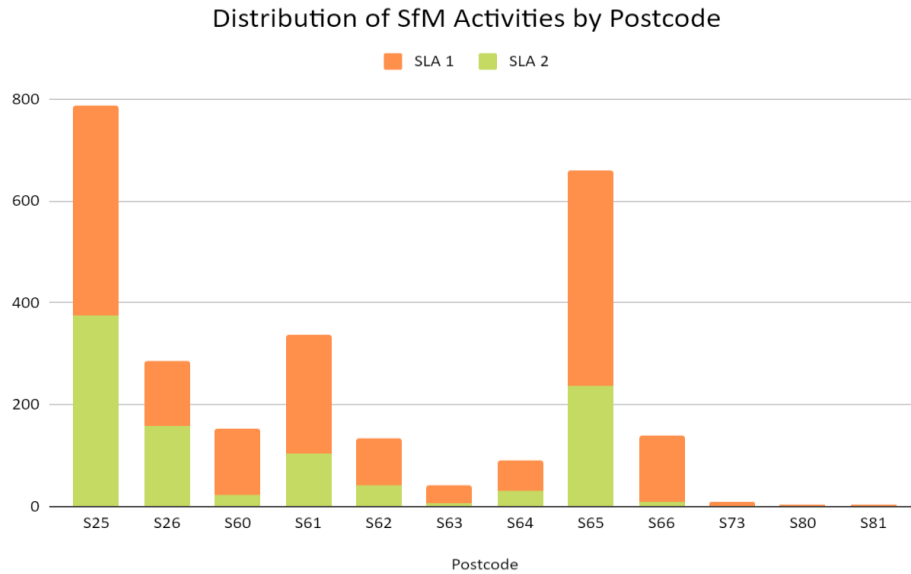


Figure 16. Postcode distribution of service users

Expenditure Overview

In total, the expenditure of the SfM project was £479,270, which included a £10,000 evaluation fee. In total, 18.8% of the budget was allocated to VAR, who led and supported the organisation and delivery of the project. The budget was allocated via two stages of service level agreements: Service Level Agreement 1 October 2021 to March 2022 (SLA1) and Service Level Agreement 2 (SLA2) April 2022 to September 2023. The project was extended by agreement with the funders until February 2024. YMCA withdrew at the end of the first year - six months into SLA 2. Subsequently, RUSCT agreed to increase their involvement in the SfM project, and a new agreement was created, which is identified in the data set as RUSCT2. The Bases, comprising JADE, CLP, YMCA and RUCT2, received 44.6% of the budget, with the Basket provision collectively receiving 34.6%—finally, the evaluation fee of £10,000 accounts for 2.1% of the overall expenditure.

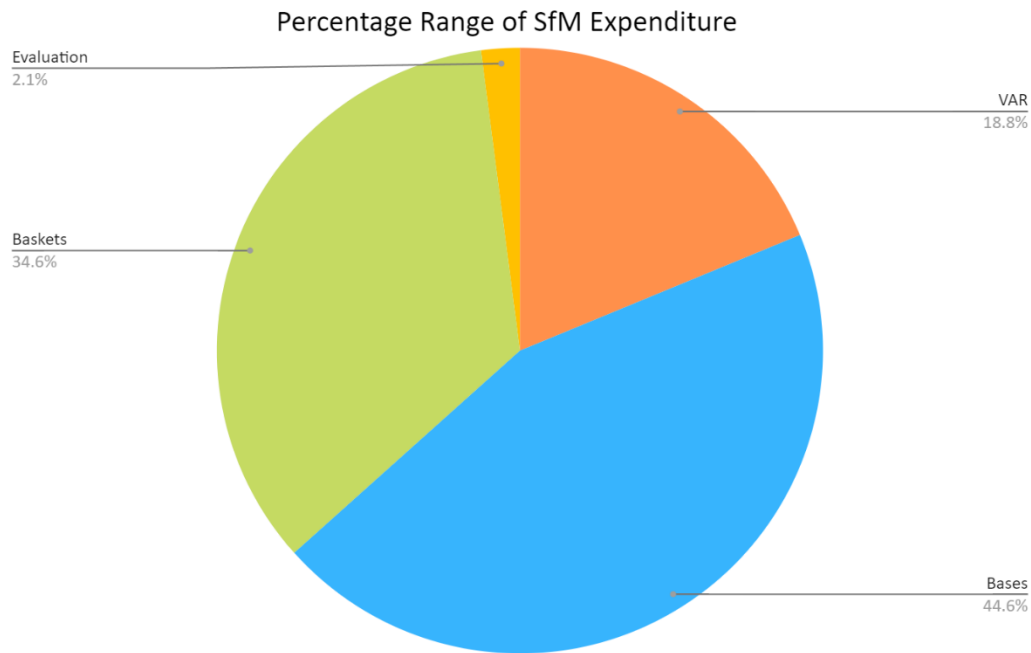


Figure 17. Percentage range of SfM expenditure

As a whole, the SfM expenditure averaged £191.94 for each unique user. The average cost per activity was £126.16. The SfM providers who delivered bespoke small group activities represent a higher cost per activity. However, those figures are reversed when we extract the cost per unique service user; in that event, we naturally see the bespoke individual provision has a higher rate of cost per person.

Conclusion

The SfM project partners, alongside the children and young people of Rotherham, delivered a co-produced community-based multifaceted service. The entirety of its success could not be adequately articulated, even in 63 pages. Together, they have designed a collaborative third-sector infrastructure that has the foundational trust and expertise of established charities. Upon this, the Consortium has creatively supported the expansion of those primary providers and transformed what they can offer young people. That has allowed them to collectively support meeting children's needs providing the right support, in the right place, at the right time. Despite their success, the level of need remains high, and SfM providers report having to introduce waiting lists. Future reliable funding over an extended period would enable this vital work to continue.

APPENDIX A Activities

The combined activities provided by the partner agencies create opportunities for children and young people to get involved in the following activities:

- ❖ 1 to 1 counselling
- ❖ 1 to 1 trauma-informed support
- ❖ Advice drop-ins
- ❖ Arts-based workshops/ creative projects
- ❖ Education, employment and training support
- ❖ Environmental/outdoor activities
- ❖ Holiday lunch clubs/ activities
- ❖ LGBT+ youth club
- ❖ Mental health and wellbeing support
- ❖ Open-access youth clubs
- ❖ Outdoor experiences
- ❖ Self-help/Wellness programmes
- ❖ Special Educational Needs/Disabilities support
- ❖ Sports sessions/ tournaments
- ❖ Themed activities

Multiple areas of impact

- ❖ Improved health and well-being/improved life chances
- ❖ Improved self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth
- ❖ Improved emotional resilience
- ❖ Reduction in social isolation and loneliness
- ❖ Better able to build healthy relationships with peers
- ❖ Increased access to social/community activities and networks of support, including from peers
- ❖ Better equipped to take the lead with their personal development and to make positive life choices
- ❖ Increased involvement in local democracy
- ❖ Alternative and positive ways of gaining status and kudos
- ❖ Higher aspirations and expectations
- ❖ Development of knowledge, practical and social skills
- ❖ Greater environmental awareness and willingness to access nature

Appendix B Activity for Year One

Provision	Activities	Estimate participants	Delivery Partners
Extended Youth Work Provision Inc. Outreach/ detached youth work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth club sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open access LGBTQ+ Themed activities Environmental/outdoor activities Outreach / detached youth work Advice Drop-ins 1:1 support (Trusted Adults) Holiday lunch clubs/activities (school holidays only) 	150	Jade YMCA My Place Clifton Learning Partnership
Help Wellness Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-day workshop/self-help programme (wellness strategies and tools) at 1 programme per month 	100	YWCA
Mental health and Wellbeing support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops (life skills, coping strategies, etc.) 1:1 sessions (6-week programme) 	70	Mind
SEND Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group sessions for siblings 1:1 counselling 	100	RPCF
Sports sessions and tournaments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6-week sports sessions (8 programmes) at various locations 3 tournaments 	120	RUCT
Education/training /employment support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CV writing/application forms Interview skills Support accessing Opportunities 	30	Rush House
Supporting girls through trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1:1 Support (Trauma-informed approach) 	12	Grow
Outdoor Activity experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 Outdoor Experience Days / Taster Workshops 	100	Endeavour
Creative and Arts based activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arts-based workshops Creative Projects 	50	ROAR

