



FCP SUMMER RESEARCH PROGRAMME 2022

Aim

The aim of this pilot research programme was to:

- Develop young people's research skills in a fun and engaging way
- Improve young people's employability skills (e.g. team work, presenting)
- Provide young people with professional, paid work experience
- Build relationships between students across local schools in Feltham
- Encourage young people to join the Feltham Convening Partnership's (FCP) participatory evaluation team

Introduction

15 local young people that attend five different schools across Feltham were chosen to take part in this programme. We were particularly interested in working with young people who are at risk of becoming NEET, young people from a global majority background or young people with special educational needs. Participating secondary schools nominated students who they felt were most suitable to this programme. The 15 young people worked together to gather evidence on one topic that affects young people like them in their community.

The schools that were represented were:

- Rivers Academy
- Logic Studio School
- Space Studio, West London
- Reach Academy
- Springwest Academy

This programme ran for two weeks from the 25th of July to the 5th of August. To apply for this programme, the young people each had to answer two questions:

- What challenges do young people face today in Feltham?
- What change would you like to see in your community and why?

Key themes emerged around:

- Mental health challenges in young people, especially post Covid-19
- A lack of knowledge and awareness around mental health
- A lack of mental health support for young people
- Not enough spaces for young people to go to and socialise and a lack of preventative mental health support in Feltham

The team chose to focus their research projects on young people's mental health in Feltham and, subsequently, they decided to focus on three research questions. These were:

- 1. What factors influence young people's mental health in Feltham?**
- 2. Who is currently most affected by poor mental health and why?**
- 3. What is currently available in Feltham to support young people's mental health and where are the gaps?**

Throughout the two weeks, the young people worked in groups to collect both qualitative and quantitative data on their assigned research question. They analysed their data and worked to summarise their key findings. They critically analysed their research and discussed the limitations of their research and their future directions. All of this was with the support of three mentors who are completing their postgraduate studies at Kingston University and Royal Holloway University.

Each group decided to take action depending on what they concluded in their findings. These findings are outlined below.

The key findings from the research programme:

1. Exam stress, body image and self-esteem were the key factors that impacted young people's mental health in Feltham.
2. Girls were more likely to be affected by poor mental health in Feltham than boys.
3. The biggest barriers that young people face to accessing mental health support in Feltham are:
 - a. A lack of awareness about what's available to them.
 - b. Affordability of support.
 - c. Long waiting lists to access support.
 - d. A lack of places to go to hang out with their friends and socialise.

The three actions that were taken based on the young people's findings:

1. A petition to set up a communal garden in Feltham which would be run by young people in a voluntary capacity.
 - a. This could help reduce levels of exam stress and anxiety in young people.
 - b. Could provide work-experience and better post-16 opportunities for young people.
 - c. Could not just benefit young people but could also benefit other vulnerable members of the community such as the elderly.
2. A petition to bring an OnSide Youth Zone to Feltham
 - a. This would give young people a safe space to hang out and socialise with their friends and could act as a stress reliever.
 - b. One group reported that most young people enjoy listening to music to relieve their stress. However, there are no accessible safe spaces in Feltham (outside of the home) for young people to do this with friends. This OnSide Youth Zone could become that safe space for young people to do just that.
3. Posting a leaflet through letterboxes. The leaflets contained information about local mental health support for young people in Feltham. The leaflet also contained QR codes to apps that support young people's mental health such as Kooth and Moodfit.
 - a. One of the main barriers to accessing mental health support for young people was lack of awareness around what's available to them.
 - b. The services that were provided on the leaflet were affordable, which combated another barrier that young people faced to accessing support.
4. The young people are going to write a blog on the key findings and their experience of the programme. This will be posted on the FCP website.

Presentations

The research programme culminated in the young people delivering a 10-minute presentation on their research. A range of FCP stakeholders came to listen to the young people's research. There was representation from the local authority, Kingston University, Royal Holloway University, the Reach Children's Hub and the other community partners.



One group presenting their findings to a full house. This group focused on collecting primary and secondary data to answer their research question, what mental health supports are currently available for young people in Feltham and where are the gaps?

Evaluation of the programme



All the young people who took part in the two week experience reported that they enjoyed the programme. One key theme emerged around cooperation and collaboration as a group and this seemed to feed into the young people's enjoyment of the programme. One young person reported that they felt that their contribution was making a difference.

“The cooperation between one another to help make a difference in my community- every person in the team mattered.”

“Being able to make new friends and get paid doing stuff I enjoy.”

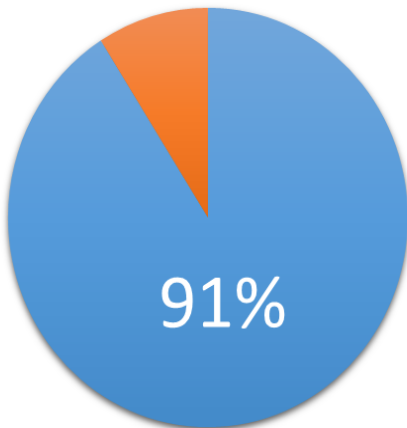
“It was great to get to know and work with the other participants, the FCP has created a memorable moment for me!”



The programme was designed for young people and was delivered in a **fun and engaging** way. One young person reported that they were surprised to actually enjoy the research aspect of the programme!

“I didn’t know that research could be so intriguing and fascinating, I always thought that it would be monotonous but it wasn’t!”

91% of young people reported that they learned new skills throughout the programme.



Participants reported to have learned a range of skills throughout the two week programme, including:

- communication
- teamwork
- analysis
- research
- presentation
- listening

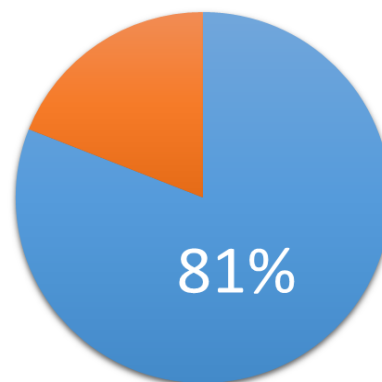
- social
- leadership

Communication and teamwork skills were reported most frequently; 54% of young people reported that their communication skills have improved over the course of this programme.

During this programme, the participants had an opportunity to build relationships with young people from different schools across Feltham.

81% of young people reported that they got to know young people from other schools during the research programme and many young people reported that they enjoyed getting to know the people in the group. One young person reported that the programme helped her be more social.

“I enjoyed this programme and it has helped me to be more social.”



Students from Space Studio West London being mentored on their quantitative data analysis.



Students from Reach Academy, Space Studio West London, Logic Studio School and Rivers Academy working on their group research project.

Another participant reported that through working with a diverse group of young people from different schools and backgrounds, their understanding and listening skills improved.

“The skills that this programme has helped me with is communication, collaboration, understanding my peers' different views and leading on an action.”

This was valuable paid work experience for local young people. As mentioned the young people learned valuable skills which will help them progress in their academic or professional journey. Alongside this, it gave them an idea of what to expect in the working world.

“Being in a professional workplace has helped me get a taste of what a job would look like and be in the future.”

Ultimately, we wanted to show the young people that they can make a difference within their community through research and that evidence to support the need for change is a great way to change mind-sets. One young person reported how they raised awareness on what impacts young people’s mental health in Feltham through their research which made them feel like they were making a change.

“Making communities, the council and local mental health supports more aware about what impacts young people’s mental health in Feltham. We have got together to research as a team to make a change!”

5 of the young people that took part in the programme have expressed an interest in joining the Feltham Convening Partnership from September.

Young people's opinions on how to improve the research programme

Some young people felt that we should spend more time out in the community working on social action. A few others reported that they would like more time to collect and analyse their data. Two young people mentioned that they would have preferred more independence as some sessions were driven by the mentors. On top of this, the itinerary was very structured for the two weeks with limited flexibility because of the short-time frame. These are all reflections that we will consider carefully for next year.

Reflections from the FCP stakeholders on the presentations

All of the FCP stakeholders reported that they enjoyed the presentations. They also noted that the research was of a high standard and the presentations were clear and informative. A representative from Kingston University reported that the programme was a great way for young people to learn new skills which will help them find a job in the future.

“I thought their presentations were excellent. It seems a very effective way to build employability skills in young people.” A representative from Kingston University

A member of the community noted that they enjoyed the social action side of the programme. They enjoyed listening to how the young people not only reported their findings but actually developed an action based on what they found.

“The presentations were so good, just love the way you are embedding community action into the youngsters, brilliant ethos/skill to take through life.” A local community member

Reflections from the mentors who facilitated the work of the young people

One mentor from Kingston University reflected on the diversity of the team and how everyone no matter their research experience contributed to the final presentations.

“The participants were from different backgrounds and schools; some had more experience than others but everyone picked up things, worked hard, and presented their work. It was even more applaudable how they faced the questions from the audience at the end.”

One mentor from Royal Holloway University reported that the timings of the programme worked well.

“The timeline and the way it was scheduled, was really appreciable; mainly when it was the very first time you organised such a programme.”

Another mentor reported that they learned a lot from the programme. So, not only did the young people learn from the mentors but the mentors learned from the young people.

“It was a great team effort and personally I learnt a lot from these young people. The young people must be enriched now with a lot of knowledge and experience.”

Reflections from the Feltham Convening Partnership Planning Team and considerations for next year:

We need to engage schools early in the recruitment process and consider how we market ourselves; one of the ways we can do this is by asking this year’s cohort to present to students from participating schools on what they got out of the programme and how it runs.

The recruitment process will start in April next year and span two months.

- Application for new cohort - April/May (right to work)
- Interviews June (documentation)
- Pre-meet up start of July (fill out payroll paperwork)
- Programme start date - July 25th approx.

It was reported by the team that the group was diverse and representative of a wide range of backgrounds. Along with this, there was good representation from all five secondary schools in Feltham. This is something that we hope to replicate again next year. The size of the group worked well and we hope to have another 15 young people participate next year.

This year we were very lucky with the ambassadors that came to mentor on the programme from Kingston University and Royal Holloway University. Next year, it would be wise to consider a training programme on how to best support the young people in their research. As previously mentioned, this programme was especially for young people who were at risk of becoming NEET, those from a global majority background or young people with SEND, so it is important that we ensure that the mentors are trained in how best to support young people from a wide variety of backgrounds.

The Reach Foundation’s Crib sheet was a useful resource for the young people to reference throughout the programme. This sheet contained language that we do and don’t use when speaking about our community.

Although we made reference to the Action Cycle which we co-created with Wasafari Consulting, we could make more use of this resource next year. This Action Cycle is a resource that the Feltham Convening Partnership makes reference to before starting an action.

Overall, the itinerary for the two weeks was engaging and we covered a lot of content. The 2.5 hour sessions worked well with a one-hour break in between. However, many young people felt that the programme could have been longer which could lead to more flexibility of the work but over two weeks could potentially be too long for the summer holidays. This is something that we will have to consider carefully for next year.

We need to think carefully about how this programme can incentivise young people to continue working with the FCP once the programme finishes. At the moment, we have opportunities available for young people and 5 young people said they would be interested in taking them up. We need to consider how we can incentivise more young people to continue working alongside the FCP. As a paid work experience will they integrate more into the evaluation of the FCP or do we give them a research project similar to what we did this year?



The first cohort of young researchers alongside the mentors and the FCP Planning Team.

Conclusion

To conclude, this programme was a great success and the young people left feeling proud of what they had achieved over the two weeks. The research was of a high standard and, overall, the majority felt that their research contributed to the work of the Feltham Convening Partnership. During this paid work

experience, they developed new skills, formed relationships with students from other schools and learned that research can be fun!

Their findings will feed into the work of the Mental Health & Wellbeing Working Group and Feltham's Youth Activists. We're hoping the 5 local young people who expressed an interest in joining the FCP from September will work with us as part of a participatory evaluation team or will follow through on the actions that they have started as stated above. It is important that young people are part of the evaluation of the FCP moving forward and we believe this programme is the start of that for the FCP.