

Libraries Rising Youth Engagement Network

Executive Summary



Written February 2026 (covering 2024 pilot phase
one and 2025 phase two)

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AI usage declaration: AI has not been used in the data analysis nor write up of this summative evaluation.

The findings in this report relate to evidence captured and made available between February 2024 and January 2026.

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1 Executive summary

Funded by Arts Council England, the Libraries Rising¹ Youth Engagement Network (YEN) programme aimed to platform the voices of children and young people (CYP), including those from under-represented and minority groups.

A total of 20 unique library services² were involved in the programme during 2024 and 2025. During this time they took part in meetings, training and networking opportunities, and/or tested co-created approaches with young people aged 11-16 years old.³

There were five overarching aims to the overall Youth Engagement Network programme:

- Ensure young people have power in libraries (by giving them a genuine opportunity to influence their local library services)
- Provide opportunities to co-create activities and shape the services on offer in their local library (and also the national network with the intention of influencing sector policy and decision-making more broadly)
- Encourage young people to learn something new, gaining skills and finding out about working in a library (with library staff learning new skills in co-creation and youth engagement)
- Support libraries across the country, building positive relationships between libraries and young people through the national network. Libraries taking part were also part of a pilot network which offered support, ideas exchange and an opportunity to reflect.

An evaluation framework and overarching strategy was put in place to monitor and evaluate the Youth Network Programme's intended impact⁴. This was created with the Libraries Rising Youth Network Programme (YEN) Programme Manager based on the original Arts Council England bid and was updated in December 2024 to respond to programme changes made following the pilot. A full version of the evaluation strategy and methodology is available from the project team on request. This executive summary briefly shares some of the top line findings⁵.

¹ Formerly ASCEL.

² Phase one pilot libraries (2024) included Luton Libraries, Norfolk Library & Information Service, Kirklees Library & Information Service, Newham Libraries, Slough Libraries, Libraries Unlimited (Barnstaple), Cornwall Libraries. Phase two libraries (2025) included Manchester Libraries, Stockton-on-Tees Libraries & Archives, Barnet Libraries, North Somerset Libraries, West Northamptonshire Libraries, Cornwall Libraries (see note below), North Northamptonshire Libraries, Newcastle Libraries, East Sussex Libraries, Lancashire Library Service, North Tyneside Libraries, Leeds Libraries, Knowsley Libraries, and Idea Store (London Borough of Tower Hamlets). Note that pilot phase one library services Burnside College (North Tyneside) and Churston & Torquay library (Torbay) withdrew from the process in 2024; and phase two library service Suffolk Libraries withdrew in 2025. In addition, note that Cornwall Libraries from the 2024 pilot continued into 2025 and are therefore only counted once in the overall participating libraries figure above.

³ Note that the age bracket of young people was changed following the interim evaluation to 11-16 years from 11-13 years to remove the narrow restriction and better reflect the opportunities for engagement that libraries reported.

⁴ Available on request.

⁵ Please see the main report for methodology, limitations, and sources of evidence for sample sizes and the exact number behind the percentages (equivalent N is shared in the main report as standard).

1.1 Key findings

- Overall, the independent evaluator finds that the programme achieved (and at times exceeded) its original aims as outlined in the grant bid to Arts Council England. This has been an innovative programme which deserves acknowledgement and celebration.
- It has not always been easy. The YEN Programme Manager and wider Libraries Rising team have learned a substantial amount through administrating and delivering a programme like this, which will no doubt be positively applied in their future projects. Being open to learning from things that have not gone well is testament to the values of transparency and authenticity embodied by Libraries Rising.
- Furthermore, the findings from the programme have significant relevance on a national level. They should continue to be shared by Libraries Rising to inspire others and could certainly be used within national lobbying fora and at policy development levels.

1.1.1. Facts and stats: target outputs results

Output target	Result	Status
120 CYP in total over the two years	236	Achieved
Number of national meetings including CYP Promise Alliance [YP have the opportunity to share their opinions and feedback at a national level]	0	This output was removed as a target for the programme in consultation with Arts Council England based on feedback from young people and Libraries Rising's pro-active response.
Diverse range of young people attend	-	Achieved (with some caveats around limitations particularly during the pilot with formal demographic data capture)
New product designed by the CYP	-	Achieved
20 sites in total	20	Achieved, with the caveat that some library services from phase 2 have rolled their total or partial delivery into phase 3
At least 5 pilot services in Levelling Up areas	18 (including 7 in the pilot)	Achieved

1.1.2 Outcomes for young people

Young people enjoy the experience

- The majority of CYP enjoyed participating, with 94% agreeing that they had a good time. This was commonly attributed to a mix of both social experiences (e.g. meeting friends, visiting the library, chatting to staff) and creative experiences (e.g. painting, spoken word, playing games, drawing).
- They predominantly used positive words to describe their experience, including fun, amazing, and delightful. Given that we can use enjoyment as an indicator for satisfaction, the findings indicate that the majority of participating libraries have created satisfactory experiences for those involved.

- CYP made several suggestions for improving their experience. Commonly occurring examples included:
 - ▀ More time for activities (per session)
 - ▀ Having more of their ideas heard
 - ▀ More sessions overall
 - ▀ More activities or equipment, for example getting a PS5
- Some other suggestions were individually made by CYP on their feedback forms for the libraries to take into consideration. These included: treating young people like adults, having a separate room for young people, including food/snacks, improving computers in libraries by having tablets, adding bean bags for comfort, thinking more about the opening time of libraries/time of sessions (i.e. having them later), organising more visits from libraries into schools and to have book-related competitions for younger children.

Young people learn something new

- 77% of CYP reported gaining new knowledge and skills, including self-awareness, creative skills, and library-related learning. Bringing in external expertise indicatively added more opportunities to gain enhanced skills, for example working with artist practitioners led to a variety of additional outcomes for the CYP.
- It should be noted that CYP from marginalised groups have potentially been exposed to opportunities that they would not ordinarily have had e.g. Newcastle Libraries giving access to tutors for their CYP revision study group.

Young people develop soft skills

- CYP suggested they had gained a range of new soft skills as a result of being involved, for example: teamwork, budgeting, organisation, time management and communication (with 83% reporting improved communication and 82% stating that they had improved their ability to work as part of a team). This indicates that the activities being co-created have not only provided enjoyment but have provided life skills which are likely to be useful in school, volunteering or work settings in the future.
- There is also some evidence to suggest that the CYP felt empowered, especially those projects where engagement was happening with libraries outside of school assignments or settings. Many of the young people involved did not know each other before taking part and have gained new friends as a result. The report also describes incidences where young people taught each other e.g. how to play particular games.

Young people increase personal resilience

- 75% of CYP reported that their confidence improved, and 88% felt proud of their achievements. There are isolated examples within the qualitative data where libraries reported specific instances of individuals developing confidence. For example, one teacher working with the Kirklees Library and Information Service team described how a student was initially reluctant to participate due to anxiety, but successfully took part in the end and was keen to return to the library in the future. Library staff from West Northamptonshire also shared the experience of a young person who had returned from university for wellbeing reasons but had developed enough confidence through the group to go back and try again.⁶

⁶Outside the target age group but was included within the provision due to demand.





- There are several examples where CYP have been inspired to do something as a direct result of their experience. Commonly occurring suggestions included doing more creative activities at home, school or elsewhere); repeat engagement with the library (e.g. summer reading challenge); and finding ways to make more friends or share skills. One participant reported that they had been inspired to do Art for GSCE.

Young people feel their voice has been heard

- Despite the above finding related to improvements, 94% of CYP felt that their opinions, feelings, and ideas were listened to, and 95% felt involved and included in co-designing activities. It was particularly striking to see how library services found inclusive ways to ensure neurodivergent CYP or those with SEND were able to voice their opinions.
- Overall, findings suggest that library staff were listening – with services that used consultation and feedback from young people to inform projects working particularly well.

Young people feel they have greater ownership of the library

- There is some evidence to suggest that young people felt more ‘at home’ in their library space as a direct result of being involved. 92% of CYP said they felt more welcome in the library, and 61% expressed a propensity to visit the library more often than they did before.
- Where ownership seems to have been particularly strong, it is where the library services have:

-  Given permission to the young people to make decisions from the start e.g. having authority
-  Encouraged them to be more empowered from the beginning and put mechanisms in place to do this (e.g. creating group rules)
-  Given young people a thorough knowledge of what was in the library and where e.g. how to find teen books
-  Provided an identifiable space e.g. noticeboard or teen area

Unintended outcomes

- There are several unintended isolated outcomes noted in the report. These include two parents becoming friends; the inclusion of CYP from the programme in wider local authority consultation schemes; the ripple effect of activity on the participation of parents/carers and siblings; and a creative practitioner team member taking their SEND learning into other future project commissions.

1.1.3 Outcomes for library staff

Development of skills and knowledge

- Library staff improved their skills in co-creating activities with CYP, with some notable increases in confidence and capability in designing and delivering such projects.
- Staff experienced significant professional development through practical engagement, particularly in working with marginalised CYP including LGBTQ+, LACs⁷, neurodivergent and CYP with SEND.
- Evidence suggests that there was a substantial amount of 'learning by doing' across both the pilot and phase 2, with staff reflecting on specific challenges and successes of delivery. Being able to practically try out activity gave the library teams permission to test, fail and learn. The programme evaluation finds common areas of learning including keeping things simple, developing trust with CYP, taking time to develop partnerships, consulting with young people, best methods for recruiting CYP, plus evaluation and monitoring techniques. Overall, they realised that this work is challenging and needs time. Specific examples of learning by individual library services was also captured, including learning how to deal with negativity on social media.
- Library staff reported that they can better communicate the value of this type of work. For example, 75% said that they feel better equipped to articulate the value of co-created work in libraries as a direct result of the programme and 88% reported that they can describe what successful co-created work 'looks like' more confidently.
- Although there are isolated examples of feedback which describes how some staff struggled with the brief from Libraries Rising being so open, others relished that it was not prescriptive.

Increased confidence in working with CYP and/or co-created projects

- 56% of library staff reported increased confidence in delivering co-created projects and 81% had greater empathy towards CYP as a direct result of the project. Being involved was also an opportunity for some staff to develop confidence in working specifically with neurodivergent CYP and those with SEND.
- There were some bespoke challenges reported by phase 2 library teams who, whilst still increasing their learning, suggested that they needed further support, guidance, and time to really build up their confidence in working with CYP to implement a truly co-created approach.
- There were instances where decision-making had to fall with the library service rather than collaboratively with the CYP. For example, the report finds that it can be a challenge to implement the ideas of CYP in local authority library spaces due to particular restrictions. This has potentially reduced staff confidence in the co-creation process.

Library staff develop new contacts with other library services

- 56% of library staff gained new contacts at other library services, potentially strengthening external relationships albeit with reported restrictions on time to maintain these new connections. There is also isolated evidence to indicate that the project helped to develop relationships within existing teams internally too.
- Having networking opportunities with others on the programme (and being able to bounce ideas around with the YEN Programme Manager) was attributed to the supportive and friendly backdrop created for delivery of this work.

⁷ Looked after Children.

Library staff have greater propensity to work on CYP co-created projects in the future

- One of the most striking findings with library staff was in their propensity and tenacity to continue this work. Alongside ongoing support from the YEN Programme Manager, having the freedom to experiment without a fear of getting it wrong has been key to ensuring that libraries have a determination for doing this work.
- 81% of library staff could see the potential of using library spaces for co-created projects, and 56% were very likely to work on such projects in the future. Staff also suggested they had been inspired in some way, for example to re-run a similar project, or to work in creative ways with SEND children.
- There were isolated examples where staff had been motivated to continue co-created projects by having a 'proof of concept' which could be rolled out to other branch libraries. This suggests that learning is potentially being cascaded outside of the immediate project teams.
- Library staff commonly felt that they have been left with legacies that they would not have had without the programme.

Unintended outcomes

- Library staff commonly described how they had enjoyed being part of the programme and how fun it was (despite any challenges they faced). The report finds that their satisfaction can be attributed to two common aspects of the process: being given permission to experiment (learn, fail, try again) and the ongoing support provided by Libraries Rising.
- Despite reassurance, some services felt self-imposed pressure on achieving success within the time frame (e.g. having a final 'product'; or working with large numbers of children). Library staff in phase 2 also reported that there was a conflict between when the young people wanted to come in for activities versus when the library was open.
- Lack of internal support or senior management buy-in was commonly reported during the pilot and phase 2 as a barrier to successful delivery of this work. Several individual suggestions for improvement were also made, and these mostly related to additional training ideas for onboarding. Having more than one library staff member delivering the project from a single service was highlighted as a particularly important learning point.
- Taking part in a programme like this was reported by one library service as a way to raise morale within a currently difficult delivery landscape for libraries.
- Partnerships were unexpectedly strengthened with other internal local authority departments for some library services. One library service had interest from other nearby local authorities who wanted to understand what has made their project such a success.
- There are some isolated but important examples of legacy to note in the findings. For example, one library service suggested that because they have started putting on a regular activity for young people, this has encouraged other youth-led partners to enquire whether they can work with the library to support provision for this target audience.

1.1.4 Process evaluation highlights

The process evaluation section of the report highlights the successes and challenges of the programme, outlining a journey of progress and learning from the pilot year into phase two and provides recommendations for phase three. It finds that the main aspects that worked well are as follows:

Training and support

- The quarterly peer meetings provided a positive space for sharing challenges, ideas, and developing independence. They helped to generate a supportive and friendly environment, with the frequency of quarterly meetings being seen as appropriate to manage within their existing workload. Implementing additional training in phase 2 worked well, along with sharing pilot library service experiences and case studies.
- A review of whether the specifics of 'getting from A to B'⁸ with co-creation could be covered more readily through additional training is recommended, given the feedback from some library staff in still being unconfident in how to truly co-create with their young people.
- Feedback from library services is that they want this work to continue and are keen to work together as a network to support each other. They are keen to help co-create the activities of a permanent YEN group which the YEN Programme Manager has already set up.

Authenticity

- Authenticity has been a successful value of the programme across both years, but especially in phase 2.
- Although more encouragement is necessary (more on this below), libraries on the whole appreciated having the freedom and permission to experiment and fail. This brought integrity to the projects and led to authentic relationship-building with children in many cases. Authenticity as a key message should continue to be pushed in phase 3 onboarding, with practical points from pilot and phase 2 key learning used to demonstrate that it is absolutely possible to experiment, learn from what does not work, and successfully achieve by the end of the process.
- Library staff felt confident and comfortable with sharing how they were feeling about the general libraries landscape at the moment. An authentic, shared learning experience was delivered through the meetings by creating a trusted, safe space.
- A broader mindset shift is required for this type of work, with library staff nervous to buy into a 'permission to experiment and learn' concept when they have concerns about perceptions of failure and pressures of potential redundancies. Libraries Rising should continue trying to make change outside of the programme in other advocacy/lobbying/strategic ways at senior management level.
- The report finds that the programme is primarily about process not product - and it should potentially be positioned as a movement, rather than a project.

Step change

- The report finds that the project was a big leap for many library services. It should not be underestimated how much has been achieved especially by those who are working under challenging local authority conditions. The evidence suggests that finding ways to celebrate achievements from the programme to raise morale and encourage continuation of co-created work may be useful.
- Libraries Rising were able to share programme outputs and outcomes at the Libraries Connected and CILIP conferences in 2025. This was a real shift for the programme in terms of visibility and was an opportunity to highlight the key learning which other library services could benefit from. There is an opportunity to continue sharing the programme's findings and lobby for CYP inclusion through 2026/7 conferences, seminars and newsletters.

⁸ This is shorthand for the gap between getting young people in a room to them deciding what they want to do (opposed to the library service spoon feeding them too much).

- Whilst CYP have been at the heart, the emphasis of the programme has been more on learning rather than outcomes for the young people. Library staff knowledge and skills development have been invaluable. Word of mouth about the programme is indicatively growing – for example phase 3 applications have increased exponentially since the pilot.

Challenging perceptions

- The pilot was successful in challenging perceptions about young people, for example pilot libraries were surprised by how engaged the young people were and their capability and willingness to continue working with the library service. Activities within phase two training delivery worked well in continuing to challenge library staff perception of CYP before they even started.
- Library staff felt prepared through the training, notwithstanding some of the bespoke feedback above around additional co-created training support. Some library services were motivated to bring in additional external training for their staff.

Expertise

- Training by Participation People was a 'cementing point' that brought external expertise into the mix and filled gaps in Libraries Rising's existing knowledge level. This training was repeated for phase 2 (and broadened to include EDI/SEND/audience development), taking place earlier in the onboarding process than in the pilot. Bringing in additional expertise e.g. from Curious Minds also helped develop the skillset of library staff.
- Library staff rated the training highly and benefited from additional support in understanding how to co-create with different types of young people they could work with. Phase 2 library services were inspired to work with new rather than existing groups e.g. Lancashire Library Service and SEND CYP. It also resulted in improved confidence prior to any delivery. This should be maintained if not bolstered for phase 3, which will require additional resource (see more on this below).

Partnerships

- The programme provided an opportunity for library staff to engage with partners they had not worked with before.
- The majority of library staff reportedly benefitted from having the extended time period that was given to phase 2 services for developing partnerships, although there was concern from some that it 'pushed the can down the road' i.e. it allowed some drift with other projects able to easily 'creep in'.

CYP with SEND

- Library staff experienced continuing professional development (CPD) through practically trying out this type of work out. They developed skills in consulting with CYP, leading to useful feedback and changes in the library space. Those working with neurodivergent and SEND CYP gained a greater understanding of communication methods e.g. if children are non-verbal. This learning could be brought together in a toolkit for the sector at the end of phase 3.

Consulting with CYP

- Library staff developed consultation skills with CYP (and an understanding of how useful a feedback loop/continuous dialogue can be). Some services were even inspired to involve CYP in other wider local authority consultation that was taking place e.g. at Manchester Libraries and North Somerset Libraries.
- Despite training being rated highly, some library staff still felt that they had 'led' the young people too much in their decision making. Further training in getting library staff from the recruitment of CYP to them deciding what they want to do is recommended as described above.

Monitoring and evaluation

- Despite some minor issues, monitoring and evaluation requirements were reported as being at the right level. Staff valued the flexibility of data collection tools and the permission to adapt approaches based on the needs of their CYP.
- Having additional monitoring data in phase 2 allowed for greater exploration of results in the final impact evaluation of the main report. However, issues were still faced with collecting monitoring data especially demographic profile.
- The YEN Programme Manager should work with the independent evaluator to enable a 'good exit' with evaluation once their contract ends in February 2026.

Accessibility

- Two staff members identifying as neurodivergent suggested that Libraries Rising's overall approach of the programme meant that it was accessible. No particular access needs were identified in phase 2, but there are specific learnings around inclusion (e.g. the challenges of using virtual spaces for quarterly meetings).
- Given the distinct differences between library services, it was a challenge for the YEN Programme Manager to ensure an experience equitable e.g. by offering more (and the right types of) support, for all library staff involved.

Overall, library staff valued Libraries Rising's supportive, understanding, and collaborative approach, which significantly contributed to their positive experience of the programme.

The report finds that:

- 100% of library staff described their relationship with Libraries Rising as positive.
- Staff praised the support and communication from the YEN Programme Manager, describing it as 'collaborative' rather than judgemental.
- 100% rated the overall project design and delivery support as either excellent or good.
- 100% rated the training received as either excellent or good.
- 94% rated the evaluation support tools as either excellent or good.
- The YEN Programme Manager was frequently described as 'positive', 'engaging', 'helpful', and 'enthusiastic'. It should not be underestimated how crucial, valuable and pivotal this role was in encouraging library staff to continue when they were experiencing challenges.
- 100% of library staff stated that they would be either very likely or likely to recommend working with Libraries Rising to other library services.

The evaluation finds that the main challenges and learning points were as follows:

Recruitment and onboarding

- Due to varying factors discussed in the report, including the need to get onboarding off the ground very quickly, some pilot library services did not fully appreciate the time commitment required, and there was variation in understanding what true co-creation entails. This ultimately led to a mismatch between what Libraries Rising would consider authentic co-creation vs the library services who believe they have delivered it. The time-sensitive schedule for recruiting young people, building trust, and relationship building with partners prior to delivery was too tight for pilot organisations - especially those with limited partnership development experience and an already strained capacity. Two library services withdrew as a direct result of these challenges.⁹ By the time CYP had been recruited, activity in some instances clashed with the school exam period which led to reduced participation. This was successfully addressed in phase 2, with Libraries Rising thoroughly revising the recruitment and onboarding process which gave it greater authority. The messaging was adapted, and - as stated above - additional training was put in place.
- A larger library staff group demanded more management in the online learning environment e.g. encouraging library staff to come off their mics and share. The size of the phase 2 cohort also meant more administration time for the YEN Programme Manager.
- The budget felt more squeezed for phase 2 support due to the increased costs of training. It was also challenging for the YEN Programme Manager to deliver the support programme single handedly, given the exponential increase in their other workload during phase 2. The report recommends that further budget and staffing resource from Libraries Rising will be necessary to match the demands and ambitions of the programme in phase 3.

Diverse CYP

- Although SEND and neurodivergent CYP were engaged in the pilot, Libraries Rising would have wanted to see greater representation of marginalised groups within the CYP during the first year (for example across LGBTQ+ and disability).
- Positively, phase 2 organisations were inspired to work with a more diverse range of CYP experiencing marginalisation e.g. LGBTQ+ CYP and LACs¹⁰. The recruitment and onboarding process plus encouragement from the YEN Programme Manager (along with clearer expectations at the onboarding stage) can indicatively be attributed to this.
- The report recommends that examples from both the pilot and phase 2 are shared with phase 3 organisations for inspiration and motivation to work with specific CYP audiences that they have not engaged before.

Partnerships

- The programme has demonstrated that small scale can be mighty (and innovative for the library sector). The report highlights how simple changes can lead to larger outcomes such as developing new partnerships and independent visits by teenagers. However, the pilot phase's time-sensitive, limited duration and lead-in times were too tight for recruitment, delivery and relationship building for many services, especially those who were engaging new groups (or had little experience with developing partnerships). As referenced above, this was acknowledged by Libraries Rising following the interim evaluation and extended for phase two, to allow an extended time period for partnership development and delivery; longer opportunities to build trust with CYP; the ability to avoid school exam periods for those working with education partners; and to give libraries encouragement to see that the process is as important as the final product.
- Pilot and Phase 2 libraries needed to build more holistic support around CYP including through parents and carers. This should be modelled for phase 3 organisations.

⁹ It should be noted that both organisations described how they left the project with resources and a greater understanding of co-creation to take into future projects. This feedback is included in the main report.

¹⁰ Looked after Children.

Reluctancy with sharing learning

- There was limited enthusiasm from pilot library services for sharing experiences and learning beyond the project network due to (primarily) concerns about being seen as a failure. It was sometimes difficult to balance creating a safe space for the group meetings (where conversations could be kept confidential) with Libraries Rising's intention to share learning with the sector. Changes to messaging within the recruitment and on boarding process eased this in phase two, however there were still concerns from some services who felt pressure to 'achieve something'. This reflects the challenges that library staff are currently facing on the ground at the moment with job redundancies and concerns around being seen to fail.
- As stated above, ultimately a change in mindset is needed outside of the YEN programme– there is only so much that can be achieved within it. Change management is required at a higher, and wider level.

Delivering co-creation within local authorities and gaining buy-in

- Despite the positivity of the majority of staff to continue doing this work in some way, in reality there is a concern that capacity, budget and time will hamper co-creation and ultimately embedding learning from the programme. Both pilot and phase 2 organisations sometimes found it difficult to implement what their CYP wanted within local authority restrictions (e.g. receiving the grant payment; paying for specific games with companies that are not listed as suppliers).
- It is not feasible for library service staff to be able to make change happen without the backing of their senior managers, and the impact evaluation at both pilot and phase 2 shows the difference in success between services who did, and did not have that buy-in.
- The report recommends that Libraries Rising continue to build in requirements for senior management buy-in evidence at recruitment stage. They should develop their wider Libraries Rising work in lobbying and seeking buy-in from Heads of Service for co-creation and youth engagement work

Engaging CYP on a national level

- The intended national network meetings did not happen during the pilot or phase 2, mainly due to feedback from the target audiences (e.g. SEND, neurodivergent CYP) who reported that they were uncomfortable with national-level communication either in person or online. The YEN Programme Manager will continue collecting evidence on the outcomes of this work to feed into national conversations. Although this is listed in this 'what did not work well' section, the reason behind not achieving it points to a proactive, sensible and positive picture.

Developing trust

- Those working with CYP over a longer, more sustained period (e.g. those who got up to speed quickly within the existing timeframes) were able to develop a more positive and trusted relationship. Having implemented a longer lead-in time for partners during phase 2, this led to a greater amount of trust-building time with CYP which worked well.
- However, concerns were raised in phase 2 in relation to specific barriers that were experienced by library staff (and therefore CYP). These included the opening times of library services which do not always match the needs of young people. Conversely, those who opened after hours to try and attract engagements from young people found it a struggle to staff these events.

Evaluation and monitoring

- There were some challenges with capturing monitoring and evaluation data. These included collecting CYP demographic data to evidence diversity and being confident to adapt tools provided for SEND and neurodivergent participants. Recommendations made at the interim evaluation reporting stage were put into action to address these issues for phase two, including changes to the evaluation briefing for staff, the end of project proforma, and the messaging around collecting demographic data (including sharing best practice case studies). This resulted in a much better experience for library staff and also improved data for analysis in phase 2.

- Although library services were not asked to formally measure the number of CYP who had returned to the library independently as a result of YEN, it would be useful to find ways to do this in future years. The report also recommends:
 - 📖 Keeping the evaluation 'light touch' for phase 3 (i.e. proportionate) whilst maintaining its robustness
 - 📖 Developing a co-created approach to evaluation planning in the future, e.g. working with CYP to help develop the evaluation framework (in the same way that they would co-create other elements of the project)
 - 📖 Revisiting the methodology e.g. if the creative toolkit is not used, what could work better for library staff? Is time the only barrier in using this?
 - 📖 Bringing in CYP evaluation training specialists who could bring fresh ideas into the mix e.g. peer-to-peer video interviews
- A light touch online survey to assess the longitudinal impacts on pilot library services was deployed. Unfortunately the response rate was poor, and reliance is currently on the YEN Programme Manager to seek updates from pilot organisations – some of which have changed staff. Further work in terms of long-term legacy for the programme is recommended, but this would require additional internal resource or external budget.

CYP with SEND

- Co-creating with non-verbal CYP was challenging for pilot library services and highlighted the need for more specialised support and training for those working with SEND participants. This was introduced into the phase 2 training and onboarding phase, including using learning from the pilot organisations.

Setting targets

- Initial targets in the bid were set too high. This could not have been pre-empted until the pilot had been delivered, and both impact and process evaluation completed. The evidence in the interim report suggested that this type of work is more about group need and depth rather than breadth. Limiting age groups to 11-13 years was also found to be unnecessary, with some library services working with children up to the age of 14. This was adjusted and work continued to focus on delivering meaningful activity rather than achieving high numbers. Library services were able to access a greater pool of young people and partners having had the age band increased.

Genuine strategic need

- Changes to the recruitment and selection process for phase 2 were made by Libraries Rising to ensure that all applicants genuinely wanted to make a difference to young people.
- Although the impact evaluation highlights that there were some buy-in issues, evidence suggests that the majority of library services involved in phase 2 genuinely wanted to develop a strategic approach to co-creation.
- The report suggests continuing to instil at recruitment stage that this work is hard, and time intensive. It is critical to want to do this work, and to do it properly. It should always align with a library services strategic intent.

1.1.5 Overall aims results summary

Programme aim	Status
Ensure young people have power in libraries (by giving them a genuine opportunity to influence their local library services)	Achieved
Provide opportunities to co-create activities and shape the services on offer in their local library (and also the national network with the intention of influencing sector policy and decision-making more broadly)	Achieved
Encourage young people to learn something new, gaining skills and finding out about working in a library (with library staff learning new skills in co-creation and youth engagement)	Achieved
Support libraries across the country, building positive relationships between libraries and young people through the national network. Libraries taking part were also part of a pilot network which offered support, ideas exchange and an opportunity to reflect.	Achieved



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