Scottish Borders
Youth Commission on Bullying
Evaluation Report
November 2012

Youth Commission on Bullying Advisory Board
supported by Northern Star
Executive Summary

Scottish Borders Council established and commissioned the Scottish Borders Youth Commission on Bullying on 1st March 2011 to present evidenced recommendations on the prevention and management of bullying behaviour to inform the development of a revised Anti-Bullying Policy Framework for the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning. The Youth Commission adopted a co-production approach. This report presents the findings of the Advisory Board’s self evaluation of the Youth Commission.

Overall there was a positive impact on the Youth Commissioners as a result of their involvement in the Youth Commission. They developed new skills, new friendships and an increased sense of confidence. The challenges they faced as a result of new ways of working often resulted in the development of new skills to meet those challenges. The mentor programme had limited impact on the Youth Commissioners and the Commission. The commitment of Advisory Board members to the Commission and to the Youth Commissioners was a key factor in their impact: those most involved had the greatest impact. Advisory Board members themselves felt they had learned a great deal about the process of co-production and working participatively with young people. Challenges for the Advisory Board members included understanding the role and remit of the Advisory Board, inconsistent membership of the Board, working within a co-production model and the shifting political landscape that formed the backdrop to the Youth Commission.

The assessment of the impact of the Youth Commission is partial as the process is on going. The evaluation revealed that the Youth Commissioners had confidence that their recommendations would be implemented in policy and would make a difference across Scottish Borders whilst the professionals involved in the process were more cautious highlighting the challenges involved in policy development and implementation. The Youth Commission has raised the profile of bullying in The Council, improved understanding of co-production and provided greater insight into bullying behaviour and young people. Engagement of key stakeholders in the Youth Commission proved challenging and may have an impact on the implementation of the policy. There is a definite application of this model for other departments and policy areas across Scottish Borders Council.

The distinctiveness of the Youth Commission lies in the adoption of a co-production approach and was characterised by:
- Recognising people as assets and valuing work differently
- Promoting reciprocity – mutual trust and a strong partnership between young people and professionals
- Building social networks.
There are a number of key policy frameworks that both shaped the work of the Youth Commission and that the Commission delivered against. Key local and national policies and frameworks include:

- Valuing Young People
- Curriculum for Excellence and in particular Health & Wellbeing Outcomes
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- National Standards for Community Engagement
- A National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Children and Young People.

This report captures our learning to date and also provides information for those wishing to use a co-production approach in their own work.
Introduction

Scottish Borders Council established and commissioned the Scottish Borders Youth Commission on Bullying on 1st March 2011 to present evidenced recommendations on the prevention and management of bullying behaviour to inform the development of a revised Anti-Bullying Policy Framework for the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning. The Youth Commission adopted a co-production approach.

A co-production approach is where services and policies are planned and delivered in a mutually beneficial way that utilises local community experience while still valuing professional expertise. Figure 1 below demonstrates that for co-production to occur it must take place in the middle ground when ‘user and professional knowledge is combined to design and deliver services’.

Figure 1: User and professional roles in the design and delivery of services

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<tr>
<th>Responsibility for design of services</th>
<th>Responsibility for delivery of services</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professionals as sole service planners</td>
<td>Users as sole service deliverers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professionals and service users/community as co-planners</td>
<td>Users co-delivery of professionally designed services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No professional input into service planning</td>
<td>User/community delivery of co-planned or co-designed services</td>
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Through the Scottish Borders Youth Commission on Bullying, a group of 12 young people took on the voluntary role of Youth Commissioner to work with Scottish Borders Council and an Advisory Board to make recommendations for a new policy approach to preventing and managing bullying behaviour. The Advisory Board comprised membership from Scottish Borders Council Elected Members, Scottish Borders Council Officers, Scottish Borders Council School Staff, Lothian and Borders Police, NHS Borders, Young Scot, and respectme – Scotland’s Anti-Bullying Service.

From July 2011 to March 2012, the Youth Commissioners (aged 14-23 years old) gathered evidence, researched sources, analysed results, and presented 33 recommendations. The youth-led methodology resulted in three work-streams investigating bullying behaviour within the contexts of school; community; and equalities. Evidence was gathered through interviews, focus groups, surveys, observation, and secondary sources with parents, primary and secondary school pupils, teachers, heads of service and partner organisations.

The opportunity to become a Youth Commissioner was promoted through existing education networks, advertised through the local commercial radio station as well as within local press and social media. Young people submitted an application form and all were invited to a selection day. The selection day allowed members of the Advisory Board to identify a group of young people who would work effectively together, came from a diverse range of backgrounds, and brought something unique to the Commission. Twelve young people, out of 33 who applied were appointed as Youth Commissioners in July 2011. In August 2011, the Youth Commissioners completed two days of induction training.

The Youth Commissioners met at fortnightly intervals at a central location within the Scottish Borders. The Advisory Board met every eight weeks to provide direction and support. On occasions the Board members attended the Commissioners’ meetings when requested to provide support, contacts, and expertise.

In addition to the regular meetings of both groups, two residentialials were held. The first in September 2011 to enable the Youth Commissioners to develop and design their methodology – this was in collaboration with the Advisory Board members. The second in February 2012 brought the Youth Commissioners together to consolidate and analyse all their research findings and draft an initial set of recommendations – again this was in collaboration with the Board and also provided an opportunity for scrutiny and rigour from Advisory Board members.
Initial recommendations were made by each of the three work-streams; these were then consolidated. Any areas of duplication or similarity were combined to form a single recommendation – this resulted in a reduction in the final number of recommendations. Youth Commissioners worked alongside the Facilitator and Board Members to strengthen and add specificity to each individual recommendation. The Facilitator was responsible for compiling the recommendations with the associated evidence or comment by the Youth Commissioners. This resulted in the production and publication of the Youth Commission on Bullying Recommendations Report.

At a meeting of Scottish Borders Council on 29th March 2012, two Youth Commissioners presented the recommendations of the Youth Commission to the elected members, the Commissioning Body. A motion was moved by Cllr George Turnbull and the following decision agreed by the council:

(a) to congratulate members of the Scottish Borders Youth Commission on Bullying for their work and to accept their report and recommendations; and

(b) that the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning be asked to consider his response to the Commission's recommendations and bring a full report back to Council in due course.

Following the presentation of recommendations, the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning has established an Anti-Bullying Policy Implementation Board to develop and implement a policy and strategy based on the recommendations of the Commission. This Board is chaired by Cllr Sandy Aitchison and comprises representation from schools, youth work, further education, parents, and pupils. The Youth Commissioners have membership on the Implementation Board and have acted as consultees to the policy development. A draft Respectful Relationships policy was made available for consultation in October 2012. The Respectful Relationships Policy will be presented for approval by the Education Committee of Scottish Borders Council on 27th November 2012.
Evaluation

This report presents the findings of the Advisory Board’s self evaluation of the Youth Commission. This evaluation took place after the Youth Commission recommendations were presented to Scottish Borders Council and accepted unanimously. As described above, at the time of writing, the recommendations were being worked up into the full anti-bullying policy for the Scottish Borders. Although the process of policy making was still in process, the Advisory Board considered it important to make an interim assessment of the impact of the Youth Commission, in order to capture the learning and evaluate the impact on participants and policy-making to date. The Advisory Board agreed a process of reflection and self-evaluation to:

- Review the learning from, and strengths and weaknesses of a co-production approach to policy development within the context of the Scottish Borders Youth Commission on Bullying
- Identify areas of impact and added value brought by co-production
- Produce a report that presents the learning for others

Conducting an evaluation at this stage in the process was considered to be important to provide an opportunity for the Council and its partners to draw on the lessons learned in adopting a co-production model of policy development.

Methodology

The Advisory Board designed and delivered this evaluation supported by Northern Star. Northern Star supports organisations in the voluntary and public sectors to understand, engage with and measure their impact on people. The Advisory Board worked together to develop the parameters for the evaluation and developed the following evaluation purpose and questions:

**Evaluation Purpose:**
To understand the strengths and weaknesses of the Youth Commission approach to policy making and identify the added value of this approach, specifically:

1. **What has the impact been on its participants:**
   - Youth Commissioners
   - Advisory Board Members
   - Partners
2. **What impact has the Youth Commission had on policy making so far?**
3. **What has been distinctive about the process of this Youth Commission and what difference has this made?**

This report is structured around these three evaluation questions. The report outlines the outputs of the Youth Commission before addressing each of the three
evaluation questions. It concludes with an assessment of how the Youth Commission meets national and local policy frameworks and a section highlighting learning for the future.

The Advisory Board used a combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews, participative sessions, questionnaires and written submissions to carry out the evaluation by speaking to Youth Commissioners, Advisory Board members, Elected Members, Council officials, partners and national organisations. Evaluation material generated throughout the Youth Commission was also used.

During the fieldwork for the evaluation, the Advisory Board spoke with a total of:

- Four Youth Commissioners in a group session (evaluation material for all 12 Youth Commissioners was included in the evaluation)
- Six members of the Advisory Board through written submissions and two group sessions
- One elected member of Scottish Borders Council
- Two partners including one school
- Four Council Officials
- Youth Commission Facilitator
- Three representatives from national organisations
- Eight survey responses from Youth Commission Mentors
Youth Commission Outputs – what did we do?

The Youth Commission on Bullying consisted of:

- 12 Youth Commissioners
- 1 Facilitator
- 1 Sessional youth worker
- 10 Advisory Board members
- 12 Mentors

Once recruited, the Youth Commissioners participated in two days of induction training with ongoing youth work support provided in fortnightly meetings. The Youth Commissioners and Advisory Board members participated in two residential: the first in September 2011 to identify methodology and the second in February 2012 to develop and refine the recommendations.

The Youth Commissioners gathered their evidence through various means. They gathered their research through:

- Five focus groups (NHS staff, youth work staff, Lothian and Borders Police Staff, secondary school pupils, Switched on Learning Group)
- Online survey of 224 parents/carers of pupils in Scottish Borders Council Schools
- Online survey of 234 staff working in or with Scottish Borders Council Schools
- Activity sheet from 317 primary school pupils using age-appropriate research methods
- Questionnaire with 170 S1 pupils at Hawick High School: Who do you talk to about bullying?
- Questionnaire/interview for 41 secondary school pupils regarding equalities issues
- Three interviews with primary school headteachers
- Three interviews with members of Education Management Team

In addition to this primary research the Youth Commissioners received written evidence from specialist services and partner organisations, including the University of Edinburgh and Breathing Space. Collectively the Youth Commissioners read 48 different secondary sources of information about bullying behaviour or equalities issues – this included strategies, plans, government policies, newspaper articles and academic journals.

Youth Commissioners were invited to attend the following national conferences;

- respectme National Conference 2011
- The Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Cyberbullying Conference 2011
Scottish Learning Festival 2011, in partnership with Young Scot

These were beneficial for developing contacts for the Youth Commissioners, testing their findings with leading experts, and for identifying new sources of evidence.

As a result of their participation in the Youth Commission, four Youth Commissioners completed the Participative Democracy Certificate (SCQF Level 5) whilst all twelve Youth Commissioners received MV Awards in recognition of their volunteering commitment. The Youth Commission on Bullying was recognised by CoSLA and received a Bronze Award in 2012 for ‘One to Watch’.

The Youth Commission on Bullying produced 33 recommendations organised under five headings:
- Definition and Approach
- Raising Awareness and Prevention
- Education and Training
- Management, Response, and Recording
- Monitoring and Implementation

Available at www.scotborders.gov.uk/youth
Youth Commission Outcomes – what did we achieve?

This section examines the impact of the Youth Commission on its participants and on policy making.

Q1. What has the impact been on its participants?

Youth Commissioners

Twelve Youth Commissioners (aged 14 – 23 years old) were involved in the Youth Commission from July 2011 to March 2012. Their motivation for becoming Youth Commissioners can be grouped into two distinct categories:

- The experience of being a Youth Commissioner and skills development
  For some of the Youth Commissioners, their motivation to volunteer for the Youth Commission stemmed from a desire to develop new skills through an opportunity that was different from any other they had been part of. The young people involved in this evaluation hoped their involvement in the Commission would improve their applications for employment or higher education.

- Strong views about the need to address bullying
  For other young people, becoming a Youth Commissioner was an opportunity to make a difference to an issue that they felt strongly about. Some of the Youth Commissioners had personal experience of bullying either friends or other young people they knew (only one identified that they had been bullied themselves) and they wanted to ensure other young people in the Scottish Borders did not have to experience bullying.

Scottish Borders Council, and in particular the Youth Commission Facilitator Susan Robb, made a conscious decision to use a youth work approach to underpin the design, recruitment and delivery of the Youth Commission. The whole process was designed to create opportunities for learning and development for the young people involved. The depth and range of the project provided opportunities for each young person to engage in their own areas of interest. The training provided to the Youth Commissioners covered a wide range of topics and skills and was based on training needs analysis.

The Youth Commissioners clearly felt that their involvement in the Youth Commission had been a very positive experience for them. They increased in confidence, learnt new skills and were able to participate in new experiences. A third of Youth Commissioners stated that they had really enjoyed attending conferences as part of their role and in particular attending a conference on Cyber
Bullying in Glasgow. It was an opportunity to share what they had learnt and meet other people from across Scotland and they felt that without the Youth Commission they would never have been able to participate in this opportunity.

The Youth Commissioners also highlighted the importance of the support they received from the Youth Commission Facilitator.

“Would not have been possible without her”  
(Youth Commissioner)

They valued the relationship she was able to develop with each Youth Commissioner and the support she was able to provide. They also valued her ability to “make things happen” and keep the Commission and Youth Commissioners on track. They felt that she was a stepping stone between the Youth Commission and Scottish Borders Council and her existing networks and understanding of how the Council works were invaluable to Youth Commissioners who began the process with limited knowledge and experience of Council policy making.

“She had a personal relationship with each of us, you felt you could bring things to her, she gave encouragement, made you feel secure, as well as chasing you up!” (Youth Commissioner)

The positive and effective impact of the Youth Commission Facilitator was also noted by members of the Advisory Board, Council Officials and external national organisations who had observed the Commission and been asked to provide their comments for this evaluation. The Facilitator had a background in supporting young people to participate, an extensive existing network and a track record of delivering successful participatory outcomes within the Council and with partners; all of which were considered essential for the success of the Commission.

**Impact on Youth Commissioners**

- **Increased confidence and sense of empowerment**
  Youth Commissioners identified an increase in confidence as a key outcome of their involvement the Youth Commission. They were able to articulate how this increase had already made a difference in other areas of their lives and how they hoped this would continue to make a difference to them in the future. They talked about becoming more confident in communicating with both their peers and professionals and in delivering their responsibilities as a Youth Commissioner including researching and presenting evidence, working as a team, expressing their opinion and challenging the views of others sensitively and appropriately.
“Yes, since my time in the Youth Commission I have become more confident and opened up a lot more and the skills they have gained will help me in life.” (Youth Commissioner)

“I am a more confident and successful individual. I feel more employable, involved, informed and proud” (Youth Commissioner)

“Given me confidence to get involved with more things I wouldn’t have before” (Youth Commissioner)

“The commission has meant a lot to me because it has given me loads more confidence and I feel like it has helped me deal with my own experience of bullying” (Youth Commissioner)

At the end of the second Youth Commission Residential in February 2012, Youth Commissioners were asked to identify the skills and attributes they had developed through their involvement in the Youth Commission and the change they had seen over time. Each young person rated each skill or attribute before their involvement in the Youth Commission and again at the February residential using a 10 point scale. Seven Youth Commissioners identified improvement in confidence and on average, recorded a 3.9 point increase in confidence since their involvement in the Youth Commission.

➤ Development of new skills, knowledge, experiences and qualifications

In the skills mapping exercise described above and in the evaluation focus group, the Youth Commissioners identified the following skills they had developed during their time with the Youth Commission and examples of where they had used these skills.

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<th>Skill</th>
<th>Example</th>
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| Research Skills      | ➢ Gathering information – Youth Commissioners gathered information from a wide variety of sources both primary and secondary. They used a variety of techniques and were able to talk about their ability to develop appropriate questions for gathering information, planning and delivering focus groups and interviews. As a result they were able to describe how they now give more thought to questions that are asked in lessons and take the time to work out how to answer and the appropriate language to use  
                        ➢ Analysing information – Youth Commissioners described how their ability to analyse, prioritise and synthesise a variety of data had improved. They were able to reflect on the challenge this information presented and the strategies they used to manage this |
| Communication Skills | Listening to and respecting other Youth Commissioner and Advisory Board Members’ opinions during Youth Commission meetings and residentials  
|  | Ability to talk to and make friends with new people “More assured and at ease in being out and about and around other people” (Youth Commissioner)  
|  | Communicating using language that is appropriate for other people  
| Delivering presentations | “In English [at school] I have found it easier to do presentations and talks” (Youth Commissioner)  
| Negotiation skills | Sharing opinions during discussions on evidence gathered, developing recommendations and being able to back up their opinions with evidence  
| Team working | Being part of a team, building relationships, valuing the contribution of other team members and supporting other Youth Commissioners  
|  | Respecting and working with adults as equals  
|  | Respecting and working with professionals and developing increased understanding of professional roles  
| Life skills | For many Youth Commissioners managing their time effectively was one of the biggest challenges of the Youth Commission. Youth Commissioners felt that they had improved their organisational skills and had learnt valuable time management skills  
|  | Writing letters  
|  | Organising meetings  
| Better understanding of equality | Being able to see and understand someone else’s point of view especially if they are different from you  
|  | “More appreciative of other people who may not be the same as me” (Youth Commissioner)  
|  | “Through both primary and secondary research (done as a part of youth commission work) I definitely have increased awareness of the levels of diversity across my local area. This is evidenced in personal changes in myself. I am more accepting and willing to celebrate diversity” (Youth Commissioner)  
| Better understanding of policy making | Youth Commissioners developed an increased understanding of the Scottish Borders Council, the way it operates and develops policy |
All of the Youth Commissioners felt that the skills they had identified had improved over time, some seeing small improvements whilst others recording significant changes. The Youth Commission Facilitator also identified skills development as a major impact of Youth Commissioner’s involvement in the Youth Commission. She observed the development of confidence, research skills and communication skills that they can use in interviews for employment, college or university.

As a result of their participation in the Youth Commission, four Youth Commissioners completed the Participative Democracy Certificate (SCQF Level 5) whilst all twelve Youth Commissioners received MV Awards in recognition of their volunteering commitment.

- Creating Positive Change

There was a strong sense among the Youth Commissioners that their work on the Youth Commission would lead to positive changes for other young people across the Borders. The Youth Commissioners felt empowered by the process and expressed confidence that their recommendations would be implemented in the new anti-bullying policy. They felt listened to and respected by Scottish Borders Councils and its officials.

“Yes, the council has accepted our recommendations so I know they will be taken into consideration. I am confident that our work can create a positive change and I hope to witness this in the coming years.” (Youth Commissioner)

“Yes I am very satisfied that me and my fellow Youth Commissioner have created a positive change and the recommendations are going to prove it.” (Youth Commissioner)

“I am contributing to my community. I feel like my opinion matters. I am working to achieve a goal. I am being given opportunities that most people don’t get” (Youth Commissioner)
Improved confidence towards securing employment, training or further/higher education place

As a result of developing the confidence, skills and competencies described above, the Youth Commissioners expressed increased confidence and positivity about securing employment, training or place in education.

“A lot of experience and [I] talked about it at job interview recently – definitely feel as if its made a difference early. People are interested, a lot of experience” (Youth Commissioner)

“I definitely feel that this is a piece of work that will help me achieve my career aspirations. It will be put on my CV and university applications. I also think that the skills I have learned will help me be a more successful student and employee” (Youth Commissioner)

“Yes my self-confidence has increased – meeting new people and getting to know them. The experience I have gained from the Youth Commission has surely brightened my C.V and made it look impressive” (Youth Commissioner)

A partner of the Youth Commission, Borders College, noted in particular the impact the process had on college student who became a Youth Commissioner in that she is now Student President within the College.

Challenges

Youth Commissioners were asked what they found challenging about their involvement. Interestingly, whilst Youth Commissioners could identify what they found difficult they were also able to identify how they had learnt from the challenge.

Time Management

Many Youth Commissioners found it challenging to balance their educational commitments, the Youth Commission and other activities/organisations they may be involved in. They also found it difficult to work on several Commission tasks at once. As described above, being challenged in this way led to the development of improved time management skills with support from the Facilitator.
➢ **Workload**
Some Youth Commissioners found some of the tasks and meetings challenging in particular maintaining concentration over periods of time and talking in front of other people.

➢ **Working with Others**
The Youth Commissioners found working with others with different views or ways of working challenging. Some Youth Commissioners found working with teachers difficult, possibly due to differences in the perception of the role of a Youth Commissioners from both teachers and Youth Commissioners. The Youth Commissioners also found it difficult when those they had invited to submit evidence did not respond, or took a long time to email back.

**Advisory Board**

Co-production was the driving force behind the Youth Commission and as such the Youth Commissioners worked with an Advisory Board to make recommendations for a new approach to preventing and managing bullying behaviour.

**Motivation for involvement**
The motivation for involvement as a member of the Advisory Group varied but broadly fell into three main categories:
1. Direct responsibility for development and delivery of the Youth Commission (Scottish Borders staff and elected members)
2. The work of the Youth Commission falls within the professional remit of members
3. Interest in the process of co-production and the model adopted by the Youth Commission and interest in the topic of bullying

Becoming a member of the Advisory Board offered the opportunity to provide input on behalf of their area of expertise as well as being part of an innovative process shaping policy making.

➢ **Impact of the Advisory Board on the Youth Commission and Commissioners**
The Youth Commissioners had mixed feedback on the impact of the Advisory Board. They felt that the members of the Advisory Board who were really engaged in the process, contributed significantly to the Youth Commissioners and the Commission in the following ways:

➢ Advisory Board members brought useful contacts to the Commission for example in the police and NHS.
Advisory Board members brought useful experience from their professional roles. The link with respectme was seen as very useful with the respectme Partnership Manager keeping in regular contact, providing encouragement and spending time getting to know the Youth Commissioners.

The Youth Commissioners really valued those Advisory Board members who they felt took the time to get to know them individually.

The Youth Commissioners identified that it was beneficial to have Advisory Board Members at the residential. At the first residential the Youth Commissioners benefited from the different perspectives and ideas offered by the Advisory Board members. At the second residential, all the Youth Commissioners agreed that the chance to present draft recommendations to the Advisory Board and get feedback was a useful process.

The Chair of the Advisory Board (an Elected Member) was very highly regarded by the Youth Commissioners. They valued his commitment to the Youth Commission, the support they received from him and felt that he was a good chair.

The Youth Commissioners also felt that some Advisory Board members were “a bit invisible” and they found it difficult to trust or respect those members who had less involvement. For the Youth Commissioners who invested a great deal both emotionally and in terms of time in the Commission, it was frustrating that there were members of the Advisory Board who weren’t as engaged. It left the Youth Commissioners feeling that the Youth Commission was not important enough; “it put us on a downer”.

Feedback from members of the Advisory Board was similar. They also thought that their impact on the Youth Commission had been varied. Similar to the Youth Commissioners, members highlighted the following contributions to the Youth Commission:

- Contacts for the research undertaken by the Youth Commissioners
- Advice and guidance on aspects of the research
- Support on developing the recommendations and specifically on how they should be presented to ensure maximum impact

Members of the Advisory Board felt that the impact that each member made depended on their level of engagement. Advisory Board attendance at meetings and residential was considered really important for fostering a team ethos, helping both groups to understand each others roles, experience and expertise.

A couple of members of the Advisory Board thought that the Board’s impact was limited, in part due to the competency of the Youth Commissioners. They felt that they provided some guidance and arranged interviews as part of the research but
that the Youth Commissioners did not require any further help. The strong relationship between the Youth Commission Facilitator and the Youth Commissioners meant that they often saw her as their main point of contact, advice and support and did not seek out Advisory Board members for guidance. This did have an impact on the workload of the Facilitator. Members of the Advisory Board felt that some members were more approachable and accessible than others and that for some Youth Commissioners it was daunting seeking advice and support from someone they had not formed a relationship with.

**Advisory Board Learning**
- **Implementing a co-production model**

Being part of the Youth Commission enabled Advisory Board members to develop their knowledge and understanding of co-production and some of the challenges and practicalities involved in implementing this approach.

> “After being involved from the start in the theory of co-production approaches to policy, I have learnt that it does work if fully understood and supported by all parties.” (Advisory Board Member)

A specific learning noted by many involved in this evaluation was the need for strong committed, professional support for the Youth Commission for the Youth Commissioners and the Advisory Board. Having so many people involved in the Commission, the need for one person, in this instance the Facilitator, with an overview who is able to galvanise people into action was seen as integral to delivering on time. An Advisory Board member also felt that they learned a great deal from working with the Facilitator by observing her style of working with the Youth Commissioners.

**Challenges**
- **Role and Remit of the Advisory Board**

Initially members of the Advisory Board struggled to understand their role and remit. The innovative nature of the Youth Commission, required members work in partnership with young people, supporting them to set the agenda and for many this is a new and challenging way of working. Members of the Advisory Board have extensive previous experience within their field but not necessarily in working participatively with young people and some found it challenging to find a balance between sharing what was useful and not dominating proceedings. As the Commission progressed the Board became stronger and more pro-active; more confident in its role within the Youth Commission.
A Co-production Approach
Adopting a co-production approach to policy making necessitates a sharing of power, moving from a model of policy making where professionals and officials hold the power to a model where power is shared with those who are impacted on by the policy. This can be very challenging for all stakeholders and means new ways working which can be uncomfortable for professionals and officials who may have had little experience working in this way.

Membership of the Advisory Board
There were some members of the Advisory Board who had limited involvement in the Youth Commission but it is unclear as to the reason for this. The limited involvement did however have a negative effect on the Youth Commissioners ability to really engage with these members. Some board members invested significant amounts of time in the Youth Commission and reported frustration with inconsistent engagement by other Advisory Board members.

Shifting Contexts
A number of Advisory Board members noted the challenge in keeping everyone fully involved for the whole process as people, including elected members, move on to new issues and priorities. This was brought into sharp focus during the Youth Commission when the election changed the political make up of Scottish Borders Council. However the strong evidence base for the 33 recommendations goes someway to insulating them from these external changes.

Partners
Most of the feedback provided by partners such as Borders College and schools is contained in other sections; however this section examines the impact of the mentor programme of the Youth Commission. The mentor programme aimed to link every Youth Commissioner with a mentor from outwith the Advisory Board. The mentor was to provide help, guidance and pastoral support. From the evidence received, the impact of the mentor programme was minimal. The mentors themselves felt they had limited impact as the Youth Commissioners usually approached the Facilitator for support and the Advisory Board provided guidance at residential. Whilst one young person found it valuable and helpful, many Youth Commissioners did not benefit from the programme for the following reasons:

- Unsure of what the mentor was supposed to deliver
- Lack of feedback/contact from mentor
- Sought out support elsewhere
- Those Youth Commissioners most in need of a mentor were less likely to seek them out possibly due to a lack of confidence
Both Youth Commissioners and mentors felt that the programme might have had a greater impact had there been a more formal introduction to mentors at an early stage, clarity about their role and if mentors had been teachers/lecturers from the school/college the Youth Commissioner attends. The pastoral role was delivered by the Youth Commission Facilitator as she was the person the Youth Commissioners were most familiar with.

**Summary**

Overall there was a positive impact on the Youth Commissioners as a result of their involvement in the Youth Commission. They developed new skills, new friends and an increased sense of confidence. The challenges they faced as a result of new ways of working often resulted in the development of new skills to meet those challenges. The mentor programme had limited impact on the Youth Commissioners and the Commission. The commitment of Advisory Board members to the Commission and to the Youth Commissioners was a key factor in their impact: those most involved had the greatest impact. Advisory Board members themselves felt they had learned a great deal about the process of co-production and working participatively with young people. Challenges for the Advisory Board members included understanding the role and remit of the Advisory Board, inconsistent membership of the Board, working within a co-production model and the shifting political landscape that formed the backdrop to the Youth Commission.
Q2. What impact has the Youth Commission had on policy making so far?

As detailed in the introduction and overview, the timing of this evaluation means that we are only able to make a partial evaluation of the impact of the Youth Commission on policy making within the Scottish Borders Council.

Impact of the Youth Commission on policy making within Scottish Borders Council

The Youth Commissioners were confident that the recommendations they presented to Council would be implemented in the developing anti-bullying policy. They felt that the Youth Commission was a definite improvement to a traditional policy making process in that it involved young people in the evidence gathering and helped to challenge stereotypes of young people. They also noted that applying the Youth Commission approach challenged ways of working in education where young people are often the recipients rather than the drivers of change.

Members of the Advisory Board and partners felt it was too early to assess the full impact of the Youth Commission on policy making. The feedback we received suggested that the initial stages of this new approach to policy making have been well received with elected members responding positively to the Commission and respecting the findings and recommendations that were presented to them. A number of those interviewed for this evaluation believed that the Youth Commission had changed elected members’ views of young people.

The value of implementing the Youth Commission approach should not be underestimated. In addition to the impacts detailed in Question One, the Youth Commission had also provided the opportunity to develop improved understanding of co-production for officials and Elected Members of the Council.

“The [Youth Commission] has engaged and offered development and understanding for all including elected members, myself (as Director of Education) and all those involved. This is perhaps added value which was not anticipated.” (Director of Education, Scottish Borders Council)

The Youth Commission has resulted in greater numbers of people involved in policy making each bringing a unique perspective. Early research from NESTA and the New Economics Foundation as well as experience from the Youth Commission suggests that basing policy on evidence generated in part by those who are directly affected by the policy brings a greater insight and helps to ground the policy in the communities it is attempting to influence. This is however, dependent on the level and consistency of engagement of key stakeholders.
Adopting this innovative approach to policy making has raised the profile of the issue of bullying amongst elected members who were impressed with the work and outcomes of the Youth Commission. They were also impressed with how the Commissioners presented their recommendations including their confidence and professionalism.

Given this was the first time the Scottish Borders Council had adopted a co-production approach to policy making, Advisory Board members reported that the transfer of power necessary for the success of this approach was not necessarily fully understood by Board members and elected members at the outset but occurred more organically during the lifetime of the Commission.

Partners of Scottish Borders Council articulated their support for this approach to policy making. They were inspired by this approach and felt it was a real improvement on a traditional approach to policy making where Council ‘sets policy in isolation or with limited consultation’. A partner involved in the Commission from outwith the Scottish Borders, commented that sharing policy making power with young people was a brave and bold decision for the Council to make but one that had delivered positive outcomes. The acceptance of the recommendations by elected members impacts positively on the emergent policy and the changes in practice required to support its implementation. In addition, Council staff who were not directly involved with the Youth Commission were impressed with the ambition and project management of the Commission and the commitment and output of the young people.

A few Youth Commissioners, Scottish Borders Council Staff and Advisory Board Members involved in the evaluation provided feedback about the resources needed to deliver the Youth Commission. They noted that the Youth Commission required a higher level of resourcing than traditional policy making and that future applications in a time of increasing pressure on budgets, may prove challenging. Most of the resource expended on the Youth Commission came from existing staffing resource with additional financial support from Fairer Scotland Fund which enabled the Commission to hold its residential. Given the geographical nature of Scottish Borders, transport to and from meetings was a significant cost for the Commission. However, no respondent suggested that the resources expended on this project were excessive or did not provide value for money. Many stressed the importance of the support provided for the young people, how it was key to the success of the Youth Commission and that as a result the Youth Commission was not ‘just another consultation’ or tokenistic engagement.
Application for other areas of policy or service development

Amongst the people who contributed to this evaluation, there was a strong feeling that this was a model that could be applied in other areas of policy making across the Council. They thought that engaging more people from communities in policy making would only improve the process in the Council. A number of participants in the evaluation suggested the possibility of developing either a streamlined model or a number of co-production models to be used from a local level for example in a school setting to a council wide policy making setting. For one respondent this was driven by concerns about the ability to sustain the resourcing but for others it was about making the model applicable in other settings. There is the opportunity to develop a Scottish Borders Co-production Model that outlines key principles and ways of working but also allows organisation and departments to tailor their approach to the communities they work with.

Challenges

The concerns and challenges raised during the evaluation are often common to a co-production approach.

Composition of the Youth Commission

There were some stakeholders who were underrepresented in the Commission. Schools in particular were invited to participate fully but engagement was inconsistent. Some schools engaged fully with the process where as other did not and in particular, school representation on the Advisory Board was irregular in attendance. Feedback that we received from a school in the evaluation stated that they would have liked to see a fairer representation of stakeholders on the Advisory Board as they felt the composition was biased in favour of young people. Young people were not members of the Advisory Board and this feedback might point to a misunderstanding or lack of clarity about the Youth Commission and its structures which might have affected engagement by schools. Those who were very involved in the Youth Commission, both Youth Commissioners and Advisory Board members, also expressed a disappointment and frustration that there was not greater school involvement. There isn’t a clear reason for the inconsistent engagement by schools but it may have a knock-on effect on policy implementation. There was a concern from Advisory Board members that communication with schools was not effective in communicating the value of the Commission.

Validity and rigour of the findings

There was a concern from one evaluation respondent about how rigorous the process of analysis was and as a result how valid there the recommendations were. This is an important concern and one that is common in co-production approaches. Sharing power with members of the community (in this case young people) who often have little or no research or policy making experience can be
seen to weaken the process. Feedback from others involved in the Youth Commission plus research on co-production highlights that involving members of the community in shaping policy or services provides a significant level of insight into a community. Young people are experts on their own lives and experiences. Enabling them to co-produce policy with professionals means their insight has a direct impact on process and policy but the involvement of ‘professionals’ mitigates the risk to the rigour and validity of the research. There is a strong case in any future co-production work for developing communication that explicitly addresses concerns about rigour and validity and explains how the specifics of the co-production model mitigate these risks.

- **Development and implementation of the policy**

Many professionals involved in the evaluation felt the main challenge was not found in the Youth Commission but is the ongoing development and implementation of the anti-bullying policy.

“The work the youth commission has produced and the recommendations are excellent but the challenge of turning them into policy and implementing them may be more difficult. There are a lot of different factors to include and understand in taking the work forward. There is political, financial and resource implications which need to be negotiated and there is the possibility that we may not be able to do it all.” (Education Official, Scottish Borders Council)

Interestingly, this is in contrast to the Youth Commissioners who had confidence that their recommendations would result in a new policy and positive change for young people.

**Summary**

In summary, the assessment of the impact of the Youth Commission is partial as the process is on going. The evaluation revealed that the Youth Commissioners had confidence that their recommendations would be implemented in policy and would make a difference across Scottish Borders whilst the professionals involved in the process were more cautious highlighting the challenges involved in policy development and implementation. The Youth Commission has raised the profile of bullying in the Council, improved understanding of co-production and provided greater insight into bullying and young people. There is a definite application of this model for other departments and policy areas across Scottish Boarders Council. Engagement of key stakeholders in the Youth Commission proved challenging and may have an impact on the implementation of the policy.
Q.3 What has been distinctive about the process of this Youth Commission and what difference has this made?

In essence the distinctiveness of the Youth Commission lies in the adoption of a co-production approach. Therefore to understand specifically what has been distinctive about the Youth Commission and the impact this has had we have drawn on the discussion paper The Challenge of Co-production published by NESTA and the new economics foundation. In describing co-production the paper outlines four key aspects:

- **“Recognising people as assets,”** because people themselves are the real wealth of society.
- **Valuing work differently,** to recognise everything as work that people do to raise families, look after people, maintain healthy communities, social justice and good governance.
- **Promoting reciprocity,** giving and receiving – because it builds trust between people and fosters mutual respect.
- **Building social networks,** because people’s physical and mental well-being depends on strong, enduring relationships.”

Adopting a youth participation approach is not new for Scottish Borders Council. The Council and its partners have had a Children and Young People’s Participation strategy since 2008 and well established programmes of work that support and foster youth participation. The Youth Commission coincided with the refresh of and publication of *Involved: The participation of children and young people in the Scottish Borders 2012-15*. What represented an evolution for the Council was combining this youth participation approach with a co-production approach.

- **Recognising people as assets and valuing work differently**
  It is clear from the feedback from Youth Commissioners, elected members, officials and partners that Youth Commissioners and members of the Advisory Board were regarded as assets in this process. The previous experience and expertise of the Advisory Board were highly regarded by other members of the Board and by the Youth Commissioners. Equally, the Youth Commissioners’ experience was of significant value to the Commission.

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2 David Boyle and Michael Harris, *The Challenge of Co-production, How equal partnerships between professionals and the public are crucial to improving public services*. New economics foundation, The Lab, NESTA.

“I think their personal knowledge and experience of the differences in how schools geographically dispersed over quite a wide area approached bullying currently was invaluable.” (Advisory Board member)

- Promoting reciprocity

Whilst providing some challenges especially at the start of the project, the partnership between the Youth Commissioners and the professionals on the Advisory Board developed and deepened as the Commission progressed. Both Youth Commissioners and members of the Advisory Board contributed time, energy and expertise and over time developed a relationship based on trust, commitment, and mutual respect. One member of the Advisory Board was impressed by:

“...the individual and collective energy of the young people themselves and their desire to effect meaningful change in an area of importance to them. Youthfully optimistic and free of the cynicism and jaded attitudes that sometimes affect adults, their thinking wasn’t limited by organisational or operational barriers” (Advisory Board member)

Another stated:

“I have appreciated the drive, energy and qualities of young people far more than previously, and am amazed at the quality that has been produced. I certainly have more faith in co-production than I had at the start and would not hesitate in being involved again.” (Advisory Board member)

Equally, the Youth Commissioners valued the input of the Advisory Board members, in particular the ‘doors they opened’ during the research and the feedback and guidance on developing the recommendations.

The Youth Commission Facilitator commented that the Youth Commissioners learnt a great deal about Scottish Borders Council, the way it works and develops policy whilst an elected member felt that the Commission built confidence, respect and relationships between the Council and different groups/communities that it serves.

- Building social networks

As a result of the Youth Commission, new networks and relationships have been instigated or developed. The Youth Commissioners described being more visible at school and providing advice and support for other young people. Whilst not an
explicit part of the Youth Commissioner role, becoming a Youth Commissioner had enabled young people to engage with other young people on the issue of bullying. The strong multi-agency partnership of the Advisory Board engaged both local and national partners.

As part of the evaluation we asked national organisations who had observed the Youth Commission to comment on the process. That the 33 recommendations are evidence-based, was considered to be very powerful. The close link between policy development and practice was very important. The role of youth work/youth participation staff was highlighted as critical and indeed transformative to this co-production approach.

The distinctiveness of Commission was characterised by the commitment from the adults/structures/decision makers from the outset to accord ‘due weight’ to the Youth Commissioners.
The Policy and Practice Context

There are a number of key policy frameworks that both shaped the work of the Youth Commission and that the Commission delivered against. Key local and national policies and frameworks are detailed below.

National Performance Framework
The National Performance Framework provides a set of national outcomes and indicators that outline what local and national government aim to deliver alongside other partners, including the voluntary sector. There are 16 national outcomes, with National Outcome 4 being most applicable to the Youth Commission:

“Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens”

Valuing Young People
Valuing Young People was published by the Scottish Government in 2009 and is designed to support partners to deliver positive outcomes for all young people, whilst recognising that some need more help than others to realise their potential. Valuing Young People sets out the following principles for working with young people.

We will work together to:
- deliver services that reflect the reality of young people's lives - supporting them through key life transitions, ensuring they are informed, and boosting their aspirations;
- work with local partners to address barriers and gaps - so that young people are not excluded from opportunities or have their capacity to achieve their potential limited;
- recognise and promote young people's positive contribution to their communities, and as national and global citizens; and
- Involve young people at an early stage, along with the voluntary sector and other relevant partners, in developing services and opportunities in the context of community priorities.

The Youth Commission clearly delivers against each of these four principles. Young people worked collaboratively with professionals at an early stage in policy development to develop recommendations that reflect the reality of their lives and that will shape the Anti-Bullying Policy.
**Curriculum for Excellence**

Curriculum for Excellence aims to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum for children and young people aged 3 to 18. It has been introduced to raise standards in learning and teaching and improve children's life chances.

The knowledge, skills and attributes learners will develop will allow them to demonstrate four key capacities:

- Successful learners
- Confident individuals
- Responsible citizens
- Effective contributors

Learning in health and wellbeing ensures that children and young people develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes which they need for mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing now and in the future. Some outcomes and experiences within the Health & Wellbeing curriculum area are particularly relevant for the Youth Commission. The table below identifies those outcomes within which the Youth Commission has made a significant contribution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health and Wellbeing Curriculum Area</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental and emotional wellbeing</td>
<td>I am aware of and able to express my feelings and am developing the ability to talk about them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental and emotional wellbeing</td>
<td>I know that friendship, caring, sharing, fairness, equality and love are important in building positive relationships. As I develop and value relationships, I care and show respect for myself and others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social wellbeing</td>
<td>I make full use of and value the opportunities I am given to improve and manage my learning and, in turn, I can help to encourage learning and confidence in others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social wellbeing</td>
<td>Representing my class, school and/or wider community encourages my self-worth and confidence and allows me to contribute to and participate in society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social wellbeing</td>
<td>Through contributing my views, time and talents, I play a part in bringing about positive change in my school and wider community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social wellbeing

I value the opportunities I am given to make friends and be part of a group in a range of situations.

Social wellbeing

As I explore the rights to which I and others are entitled, I am able to exercise these rights appropriately and accept the responsibilities that go with them. I show respect for the rights of others.

Planning for Choices and Changes

I am developing the skills and attributes which I will need for learning, life and work. I am gaining understanding of the relevance of my current learning to future opportunities. This is helping me to make informed choices about my life and learning.

**UNCRC**
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out the rights that all children and young people up to the age of 18 should expect to be realised. The following articles are those most relevant for the Youth Commission and where it had had the most impact.

- **Article 3**: All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is in their best interests.
- **Article 12**: Children have the right to express their views freely and have their opinions listened to in all matters affecting them.
- **Article 13**: Children have the right to get, and to share, information as long as the information is not damaging to them or others.
- **Article 15**: Children have the right to meet with other children and young people and to join groups and organisations as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.
- **Article 29**: Education should develop a child's personality and talents to the full. It should encourage them to respect their parents, their own and other cultures.
- **Article 31**: Children have a right to relax, play and join in a wide range of activities.
- **Article 36**: Children should be protected from any activities that could harm their development.
The National Standards for Community Engagement
The National Standards for Community Engagement are a tool to help improve the experience of all participants involved in community engagement to achieve the highest quality of process and results. There are ten standards (detailed below) and we are confident that the Youth Commission meets all ten whilst having particular strengths in standards highlighted in bold below:

1. INVOLVEMENT: we will identify and involve the people and organisations who have an interest in the focus of the engagement
2. SUPPORT: we will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement
3. PLANNING: we will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this evidence to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken
4. METHODS: we will agree and use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose
5. WORKING TOGETHER: We will agree and use clear procedures that enable the participants to work with one another effectively and efficiently
6. SHARING INFORMATION: we will ensure that necessary information is communicated between the participants
7. WORKING WITH OTHERS: we will work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement
8. IMPROVEMENT: we will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants
9. FEEDBACK: we will feed back the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected
10. MONITORING AND EVALUATION: we will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement achieves its purposes and meets the national standards for community engagement

A National Approach to Anti-bullying for Children and Young People
The purpose of this national approach published in 2010 is to communicate and promote a common vision and aims; and to make sure that work across all agencies and communities is consistently and coherently contributing to a holistic approach to anti-bullying in Scotland. The Youth Commission’s way of working and its recommendations directly match many of those in the national approach. This is mutually beneficial; a Scottish Borders model which fits a national approach to anti-bullying.


Learning for the Future

This evaluation has found clear evidence of impact on participants and policy making. Throughout the Youth Commission and evaluation, we learnt a great deal about what worked well, what proved challenging, and ways of managing these challenges. We have collated this learning to share in the hope that it will be helpful to others considering a co-production approach. Some are very practical tips whilst others are more concerned with structures and outcomes.

Youth Commission

Structure

➢ Great care should be taken when recruiting an advisory board. It is important to ensure that advisory board members understand the level of commitment expected from them at the outset and the significance of the board’s developing relationship of trust and mutual respect with the commissioners.

➢ It is important to provide members of the advisory board with a clearly defined role and expected ways of working or support them to develop this. This does not mean that the role cannot evolve during the life of a commission but that clear parameters at the outset provide a shared platform for partnership working with commissioners.

➢ Having delivered this Youth Commission, a member of the Advisory Board suggested engaging young people at an earlier project design phase to be involved in the scoping the terms of reference of a commission.

Support

➢ Having the ‘right person’ to facilitate a commission is critical to its success. They need to have a proven track record of successful delivery which helps establish the legitimacy of a commission but they also need to have excellent networks within the organisation and the community of interest to open doors and make things happen.

➢ Whilst members of an advisory board may be experts in their own field, they may not be experienced in working in a participative and/or co-produced way. Training on the principles of co-production and working participatively delivered to both the advisory board and commissioners provides an early opportunity to establish common ground. This should be part of a formal induction programme.

➢ Be prepared to deliver training throughout a commission as it is only when commissioners begin work that some skills gaps come to light.

➢ Allow time in the project plan for developing support mechanisms and training once commissioners and advisory board members have been recruited. Using a training needs analysis will help best tailor the support required.
➢ The mentor programme in the Youth Commission had limited impact. In the case of the Youth Commission it might have been more beneficial to recruit more mentors from schools which might have had the dual effect of increasing the engagement of schools and pairing Youth Commissioners with mentors they already know and have regular access to.

Organisation
➢ Play close attention to election schedules as elections and changes in the political make up of a local authority can have an impact on any co-production work. It has been suggested that in future co-production work, greater elected member involvement would be beneficial from across the political spectrum.
➢ Have a clear plan of how you will engage and involve key stakeholders. Communication needs to be frequent, clear and outline the benefits of the process and the importance of their engagement. In the case of the Commission, greater teacher/school involvement would have been welcomed by all.
➢ It is critical to allow enough time for a commission. Relationships, trust and a shared understanding of the task take time to develop.
➢ Think carefully about the venues you use for meetings and the transport needed for people to attend.
➢ Fortnightly meetings worked well for the Commission, frequent enough to maintain momentum but with enough time to deliver aspects of the workplan.
➢ Put in place consistent and reliable admin support.

Need for outcomes and indicators
➢ During the early planning stages of co-production there is a need to develop a clear set of outcomes and indicators for measuring these outcomes. Outcomes are the changes you hope or expect to see as a result of your co-production work. You should develop outcomes for participants e.g. commissioners, advisory board and the process or service you are trying to change. Outcomes are critical for effective evaluation; you need to know what you are trying to change before you can evaluate to find out if you made a difference. In addition clear outcomes enable the participants in a commission to know what they can expect from you and in turn this helps establish realistic expectations.

Legitimacy and validity
➢ Establish how you will maintain the legitimacy and validity of your research and explain this clearly to all stakeholders. A co-production approach has the capacity to generate greater insight as a result of involvement by communities but with careful planning this does not have to mean a reduction in quality of the research (although this is a common perception).
➢ Use principles of participatory action research to generate a quality assurance checklist that you are able to refer to throughout the process. A quality assurance checklist outlines all the steps that you will take to make sure that your process and research findings are valid and transparent.
➢ Allow sufficient time in meetings to reflect on quality and validity
➢ Document how you process, analyse and weight evidence received

The Youth Commission on Bullying has been challenging and uplifting; at times frustrating and inspiring; and a huge learning experience for all. There are things we would do differently – better communication and engagement with stakeholders, training on co-production and working participatively – but this co-production journey has had significant and demonstrable impact on those involved; challenged and shaped attitudes to both young people and co-production and is a process we would highly recommend. If you are about to embark on a co-production journey, please feel free to contact us about our experience and learning:

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