



OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED IN PAC

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Enis, Cora Rooney, Sarah Tatham, and Jacqueline Dodding from The Centre for Children and Young People's Participation at the University of Central Lancashire and Institute for Connected Communities, University of East London.

SUMMARY

The Peer Action Collective, supported young people aged 10–25 to conduct research and social action related to youth violence. This was a diverse network (20–40% of young people were BAME, and more than 10% of young researchers were disabled). More than 75% of the projects took place in the most deprived parts of England and Wales. This is a summary of outcomes for the 170 peer researchers and 1379 changemakers involved.

New skills were gained by at least 90% of peer researchers and more than 90% of changemakers including:

- Research and communication.
- Professionalism and employability.
- Youthwork.

Confidence, increased for at least 80% of peer researchers and changemakers

“I know a lot of us probably weren't the people we are now when we started, ... a lot of our confidence and a lot of our ability ... has been heightened and increased by being involved in the project”.

New opportunities were experienced by at least 80% of peer researchers and 97% of changemakers who responded to the survey, including accessing education, training, career development, volunteering and meeting new young people.

“It has given me some of the best opportunities I've ever had in my life. I have met tons of great people. I have had fun learning what it is like to be a youth worker. It has been an overall great experience”.

More than 80% of young people gained an increased understanding of social action. More than 90% of young people reported a commitment to ongoing involvement in social action.

They increased their understanding of decision making, political power and how to do social action.

“I feel like now I would know how to go about it if I felt so passionate about something. ...And about how it works, what's like the safe way of doing things”.

INTRODUCTION

What was PAC?

The Peer Action Collective (PAC) is a £5.2 million programme, which aims to give young people the chance to make their communities safer, fairer places to live. It is funded by the Youth Endowment Fund, the #iwill Fund (a joint investment between The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport) and the Co-op Group.

PAC was set up in 2021 to create a network of young people resourced to lead research and take action on issues related to youth violence. They worked in 10 areas of England and Wales, each supported by a Delivery Partnership.

As learning partners, we collaborated with the peer researchers and delivery partners to record and share experiences and cocreate resources. This is a report of what was learned about outcomes for young people engaged in the programme.

What outcomes did we look for?

We developed a framework of indicators that included the funders requirements, as well as indicators created in collaboration with young people at the start of the programme. This developed during discussions in a monthly peer researcher led forum meetings and focus groups.

What data is used for this report?

Data includes findings from five quarterly cycles of reporting:

- Monitoring returns sent in monthly by delivery partners.
- Online questionnaires (conducted with Peer Researchers (PRs) at multiple time points and with changemakers (CMs) and early leavers from the programme at the end of their engagement).
- Repeat focus group discussions with PRs in all 10 DPs.
- Interviews with 26 PRs¹.

¹ Peer Researchers (PRs) completed a survey (129/17) completed at the beginning, 88 middle and 59 at the end of the project). 178 changemakers completed a survey towards the end of their engagement. 21 young people completed an early exit survey. PRs attended repeat reflective focus groups in every DP (online and face to face). A sample of young people (26), including young people who were less vocal in group situations, were interviewed in the last two months of the programme. 24 young people took part in a creative evaluation activity at the closing event. Delivery partner coordination staff engaged in monthly repeat interviews.

Proportions are used instead of percentages when we are reporting qualitative data from 26 interviews. This is phrases such as *“PRs in 8 DPs (and the vast majority of these in 4 DPs)”* are based on double coded qualitative data where young people have explicitly named these skills/experiences.

1. NEW SKILLS AND OPPORTUNITIES

1.1 New Skills

New skills were gained by at least 90% of peer researchers. Skills increased for PRs in all 10 DPs. In interviews, more than 1 in 9 of the PRs reported new skills.

More than 90% of changemakers reported new skills and opportunities. In the CM survey 94% reported that they had gained new skills; 97% reported gaining access to new opportunities.

In the exit survey all PRs and CMs described building skills during their involvement in the project.

Research, creativity and planning skills

- In 10/10 DPs, PRs described a deeper understanding of research.
- In the survey, the proportion of PRs confident in research methods increased from 47% to 71%.
- Confidence in questioning findings rose; confidence in problem solving remained stable.
- New skills in research, creativity, planning, determination, collaboration and research technicalities were highlighted.

PRs described these **increases in research skills** in the following ways:

“A lot of what I've done now I hadn't done before, like interviews, learning about like the types of questions ...just stuff like data protection, that kind of thing ... all that is like been new to me”.

Young people described the emotional labour of doing PAC, learning how to work in a trauma informed way, and how to show empathy when discussing difficult subjects and experiences. Others described creative engagement, planning, determination, collaboration and attention consent.

“ I sort of put together an event with my host organisation ... to get my last five interviews [done] and ... to help my colleague complete all his interviews. ... that one was a key highlight because not only does it show, you know, our determination to get these young people together, it shows our planning skills ... and it also shows I guess collaborative skills ... He was handing out the consent forms, I was collecting the consents ... whilst we were playing the games”.

Transferable skills

- In 10/10 DPs, PRs professionalism and employability increased.
- In 10/10 DPs, PRs communication skills improved.
- In 9/10 DPs, PRs described gaining youth work skills.
- A few PRs described developing their independent living skills.

PRs talked about an increase in their **professionalism and employability** skills as they *'treated [PAC] as a job'*, saying they have *'grown professionally from it'*.

“I've, I stood out to employers and people because I've worked on this great project that, you know, impacting lives and helping people”.

“It's improved my ... project management, planning and time management skills”.

Increased **communications skills** started to develop from the very start of the programme, and were frequently mentioned in PR focus group discussions.

"I'm not usually someone who'd go out of my way to talk to people like that. And yeah, it was, it was weird at first, but ... it just got a lot more easy. I got, I was a lot more comfortable talking to young people. I got more comfortable speaking in front of, I guess, grant makers to, you know, put in different grants and it was a good experience".

PRs described growing **strengths in youth work** which linked to communication and research skills.

"I am focussing a lot on youth work and visiting the college with the surveys was very beneficial. This really helped me with my communication skills and I've really developed in terms of email formatting and the language I use with professionals".

Increased **independent living skills** were described by some young people who had been struggling for independence prior to PAC:

"It's definitely been a learning curve, especially after lockdown. All my social skills were absolutely barbecued after two years of not talking to anyone, ... so it was definitely a learning period there trying to get back into society".

1.2 Confidence

Confidence increased for at least 80% of peer researchers. Confidence increased for more than 8 out of 10 PRs in the interview sample and this increase was described by PRs in 10/10 DPs. In the PR survey comparison over time (of the young people

who did not start by rating themselves at the top of the scale) 80% showed an in improvement.

Confidence increased significantly for at least 80% of changemakers. 80% of CM reported a difference in their confidence from the start of their involvement to the time of completing the survey. There was a significant change in levels of confidence overall, rising from an average of 4.89 out of 10 to an average of 7.56 out of 10².

Young people developed **confidence in themselves**. In 8/10 DPs, PRs described changes in understanding of themselves and their situations. In 8/10 DPs, PRs also described feeling more hopeful for their own futures and their communities.

"I feel like so much has changed. I feel like I've become such a different person as a result of this project. I'm such a confident person now. Like I'm not afraid to speak and have my voice heard. ...Especially I have social anxiety, so knowing that always like makes me worried. But since doing this project, I have felt like, I mean, actually I'm very valued. I'm an important person, whereas before I felt like I'm just another young person. We're not really thought about".

Some young people described their growth in confidence as related to an **increased ability to be assertive**:

"I've learnt from this that I need to kind of be assertive in terms of like my experience and like, who I am. And I need to assert my capabilities and experience and my potential and kind of not let other people disempower me".

² (t(157) = 15.08, p < .001; At start – Mean rating = 4.89, SD = 2.56; At time of completing the survey – Mean = 7.56, SD = 1.93)

1.3 New Opportunities

New opportunities were experienced by at least 80% of peer researchers. The majority (88%) of PRs in the survey also described new opportunities, and these were reported in monitoring data. This is echoed in the qualitative interviews in which nearly 8 of 10 PRs reported accessing new opportunities.

In the survey 97% of CMs reported that they had gained access to new opportunities from taking part in the PAC project.

“It has given me some of the best opportunities I’ve ever had in my life. I have met tons of great people. I have had fun learning what it is like to be a youth worker. It has been an overall great experience”.

Employment, training, education and career development

- 71 PRs and CM took up employment during PAC.
- 130 PRs and CM took up training and education opportunities.
- In 7/10 DPs, PRs described accessing further or higher education.
- In 8/10 DPs, PRs described following new ambitions.

PR training was provided throughout the programme, in 383 different sessions. The target of "at least 80 YP completing training by January 2022" was reached and exceeded early in the programme.

For some young people, their **new employment opportunities** were greater than they could have imagined:

“I think PAC was the thing that gave me the confidence to go out and get this job. I now have the skills that I learned. ... I'm proud of...putting myself ... outside my comfort zone. But in the long run, it helps me get where I am.... A year ago I was working at a shop and a cafe. I had two jobs a year ago. Now I am an events assistant”.

In the monitoring data 130 young people were reported as taking up **training and education opportunities**. PRs in 7 DPs described further or higher education opportunities during and on leaving PAC. Taken together, the survey and qualitative data show PR enthusiasm for taking up training at the beginning of the programme, suggest a feeling that at the end they had learned a lot that they needed to enter into employment and higher education on leaving PAC.

For some young people PAC had brought about **new ambitions or opportunities** for education, particularly in relation to youth work.

“PAC has changed my life because, before I started the project, I had no idea about youth violence or even about young people and 18 months down the line I am doing a Masters in Youth and Community Work”.

“The best thing that PAC has given me is the opportunity to apply for the police, and I've reached that goal and I feel like I've reached it only because of PAC. Because when I went to my final interviews, like, ... I knew so many things about just young people, how they are working in prisons. I feel like I knew so much stuff”.

The fact that not all young people have described a pathway into employment or education is not necessarily negative, as some were busy throughout with other activities alongside PAC.

“my main focus right now is finishing my A levels and I guess university that would be the next, or an apprenticeship depending on the offers that I get, ...I guess going about my life and earning a degree and sort of looking forward to a career ... I'm open minded to different opportunities that come”.

Leading, peer mentoring and meeting new young people

Nearly 90% of peer researchers reported experiences of leadership or mentoring. In the Survey 75% of PRs described being part of the governance of the project to some or a great extent. Also, 87.5% PRs described being offered clear opportunities to mentor other young people and lead work with them.

In all DPs peer researchers described meeting new young people. This was a particularly important goal for young people at the start of the programme.

Peer researchers described developing greater bonds with the young people in their own research group, with many young people describing their PAC group as like family:

"I think for everyone who joins PAC [in the future] I want them to know, it may look intimidating. But once you build a bond with your team and with your friends ... you see them as a second family. I know that is cheesy. But I will leave it like that".

Many peer researchers described connections made with other young people including with young people in other parts of their cities and the UK.

"You know, [this] is such a big city and you hear different stories actually. Lots of things were in common but we heard lots of different stories from different sides of the city".

"I think it's really humbling ...I think with the pandemic literally just happening. A lot of people are missing those like connections. And ... it is moving that once somebody else opens up to, to you, like that, you know? ... I still think it's a privilege ... and it is gonna keep me motivated to be involved in changing the world".

“I feel actually very connected ... [because] organisations from different parts of the UK just come together. And for me, it just felt like a whole big family, different branches coming together who do the same work but in different ways, different approaches. ...it felt good”.

Volunteering and other opportunities

During the programme, peer researchers and changemakers took up 60 volunteering opportunities outside of PAC. Few took up volunteering as they left, but young people in 4 DPs described plans for future volunteering, mainly as volunteer youth workers.

Young people took part in a wide range of other opportunities.

“It’s really opened up lots of opportunities to find out things we would never know without doing this job”.

Other opportunities reported as taken up by peer researchers and changemakers within and outside of PAC each quarter

Opportunities	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	TOTAL
KickStarter programme	1	2	2	1	1	1	8
Apprenticeship	0	0	0	2	1	1	4
Peer mentoring	0	2	26	2	14	6	50
Volunteering	2	8	7	15	23	5	60
Co-op membership	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
Research participants becoming Changemakers	0	15	30	55	97	161	358
Travelling outside of their locality as part of PAC	16	31	54	50	64	61	276

2. YOUNG PEOPLE INFLUENCING CHANGE

2.1 Diverse and representative network

This was a diverse network of peer researchers. The cumulative total of young people involved in a PR role throughout the programme was 170. Most young people were aged 17 and 20 years. There tended to be slightly more female participants than male and a consistent 2% who identified as non-binary. The goal of achieving at least 20% representation of BAME young people was consistently exceeded, with the proportion of BAME young people rising in some quarters to over 40%. Also in every quarter, more than 10% of peer researchers identified disabled.

Changemakers were also very diverse. By the end of the programme 1379 young people had been recruited into this role. The majority were aged 10 to 16. There tended to be slightly more female participants than male and up to 4% per quarter identified as non-binary. The goal of achieving at least 20% representation of BAME young people was exceeded. Between 2%-13% of changemakers per quarter identified as disabled

More than 75% of projects took place in the most deprived locations in England and Wales.

See the appendix at the end of this report for details of this diversity.

2.2 Supported to drive change

More than 80% of young people gained an increased understanding of social action. In interviews, nearly 9 out of 10 PRs reported increased knowledge of how to do social action. 82% of CMs reported increased knowledge of how to do social action. The difference in CM knowledge of social action from their start of

their involvement to the end was significant, rising on a 10 point scale from an average of 4.7 to 7.6³.

More than 90% of young people reported a commitment to ongoing social action. In the final survey 94.8% of peer researchers expressed the intention to continue with ongoing social action. In the survey, 96% of CMs felt prepared and motivated to take action for social change.

- In 10/10 DPs, PRs gained knowledge on youth violence, particularly in relations to intersectionality and the role of place.
- In 7/10 DPs, PRs gained knowledge of decision making, and some critical insights into power.
- 88% of PRs reported being given opportunities to inform local, regional or national strategies to a high extent.

Increased understanding of decision making

This included, in some cases young people learning that some policy makers are committed and will listen:

“I think because it comes across that they actually care about what they're saying and they value what we're saying. I think that's instilled a lot of confidence in us and what we're doing and who's really helped our project along. So, I just want to add that like having that relationship with [policy unit] has been really like beneficial”.

Some young people gained awareness of how political power operates:

“Well, in my opinion, it would all come down to, I guess, policymakers. I think they're the ones with, I guess, the power to sort of implement the change that we want to make, and I think that's been part of, a

³ (t(157) = 15.08, p < .001; At start – Mean rating = 4.71, SD = 2.68; At time of completing the survey – Mean = 7.64, SD = 1.99)

huge part of, what we're trying to do at PAC. ... And for things to be done about it, it's got to come from, not just ourselves as people, we've got power as well, the young people have also got power, but at the, at the top, I think its policymakers”.

Some increased critical awareness that political systems should be offering more.

“We deserve better than old men sitting in a fancy building talking about taxes rather than issues that are actually important and affect people in so many different places”.

Learning how to do social action

Young people described sometimes having had no previous experience of social action. Other PRs with some previous involvement in social action, described PAC as a different form of social action.

“I think probably with PAC showing me a different side of social action projects, not necessarily having to go out and take a group of people out to do different things in the community, but actually ... going out and doing *group sessions*. It's not necessarily what our typical sort of that NCS⁴ social action project would have been”.

Some PRs continued to lack understanding of social action, which can perhaps be explained by communication and terminology. For example, one PR described not being aware of the bespoke training provided in this area. Another PR described being unaware that campaigning is a form of social action.

⁴ National Citizens Service

Plans to engage in further social action were mainly motivated by a desire to continue to make a difference for young people.

"I really wanna continue working with young people, so I feel like ...a youth group or something where ...we could like talk about changes that need to be done, making those connections ...And then getting like a plan together, taking it to parliament or something. Really getting these young people to get involved and get their voices heard to make this country a young person first place".

"I'm being more cautious around my community. Personally, I didn't realize the situation was still quite as bad as when I was growing up, but at the same time, if I see someone in trouble, I'm more outgoing with it, and I try to actively help them rather than sitting in the sidelines".

2.3 Helping other young people have a say

- In 10/10 DPs, the majority of PRs felt they were making a difference

Feeling they are making a difference

Making a difference by helping other young people have a say was an indicator of change that young people prioritised in the creation of the evaluation framework.

"You feel like you've made an impact within society ... Even if you made a difference for one person out of like 100 is still made a difference".

"I've just been able to see like that children can actually take part in that, you know, like seeing their eyes lit up when they realise, you know, the grant [was] put in place [for] what they wanna do".

"The Council was like starting taking us seriously and saying, you know, they've actually got no panel ...Our project actually decide to step up. Come, go, all the way [to the Council] ... and we were like "You know, this is our project, this is what we found out. This is what the Council needs to do. This is what young people want". And I feel like that was one of our biggest steps being taken".

Getting young people's voices heard

Hearing and sharing young people's views was an achievement repeatedly reported in the final celebration event. PAC was seen as a way of achieving this for PRs, CMs and research participants.

"I feel like a lot of young people were extremely excited to get their voices heard".

"I want to tell other people that it's super important to have your voice heard. And PAC is like the way forward I think for young people to be able to have their voices heard.

"It has been so unbelievable and so fun and be productive. I never, ever, ever in my life, expected things to be like this. I think the impact that we are doing for the young people really means a lot. And yeah, there is no work that is more rewarding than this, like changing the future for the younger generation".

3. DEMOGRAPHIC TABLES ABOUT MEMBERSHIP OF THE DIVERSE PAC NETWORK

Table A1 – Distribution of peer researcher ethnicity across quarters

Ethnicity	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
White	43 (57%)	83 (65%)	72 (54%)	74 (57%)	72 (58%)	62 (53.2%)
Black	12 (16%)	17 (13%)	24 (18%)	28 (22%)	27 (22%)	22 (20.2%)
Asian	8 (11%)	14 (11%)	14 (11%)	15 (12%)	15 (12%)	17 (15.6%)
Mixed	6 (8%)	10 (8%)	6 (5%)	8 (6%)	8 (6%)	4 (3.7%)
Any other group	4 (5%)	3 (2%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	3 (2.8%)
BAME (Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic)	30 41%	33 34%	46 35%	52 41%	50 40%	46 (42.3%)
Prefer not to say	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
Missing data	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	14 (11%)	2 (2%)	5 (2%)	1 (0.9%)
Total	75 (100%)	127 (100%)	133 (100%)	129 (100%)	125 (100%)	109 (100%)

Table A2 – Peer researcher disability status per quarter

Disability	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
Disabled	18 (25%)	19 (15%)	17 (13%)	20 (16%)	18 (14%)	16 (14.7%)
Non-disabled	56 (75%)	104 (82%)	90 (68%)	96 (74%)	56 (45%)	64 (58.7%)
Prefer not to say	0 (0%)	4 (3%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (9.2%)

Missing data	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	25 (19%)	13 (10%)	51 (41%)	19 (17.4%)
Total	75 (100%)	127 (100%)	133 (100%)	129 (100%)	125 (100%)	109 (100%)

Table A3 – Distribution of changemaker ethnicity by quarter

Ethnicity	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
White	0 (0%)	8 (13%)	52 (30%)	193 (54%)	189 (20%)	533 (43%)
Black	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	22 (13%)	36 (10%)	163 (17%)	138 (11%)
Asian	0 (0%)	12 (19%)	18 (11%)	25 (7%)	93 (10%)	91 (7%)
Mixed	0 (0%)	8 (13%)	3 (2%)	3 (1%)	23 (2%)	35 (3%)
Any other group	0 (0%)	4 (6%)	3 (2%)	2 (1%)	9 (1%)	17 (1%)
BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic)	0 (0%)	24 (38%)	46 (27%)	66 (18%)	288 (30%)	281 (23%)
Prefer not to say	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	6 (4%)	3 (1%)	23 (2%)	39 (3%)
Missing data	0 (0%)	6 (9%)	21 (12%)	29 (8%)	162 (17%)	97 (8%)
Total	0 (0%)	64 (100%)	171 (100%)	357 (100%)	950 (100%)	1231 (100%)

Table A4 – Changemakers disability status per quarter

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
Disabled	0 (0%)	2 (6%)	2 (2%)	35 (12%)	40 (6%)	127 (13%)
Non-disabled	0 (0%)	18 (50%)	25 (21%)	196 (68%)	342 (50%)	465 (46%)
Prefer not to say	0 (0%)	10 (28%)	2 (2%)	2 (1%)	75 (11%)	222 (22%)
Missing variables	0 (0%)	6 (17%)	92 (76%)	57 (20%)	227 (33%)	191 (19%)
Total	0 (0%)	36 (100%)	121 (100%)	290 (100%)	684 (100%)	1005 (100%)

Table A5 – Project locations in each deprivation deciles in each quarter

Deprivation deciles	Number of locations in each deprivation deciles in each quarter			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
1	6 (22.2%)	6 (30%)	16 (33.3%)	31 (32.3%)
2	7 (25.9%)	3 (15%)	4 (8.3%)	26 (27.1%)
3	5 (18.5%)	1 (5%)	7 (14.6%)	14 (14.6%)
4	2 (7.4%)	2 (10%)	7 (14.6%)	9 (9.4%)
5	2 (7.4%)	3 (15%)	5 (10.4%)	6 (6.25%)
6	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)
7	2 (7.4%)	3 (15%)	3 (6.25%)	2 (2.1%)
8	2 (7.4%)	2 (10%)	5 (10.4%)	5 (5.2%)
9	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)
10	1 (3.7%)	0 (0%)	1 (2.1%)	1 (1%)
Total locations	27 (100%)	20 (100%)	48 (100%)	96 (100%)