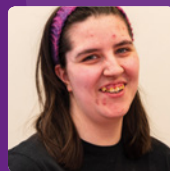
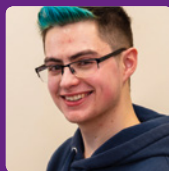
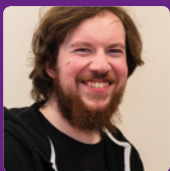


TALENT MATCH

Coventry and Warwickshire

A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS?



**MOVING
YOUNG PEOPLE
INTO TRAINING
AND EMPLOYMENT**

Polly Goodwin
Karen Garry
Merida Associates
June 2018



About Talent Match Coventry and Warwickshire

Talent Match Coventry and Warwickshire has been funded from April 2014 to March 2019 by the Big Lottery, one of 21 Local Enterprise Partnership areas in the country where the highest level of need was identified.

The programme supported 18-24 years olds who were furthest away from the jobs market, including those facing severe barriers such as homelessness and those not claiming benefits. It has given them the skills and confidence they needed to get into training and work. It involved young people in the design and delivery of the programme at a local level.

Young people could join Talent Match if they had no paid work experience in the previous 12 months. Joining the programme was voluntary.

About this report

This report brings together the learning from Talent Match Coventry and Warwickshire (TMCW) based on the findings of the external local evaluation between January 2015 and April 2018 and statistical information gathered for the National Evaluation.

It identifies what works in moving young people forward and shows how the pathways to training and employment offered by TMCW combined mentoring, active listening and barrier busting to initiate change for young people.

This report has been produced in partnership with young people, echoing the spirit of engagement across the whole Talent Match programme.

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Outcomes for young people

Many of the young people who joined the Talent Match programme in Coventry and Warwickshire achieved things they had never thought possible.

Achievements

January 2015 to March 2018 (433 young people)



About the young people

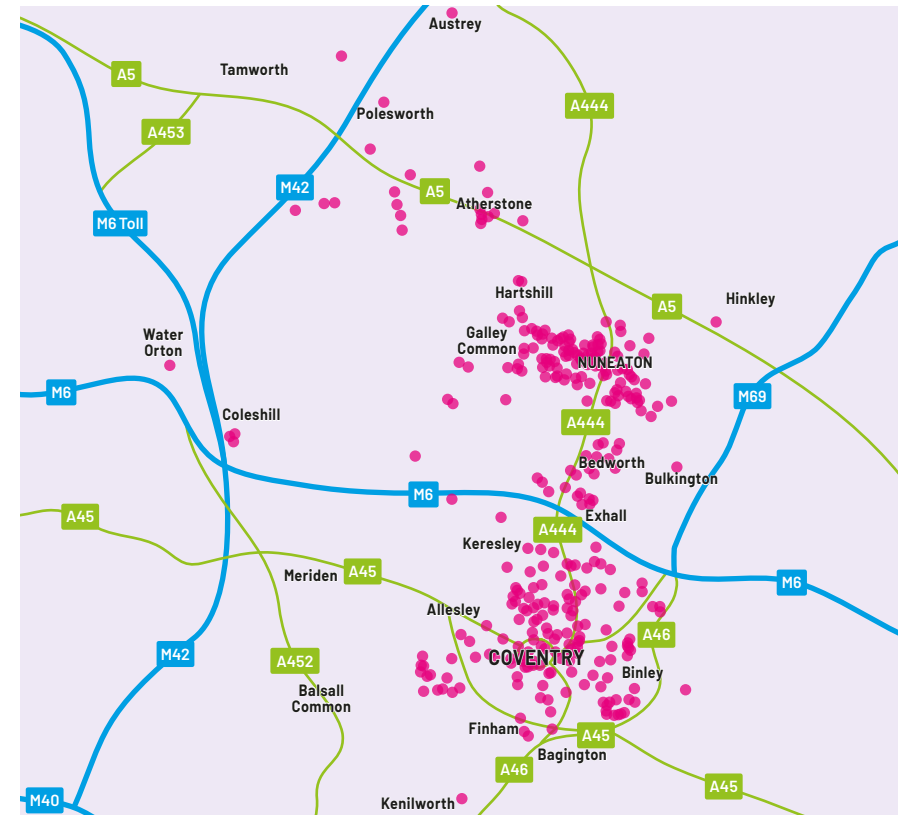
Almost **60%** (253) of the young people on the programme were **male**

Just over **25%** (112) of young people had achieved **five GCSEs grades A*-C**

81 young parents have been involved

84% identified as **White British**

Young people were drawn from across Coventry and Warwickshire...



In April 2018 the Young People's Panel identified the key ingredients that made Talent Match a success for young people in Coventry and Warwickshire. This is what they came up with...

A drizzle of reflection (3 monthly reviews)

A cup of the freedom to make choices and grow

A spoonful of empathy

A soupçon of celebrating success

Zero grams of judgement or stereotyping

An infusion of a supportive peer to peer Talent Match Community

Unlimited space to test and try new things

A generous measure of belief in us (me)

A spoonful of funding for travel

A clutch of tailored opportunities

A good measure of listening to our hopes, fears, dreams and ambitions

A shovelful of support

A regular sprinkle of incentives

A handful of fresh perspective

A large dollop of flexibility

A portion of positivity and barrier busting

A spoonful of fun

Lots of high quality staff

4 ½ cups of going the extra mile

Zero grams of pressure

Our recipe for success



TALENT MATCH

Coventry and Warwickshire




Mixing up the ingredients for a successful programme

1 Put young people's voices and influence at the heart of design and delivery

Young people were actively involved in the design of Talent Match Coventry and Warwickshire (TMCW) and have continued to be involved throughout the programme. They have contributed to the recruitment of staff, influenced decisions about activities on the programme and informed strategic decision-making in the Core Partnership.

The learning from Talent Match has influenced the way other young people's programmes in Coventry and Warwickshire are designed and delivered.

Approaches to supporting young people have matured as result of practical experience on the programme. You can read more about how that happened in the [full evaluation report](#)  [here](#).

Learning from TMCW shows that young people's engagement needs to be a core activity that is given both strategic and operational importance to achieve a successful programme.



Amy's story


Before Talent Match, Amy felt lonely and isolated, she experienced severe mental ill health and was too ill to look for work.

She felt very disorientated and unable to see a future for herself and expected to claim ESA for the rest of her life.

She hoped that Talent Match would help her to improve her chances – although she was scared that no-one would want to employ anyone who experienced mental ill health.

TMCW matched her up with a mentor with specialist skills and she worked with Amy to identify the steps she could take.

Amy improved her confidence, her time keeping and her people skills. She made her first friend through Talent Match and she is now employed as an apprentice mentor with the programme.

 [See Amy's story here](#)

Learning from what works...

- Involvement should not be tokenistic, seen as an add-on or used as a rubber stamping activity
- Invest in creating a range of ways for young people to engage and influence
- Remove barriers to participation in involvement activities, pay travel and other costs for young people to be involved
- Be clear about what you are asking young people to influence and be equally clear about what cannot be changed
- Make engagement activities fun and worthwhile – TMCW provides food for meetings, offers incentives for continued engagement, for example trips and outings, and mentors support young people to be involved
- Make sure young people know what has changed as a result of their involvement.

Engaging young people isn't just good for the programme, it is good for young people; it helps with confidence and communication skills, young people improve their CVs with what they have learnt, and it supports those young people who want to give something back.

Young People's Panel members have been offered peer mentoring training to recognise their learning with a formal qualification and to enable them to offer peer support to new participants entering the programme and extend their own skills sets.

2 Leadership, governance and strategic influence

The members of the Core Partnership provide strategic leadership and governance for the programme. The members reflect key local players, most of who have been consistently engaged in the programme from the start. They report back on learning about what works into their agencies so that information flows at both county and local levels.

Learning from the programme is fed into the Economy, Learning, Skills and Employability (ELSE) group in Coventry and has informed the development of new initiatives, such as the European-funded Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) programme.

The Core Partnership placed a high degree of trust in Talent Match staff, particularly the Project Coordinator, to deliver their aspirations for young people. What works is strong and confident



Kieran's story

Kieran left school after the first year of 'A' Levels not sure what he wanted to do.

His experience of looking for work was stressful and confusing. He applied for many jobs but didn't hear back from any of them and the experience really knocked his confidence.

Talent Match's mentoring process and regular reviews, along with help with travel costs, meant he could participate fully in the programme. As his confidence grew he got involved with the young people's steering group and became a Talent Match Ambassador.

With the help of Talent Match, Kieran has secured a 3-year paid apprenticeship with the Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC) a research and design institute in Coventry. Here Kieran will gain Advanced Level 3 qualifications and learn how to use robotics, CAD, 3-D printers and laser cutters while creating projects for the company.

 [See Kieran's story here](#)



Start where young people are at

84% of the young people that came to Talent Match had some form of work experience and over 55% had undertaken some form of volunteering.

Given that everyone joining the Talent Match programme was unemployed for 12 months, even where young people had some work or volunteering experience that in itself was not enough to secure ongoing sustained employment.

Although many young people had been looking for work before starting their Talent Match journey **over 23% weren't working and had not been actively looking for work in the 4 weeks prior to joining the programme.**

Barriers to work experienced by Talent Match participants...



33% (144) considered themselves to have a disability and **21%** (89) felt that their disability limited their activities



33% (142) experienced mental ill health with **24%** (103) young people receiving counselling through Talent Match



30% (133) experienced homelessness



10% (43) convicted for a criminal offence



8% (35) experienced drug dependency



4% (17) experienced alcohol dependency



Charley's story

When Charley joined Talent Match aged 24 she had never a job. She left school at 14 and at 18 she was pregnant with her daughter.

Charley found being a mum was a full-time job and when her daughter went to school she wanted to do something for herself.

Her mentor encouraged her to sign up for several courses and activities and she developed her confidence, interview techniques and people skills. She found the My Journey review process really helpful and she can really see how the support from TMCW has helped her move into work.

Charley is working as a crew member in McDonalds. She loves her job and is very happy there. She passed her probationary period with flying colours and 4 stars and has had lots of positive feedback about her contribution to the team.

She is happy and loving her life, she is looking forward to the future and is planning to further improve her maths and English skills.

 **See Charley's story [here](#)**

Talent Match Coventry and Warwickshire learnt that to work successfully with young people who need the most support programmes need to:

- Have a clear pathway through the service that young people move along at their own pace
- Support young people to deal with issues that present barriers to work first, such as poor confidence, health and wellbeing, housing or childcare
- It's hard to think about finding a job if you are worried about where you are going to sleep – **a significant issue given that 30% of young people on TMCW had experienced being homeless.**
- Go out and find the young people to join the programme – don't expect them to find you. TMCW found that peer-to-peer recruitment worked well and asked young people already on the programme to tell their friends about it, offering a 'finder's fee' when someone successfully joined. This approach reached young people not known to or involved with mainstream services.

This is particularly important given that 20% of young people were classed as 'hidden' in that they were not receiving benefits, not working, self-employed, on an apprenticeship or in formal education or training when they become involved with Talent Match.

- Go and get young people if they don't turn up for appointments – getting into a daily routine for working is important, recognise that young people can struggle with this and give them practical support to make changes.



The Talent Match Coventry and Warwickshire Pathway has **4 key components...**

STAGE 1 – All about you

Where young people find out about Talent Match, get matched with their personal mentor and meet other young people on the programme.

STAGE 2 – Getting involved

Developing confidence and motivation, gaining functional skills, counselling or professional mentoring where appropriate, a team building residential, programme engagement, activities and participation opportunities and regular progress reviews.

STAGE 3 – Moving on

Getting qualified, exploring further learning, vocational skills development, work placements, supported job search, visits to employers, getting to work – exploring transport solutions.

STAGE 4 – I'm there

Support for the next step into employment or learning, mentor keeps in touch to ensure success.

4 Design a flexible pathway and offer one-to-one mentoring

Mentoring and one-to-one support is at the heart of the Talent Match Coventry and Warwickshire model. Mentors were all young adults who could understand where young people were starting from and work from there.

At first, TMCW recruited peer mentors from target client groups as apprentices, often with little prior work experience, offering them a package of support and learning. This model was based on learning from a previous programme and for one young person it was a positive experience which helped her to grow and develop; for other peer mentors it wasn't the right time for them to take up the opportunity and they moved on to other things.

What works is recruiting mentors who are slightly older than the target beneficiaries, with more experience and training, who reflect the background of the client group and understand where young people on the programme are coming from.

Mentors need to be passionate about what they do and excited by the changes they see in young people. They need to be mindful and clear about boundaries, while not over-awed by the responsibilities and potential for influence inherent in their role. Experience of and qualifications in youth work while not essential, are helpful.



Rebekah's story

For Rebekah, an apprentice Peer Mentor, the experience of working with Talent Match has been life changing.

A combination of not knowing what she wanted to do, not knowing "where I fitted in", having no formal qualifications and being unemployed for 18 months had led to her becoming "seriously depressed."

After 18 months as an apprentice Peer Mentor she had an NVQ Level 3 in Youth Work and felt that Talent Match had enabled her to learn new skills, grow in confidence and "develop as a person". Following a formal recruitment process she took on a new role within Talent Match as a senior mentor.

 [See Rebekah's story here](#)

The pathway needs to be personalised and tailored to supporting each individual young person. A 'one size fits all' approach does not work as each young person will have a different journey and length of time on the pathway; some will need more time and support than others, for instance if they have been a long time away from work/formal education or training.

Many young people coming to Talent Match talked about how lack of confidence had stopped them from moving forward after school or college and what TMCW learnt is that these issues need to be addressed first before thinking about training, learning and employment issues.

It is important that young people's ambitions and aspirations are actively listened to and that mentors connect them to opportunities that are tailored to their own vision for the future. To create a good range of opportunities, work placements, activities and volunteer options on offer, staff built strong relationships with delivery partners and employers.

The local evaluation of Talent Match Coventry and Warwickshire undertook cost consequence case studies in 2017. As well as exploring how TMCW improved the life chances for young people, the case studies detailed the realities of life for each young person. They described the Talent Match interventions, listed the outcomes for each individual and set this against a cost analysis framework where savings were estimated using possible trajectories either identified by the young people themselves, or drawn from research and anecdotal evidence.



The case studies show how the programme not only moved people into or closer to work but helped them to address issues around confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing, mental health and social isolation.

 [Case studies are here](#)



Hugo's story

Hugo dropped out of college after a tough final year and spent the next 12 months at home. He found himself with little drive or motivation to do anything.

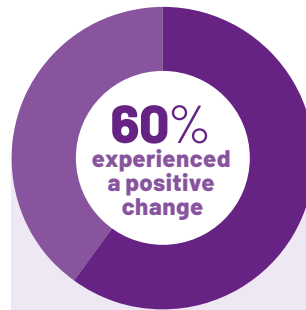
A referral from The Prince's Trust got him involved in Talent Match. Hugo found that conversations with his mentor offered him a new perspective not only on work but what he wanted to do with the rest of his life.

Through Talent Match Coventry and Warwickshire, he has made a network of friends and with support from them and his mentor has been able to push himself and is enjoying challenging himself to try new things.

He volunteers with the Nuneaton and Bedworth Healthy Living Network and enjoys being part of this group, learning how to prepare healthy food and snacks.

 [See Hugo's story here](#)

Many young people attributed improvements in their **health and wellbeing** to being involved with TMCW...



Having worthwhile things in my life



Satisfaction with life



Communication skills



Working with others



Happiness yesterday



Anxiety



Setting and achieving goals



Managing feelings



Confidence



Reliability



Sundip's story

Getting involved in Talent Match helped Sundip to identify his long-term career goal of being a fireman and take his first steps into work.

He had support with getting his Maths GCSE and with travel costs, as well as opportunities in the workplace and to take part in fun activities.

He had counselling to come to terms with the death of his father and his mother's illness.

 [See Sundip's story here](#)

5 Make sure commissioning delivers individually tailored opportunities designed to meet young people's needs

The commissioning of support services has been a learning process for TMCW. Initially providers were recruited to a delivery framework using a cost per head contract. However, with its individually tailored approach, Talent Match found it hard to fill places on generic courses and providers found it difficult to offer something different on a one-off basis without the financial security of guaranteed minimum numbers. As a consequence, young people could not access the activities and support services they needed.

TMCW learnt that to meet young people's complex needs what works are higher value mini-contracts that allow young people to join existing or specifically designed activities, many of which were not part of the 'standard' courses on offer when Talent Match first developed its commissioning framework.

These smaller but more bespoke contracts required a detailed procurement process that allowed Talent Match to involve young people directly in commissioning. Most of the commissioned provision eventually stemmed from young people's requests, as channelled through the mentors to the Project Co-ordinator and then acted upon.



Aneil's story

Aneil didn't know what he wanted to do when he left school.

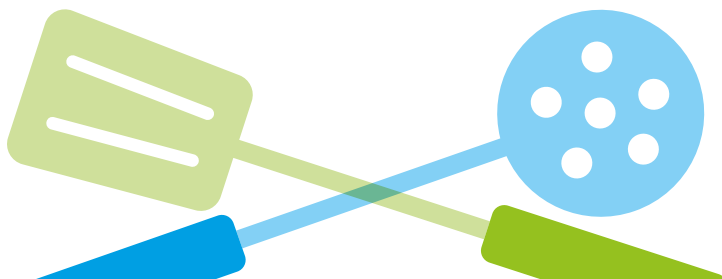
The Job Shop in Coventry suggested he tried TMCW and the courses and programmes that he took there, such as Motorvate and Imagineers helped him to develop as a person.

He became more open to trying new things and now understands when things don't work out you just have to keep trying and not give up!

Through TMCW he got a job in food retail which he really enjoyed.

He later moved to another role in food retail and is looking forward to the future knowing he has the skills to do things for himself.

 [See Aneil's story here](#)



Talent Match offered individually tailored support and their experience shows that this approach is not necessarily costlier in the long term. It does require doing things differently and accepting that this may incur an increased initial investment. It also requires building relationships with a range of providers and really understanding what they can do and how this matches young people's needs.

This more nuanced and mature commissioning approach was developed by the programme in recognition that what was needed were innovative services delivered by locally invested organisations who understood how to work with young people with multiple barriers to work and training.

TMCW also built relationships with several key local employers who offered work placement opportunities through which some young people got jobs.



Callum's story

Callum's depression started at school and although he had completed college before he joined Talent Match he didn't have any work experience.

He started on his journey through Talent Match by getting involved in social events, the young people's steering group and residential.

When he felt ready, he received tailored support from one of TMCW delivery partners Imagineers.

He found mentoring, tailored support and getting involved in activities with other young people helped him to meet new people and understand more about them, combat his depression and "break him out of his bubble."

Callum went on to work in a restaurant – a job he found with Talent Match Coventry and Warwickshire's help.

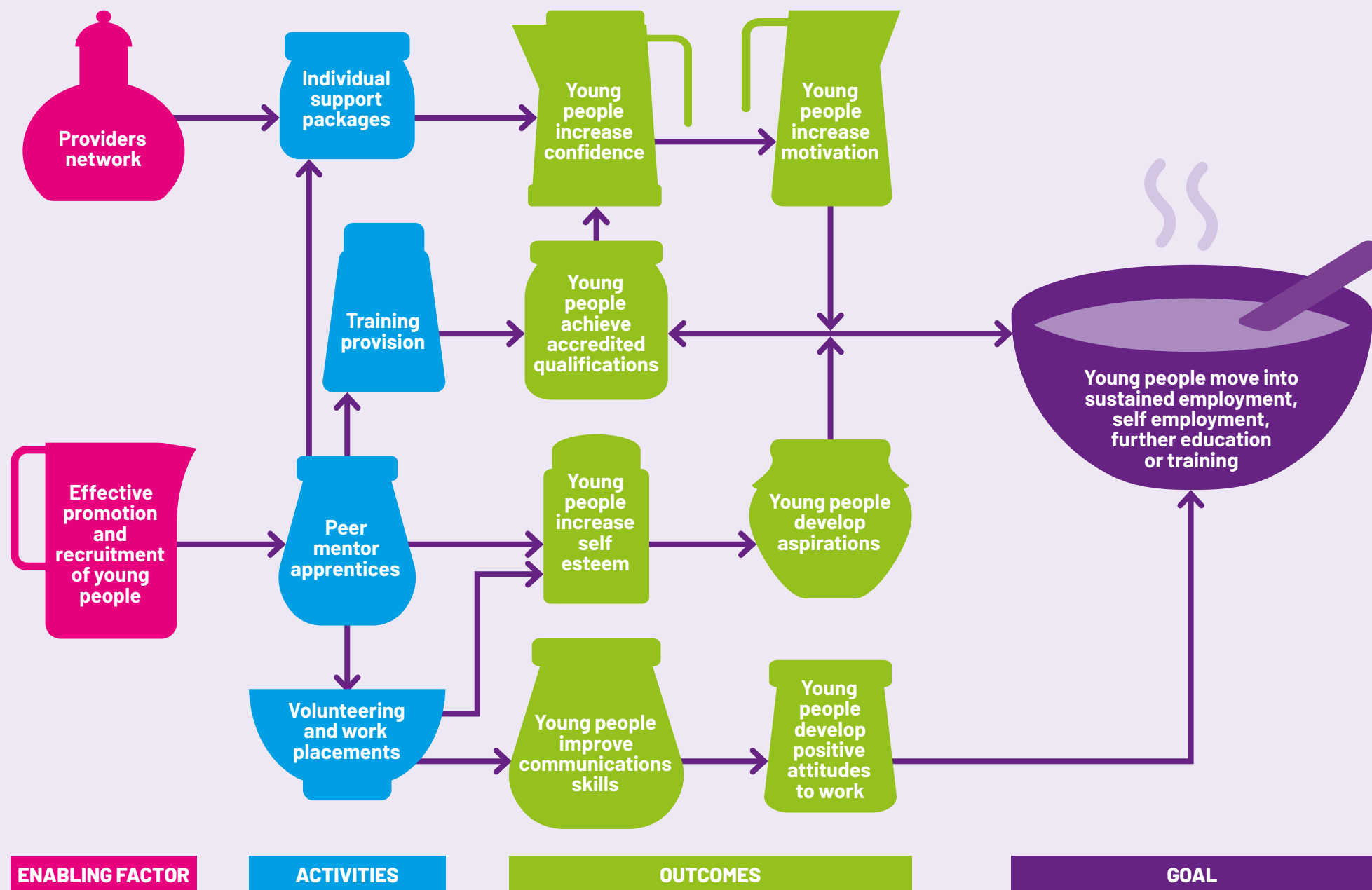
 **See Callum's story [here](#)**

6 Learn from what works

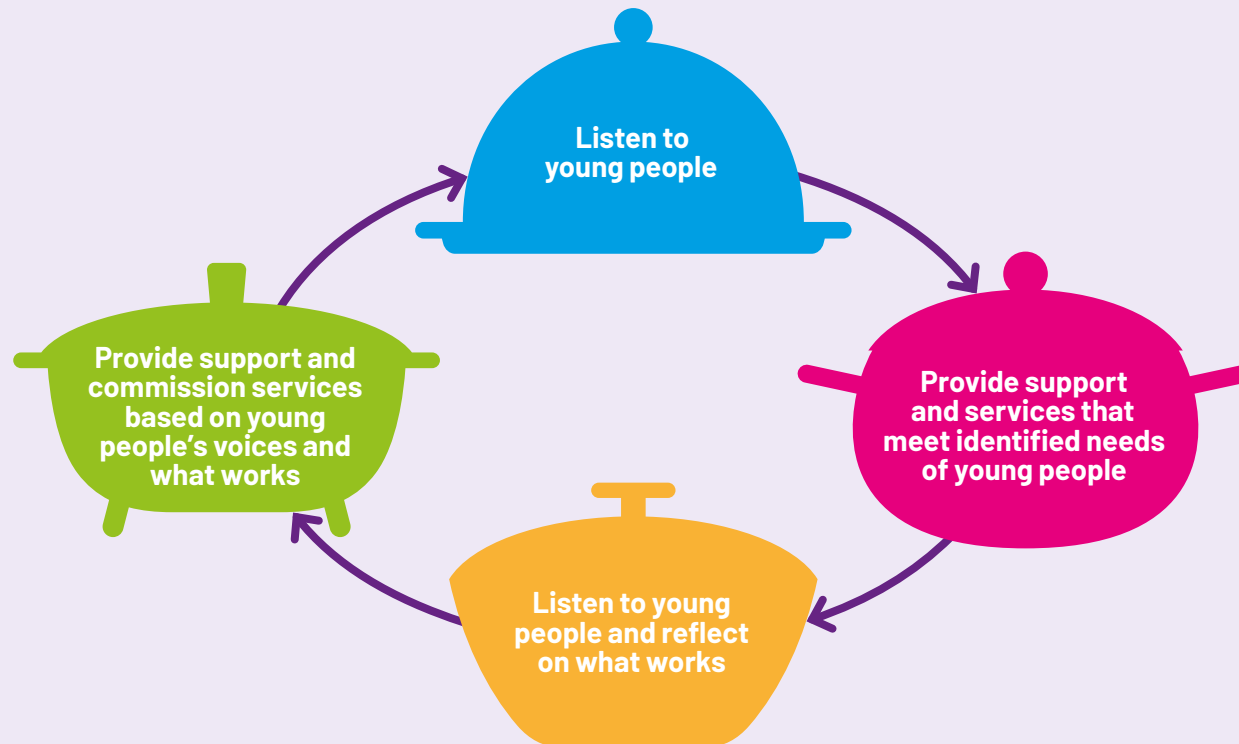
Talent Match Coventry and Warwickshire used a Theory of Change (ToC) as a working tool to help identify how to deliver outcomes for young people. Designed initially with the local evaluators, the Project Co-ordinator and delivery team used the ToC as a live tool to support learning and reflection.



Theory of change for Talent Match Coventry and Warwickshire



Talent Match listen and act cycle



Key to success is having a positive approach to in-programme learning and the will and capacity to act on it. Both the the Core Partnership and the programme delivery team engaged in open on-going conversations about how well the programme was doing in terms of meeting young people's needs and aspirations. This, combined with the ability to decide on and implement improvements quickly, with the minimum of disruption to delivery, saw changes implemented, tested and refined across the life of the programme.

7 Remove physical barriers to accessing work and learning opportunities

Young people in parts of the TMCW area have limited access to public transport, particularly those living in rural areas. Many young people do not live near to job opportunities and this in itself can prove to be an insurmountable barrier to working.

These young people need to find alternative forms of transport but do not have the money to pay for driving lessons or taxis. Talent Match helped with travel costs and supported young people with travel needs as they moved into work.

Talent Match used a 'mopeds into work' scheme that allowed young people to bridge the transport gap. As a result, take up of the programme has been good in rural areas.





Sabrina's story

Sabrina thought it would be easy to get a job after she left school – but this wasn't the case. She felt that school didn't really prepare her for getting into work and her depression and anxiety made job hunting even harder.

Talent Match helped Sabrina to build her skills and her confidence and when she got a retail job Talent Match funded her bus pass so that she could get to work. They then funded a Compulsory Basic Training motorcycle course and she got a moped which made her independent and made getting into work on time much easier.

Because she was happier and more confident she felt that she was a better parent. She said, "I'm a mum who can provide for her child. I pay my own bills and I can pay my own way."

Sabrina knows what her future looks like and she is excited about it. She knows that focusing on setting goals for herself will help her reach her potential.

 [See Sabrina's story here](#)

8 Celebrate success

TMCW made sure to celebrate the successes of young people and regular 3 monthly reviews gave them time to reflect on the progress they were making. Annual formal awards ceremonies were held to recognise

and reward young people's achievements. These events were organised jointly by young people and staff and were attended by strategic partners and local dignitaries.



Acknowledgements

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