

# EVALUATION OF SALMON YOUTH CENTRE APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME: 2018

“The Salmon Youth Centre apprenticeship scheme has established a unique knowledge base and strong skills for delivering successful outcomes with disadvantaged young people.. Given the scheme’s successful track record and the projects capacity to deliver real value for money there are clear grounds for expanding and doubling the capacity of the apprenticeship scheme.

Dr Richard Slade  
January 2019

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# **YOUNG LEADER PROGRAMME SALMON APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME EVALUATION 2018**

## **INTRODUCTION.**

Salmon Youth Centre (SYC) based in Bermondsey, in the London Borough of Southwark, receives funding from the Big Lottery (BL) to provide a Young Leaders Program. This program includes the provision of apprenticeships for disadvantaged young people and a condition of funding is that the apprenticeship scheme is independently evaluated. This report sets out the findings conclusions and recommendations arising from an independent evaluation of the apprenticeship scheme undertaken by Dr Richard Slade between May and November 2018. This evaluation and its report build on a similar project undertaken by Dr Slade in 2015.

The report begins with an executive summary followed by an outline of the parameters of BL funding and the evaluation scope. It then provides a contextual background summary of SYC's positioning in universal youth services together with a brief profile of the Southwark community. The report moves to describe the evaluation methodology and summarises key outcomes of the 2015 evaluation as a benchmark against which to assess progress.<sup>1,2</sup> The report then sets out a discussion of the 2018 evaluation analysis and findings and concludes with a series of recommendations based on these findings.

The overall tone of the evaluation report, findings and recommendations are positive. This results from close and careful analysis of evaluation data that validate the report's contents.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Grateful thanks to the staff and managers of SYC for their enthusiastic support of the evaluation, Dr Madeleine Mosse for her generous help with interviews and to Ms Elana Mosse for her patience with interview transcriptions.

A 'big thank you' to all the Salmon Youth Centre Apprentices who engaged with the evaluation in such an articulate, enthusiastic and cooperative manner.

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<sup>1</sup> Slade, R. 2015. *Evaluation of an Apprenticeship Scheme Provided by the Salmon Youth Centre, Bermondsey*. Salmon Youth Centre

<sup>2</sup> Slade, R. Fisher, P. Steels, S. Mosse, M. *Resilience and Young People; an Evaluation of a Youth and Community Work Apprenticeship Scheme*. Available at <https://www.academia.edu/>

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY. SALMON APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME  
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This evaluation, which followed a similar exercise to that carried out in 2015, set out to address 2 key questions

1. What was working well in relation to the apprenticeship scheme from the perspective of individual participants and what could be improved?
2. Was the apprenticeship equipping young people with skills and expectations that would enhance opportunities to build successful careers and lives?

**What was working well.**

3. A major finding of the 2015 evaluation was the importance of SYC's values and policies of 'sticking with' people from disrupted and often chaotic backgrounds, who frequently demonstrate behaviour which challenges services. This policy is continuing to pay dividends. The evaluation firmly endorses SYC's enactment of its values in deliberately setting out to engage youngsters who might be considered 'hard to reach'.
4. The emotional, financial and social cost of failing to engage with needy youngsters is evident across the UK in the lives of young people who have not had the opportunity of taking part in a scheme such as this one. Against this background the apprenticeship program continues to represent excellent value for money.
5. Some apprentices had loving and supportive families but poor experience of educational achievement because of learning difficulties. Other apprentices had additional needs arising from experiences such as disrupted family backgrounds, homelessness and imprisonment. Set against this context there was clear evidence that engagement with the SYC community and staff through the apprenticeship scheme enabled life chances to be developed and realised.
6. For all the apprentices there was a significant positive difference between their lives in the present and their past. Apprentices who had completed the scheme during the period of the evaluation had developed a clear sense of career direction and a more settled life. The majority had implemented practical plans for working with children and young people.
7. There was clear evidence identified during the evaluation of apprentices developing personal resilience that moved them away from destructive life cycles. SYC's ethos of enabling trust and responsibility within a strong team work ethos was described by a number of interviewees as a maturing experience. The evaluation strongly supports this view.

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8. Becoming settled in communities and having access to public transport meant apprentices were well placed to take advantage of the scheme.
9. The evaluation found that each apprentice now 'owned' a network of individuals able to provide them with help and support. Equally importantly, apprentices knew when to ask for support.
10. Apprentices were developing important life skills in terms of self-organisation, time management and staying calm which are likely to be valuable in transferring to their personal lives and future career opportunities.
11. The apprenticeship scheme provides an opportunity, unique in the lives of some, to make a contribution, to help others and in doing so receive positive feedback which develops and enhances self-esteem and a sense of achievement. The practical youth work skills which enabled this to happen were developed through personal motivation and modelling behaviour on that of other members of the experienced staff team. This gave apprentices the opportunity to develop new and professional ways of interacting with children and young people.
12. Given growing levels of need amongst young people, SYC may wish to consider a more focused marketing and targeting of the apprenticeship scheme on those with actual or potential interest in youth work.

**What could be improved**

13. Areas for immediate improvement discussed in the evaluation findings are:
  - a. NVQ tutoring
  - b. Exit planning
14. Areas for improvement discussed in the evaluation findings are:
  - a. A more structured and coordinated approach to placements and courses away from SYC.
15. Consideration could be given to developing 'in-house' NVQ resources. Potential funders should not see NVQ support as an 'add-on' but rather an intrinsic aspect of the overall scheme and a key ingredient in its success. Furthermore, developing NVQ tutoring on an in-house basis would allow more assertive and targeted direction of support to individual need.

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**Was the apprenticeship equipping young people with skills and expectations that would enhance opportunities to build successful careers and lives.**

16. The evaluation identified evidence that the SYC staff team were making excellent use of BL lottery funding in developing the skill sets of young people working as apprentices.
17. All members of the group had begun to develop expectations and opportunities that, if pursued, would be likely to improve emotional and material well-being. For some apprentices, the contrast between the chaotic nature of previous lives, the sense of purpose relevant to the present and the development of future plans was marked.
18. This evaluation found that the outcomes of the 2015 evaluation had been sustained and developed. This is particularly the case in relation to maintaining focus on the most disadvantaged young people, a strong team work ethos, and new line management arrangements of apprentices with the potential to bring more person-centred support and guidance to the progress of individual apprentices.
19. More broadly, the evaluation endorses SYC's continuing positioning in universal services as the best way of meeting the needs of as many youngsters as possible, rather than adopting targeted short-term initiatives of the sort which are developing around issues of public safety such as knife crime.

**Other recommendations**

20. There is scope to consider outreach work with parents and communities where there are concerns in relation to substance misuse, crime and antisocial behaviour. Advice is available in relation to 'Community Guardian' and community mediation schemes which might strengthen SYC's whole system approach.
21. It was clear that SYC were addressing a range of needs for example learning difficulties and mental well-being that should have been addressed by statutory agencies either in the past or at present. Examples of such agencies include statutory education services and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CHAMHS). Given this it may be timely to review partnership arrangements to ensure such agencies are certain they are making an appropriate contribution to the services provided by SYC.

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**PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

22. The apprenticeship scheme has established a sound knowledge base and strong credentials for delivering successful outcomes with disadvantaged young people. In the past the scheme has followed a clear objective for helping such youngsters develop into urban youth workers. The objective of developing urban youth workers is firmly endorsed by this evaluation.
23. The scheme has a successful track record of interventions with challenging young people and a clear capacity to deliver real value for money. This is against a background of national reductions in resources to universal youth services. Given this the evaluation found clear grounds for SYC discussing with funders ways of expanding and doubling the capacity of the apprenticeship scheme.
24. Such an approach would require careful costing and should include additional staff time in order to ensure that extra commitments were deliverable, and the project continued to achieve value for money.

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**2018 EVALUATION SCOPE AND PARAMETERS OF BL FUNDING**

Funding for the apprenticeship scheme comes from a grant of £499,000 made by the BL to SYC to provide services to children and young people. The funding period is from January 2017 to January 2022 and has been awarded to achieve the following outcomes.

1. 50 young people facing multiple disadvantage will have enhanced life-skills and will pursue higher education, training and professional careers. This outcome is to be achieved by 2022 and will be delivered through an apprenticeship scheme. This scheme is the focus of this evaluation.
2. 150 disadvantaged at-risk young people will have enhanced life-skills, qualifications and access to training and opportunities thus avoiding experiences of deprivation.
3. 5,000 disadvantaged young people will gain confidence and skills and have more positive role models; thus, helping to reduce the likelihood that they will become disadvantaged.
4. 5,000 disadvantaged young people will have improved health and wellbeing.<sup>3</sup>

The grant included £9,000 to build organisational skills, knowledge and confidence. The utilisation of this element of the grant is not part of this evaluation.

Most of the young people involved with this evaluation, had engaged, over many years, with SYC services delivered in line with outcomes 2,3 and 4. Whilst the nature of their engagement had changed from being a receiver of services to becoming an apprentice youth worker the enduring nature of the relationships permits some generalisation of evaluation findings to all BL outcomes.

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<sup>3</sup> Salmon Youth Centre BI Application Young Leader Programme



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### **THE APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME AND THE APPRENTICES.**

The apprenticeship scheme involves the recruitment and support of young people and young adults to a scheme which enables them to develop life skills and knowledge and consider whether to pursue a career in youth work or another direction. The scheme deliberately aims to work with youngsters whose backgrounds are often chaotic, dysfunctional and deprived of opportunity, who might be considered challenging to help and who may be at a crisis turning point in their lives. This includes young people with profoundly disrupted lives and who might be considered at the margins of the capacity of agencies to be able to help them. Many have experienced life events of the sort associated with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Most apprentices are well known to SYC staff through having taken part in activities provided by the centre when they were younger, or by being a young leader, or both.

SYC advertises the scheme as one where:

*“... if you’ve just finished school or college and have no idea where to go next, or you would like to pursue a career in youth work but don’t know how to get there...you spend 35 hours a week at Salmon for up to a year, studying for a qualification (NVQ level 2 or 3 in Youth Work) and gaining invaluable experience in youth work... you will be offered ... qualifications and training. For example AQAs, FA Level One, Duke of Edinburgh Award, practical training in music, rock-climbing, trampolining etc...Apprentices are part of the staff team at Salmon so you would also be expected to attend relevant meetings, fill in time-sheets and cover reception some lunch times – all part of gaining a rounded experience of life in the workplace!”<sup>4</sup>*

The evaluation found these opportunities were comprehensively and meaningfully available to all apprentices.

The offer of an apprenticeship is made on the basis of a formal application and interview accompanied in some cases by a short period of direct work with children or young people where a potential apprentice’s youth work skills undergo practical assessment. People recruited to the scheme receive support and supervision in working with children and young people who attend SYC across all the age groups. Formal and informal management support and supervision are important features of an apprenticeship.

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<sup>4</sup> Salmon Youth Centre. <https://salmonyouthcentre.org/>

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The schemes learning opportunities especially NVQ qualifications and coaching awards in youth work activities such as football and basketball, are important. For a majority of apprentices, they are a rare opportunity to successfully achieve a recognised learning qualification.

During evaluation interviews most apprentices described significant learning difficulties associated with dyslexia, ADHD and developmental delay (sometimes in combination and for some people associated with other challenges). These needs had undermined their educational progress and prospects. There was evidence in the narratives of some apprentices that learning difficulties had been identified and appropriately addressed. However, this was not always the case and sometimes occurred after long periods of frustration, of being ignored, and the consequent presentation of challenging behaviour. One apprentice summarised their experience, in a way typical of the cohort in the following way.

*“... I used to sit in class with my hand up for like half hour and they wouldn't come and help me... so, then I used to just give up and just get kicked out of class so I could go somewhere else. I spent quite a lot of time out of school ..because the problem was I got bullied quite a lot when I was younger for not being able to read and then I got scared to put my hand up incase people took the mick out of me and it was just the ongoing circle where I was just like self-destruct mode...”*

The life experiences which apprentices discussed during evaluation can be broadly understood as falling in two groups. One group described experiences such as those of being a young carer or controlling, coercive and abusive exploitation. Family disruption and exclusion and isolation because of poor income were common. Accounts of migration, geographical movement and forms of exploitation related to criminal behaviour were also described. By contrast a second group spoke of warm and loving families where they felt settled and cared for despite challenges such as dyslexia or developmental delay. It was noteworthy that people in the first group described how, during their apprenticeship, they rebuilt relationships with their families and were giving and receiving practical support and help from the limited resources that apprentices and their families had available.

During the evaluation all the apprentices clearly relished the opportunity to work with and in most cases pursue a career working with young people. For some this was a carefully thought through goal and built on long-term engagement with SYC. For others, their enthusiasm impressed as stemming from having been given the responsibilities of a role where they were promoting the welfare of other people that was in turn developing their confidence and self-worth. For this latter group the apprenticeship was a 'first-time' unique and positive life-experience.

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### **Salmon Youth Centre and The London Borough Of Southwark**

Founded in 1907 the Salmon Youth Centre (SYC) has three strategic objectives for the delivery of universal youth services to the Bermondsey community. SYC aims to develop and support:

- The health and wellbeing of children so that they are happy within themselves and their environment.
- Their education and work, prospects
- Their community engagement so that young people engage positively in their community.<sup>15</sup>

SYC is located in the London Borough of Southwark which is one of the 20% most deprived local authorities in England. By 2020 the population of the Borough is estimated to reach 332,000 people. Of this figure 41% will be from a black or ethnic minority groups. Around 28% of children live-in low-income families and health inequalities are significantly greater in the locality surrounding SYC.<sup>6</sup>

SYC provides services to children and young people from the age of 6, through activities for three age groups: 6 to 9-year-olds, 10 to 13-year-olds and young people over the age of 14 into adulthood. The centre also provides services to people with learning disabilities and physical disabilities up to the age of 25.

SYC services are provided by nine frontline youth workers who include former apprentices. This group is led by a management team who are actively involved in the direct provision of services as well as the management of staff and the organisational and strategic direction of the organisation. SYC staff are accountable through a Director to a Board of Trustees.

SYC activities cover a wide range relevant to physical and mental well-being and community work. They include football and wheelchair basketball, and one-to-one interactions such as mentoring or music production. Additional pursuits include day excursions and adventure type holidays. Several community groups make use of SYC's purpose-built facilities. These active and practical relationships contribute to the impression of SYC as a vibrant and dynamic resource that is important to the local community and upon which the organisation has a significant impact. For example it was remarkable during the evaluation to learn how young adults who are now apprentices had been attending SYC along with their siblings since the age

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<sup>5</sup> ibid

<sup>6</sup> Public Health England. 2017. Southwark Unitary Authority: Health Profile 2017. Available at <http://fingertipsreports.phe.org.uk/health-profiles/2017/e09000028.pdf>

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of 6. In doing so they often followed in the footsteps of their parents and grandparents. The enduring relevance of this history and legacy should not be underestimated.

The centre receives grants and funding from a number of charitable organisations. Given the significant national reduction in the provision of universal youth services across the UK, this diverse funding portfolio is likely to place SYC in a more robust position than similar organisations with a narrower funding base.

### **Youth Work Policy Context**

SYC can be understood as a provider of 'universal' youth services. A 2014 review of youth services across the EU defined universal youth services as having:

*"...three core features that define ... youth work as distinct from other policy fields. They are: a focus on young people, personal development, and voluntary participation"*<sup>7</sup>

Dunne et al (2014) give a fuller explanation of universal youth services.

*"Youth work takes place in the extracurricular area, as well as through specific leisure time activities, and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes and on voluntary participation. These activities and processes are self-managed, co-managed or managed under educational or pedagogical guidance by either professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders and can develop and be subject to changes caused by different dynamics."*<sup>8</sup>

Studies of the growth of universal youth services since the 19<sup>th</sup> century chart their development from open access arrangements to the more targeted and for some instrumentalist approaches developed since the millennium under the 'New Labour' government.<sup>9</sup> Research of youth work following the onset of 2010 austerity is limited. However, the trade union UNISON's 2016 study found that against a background of measures targeted at young people such as reduction in education maintenance grants and an increase in tuition fees, spending on youth services had reduced by £378 million since 2010. These reductions across the UK had resulted in an estimated loss of 3,660 youth work posts, the closure of over 600 youth centres and the loss of nearly 140,000 youth workplaces.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Dunne, A et al. 2014. *Working With Young People: the Value of Youth Work in the EU*. EU Commission. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Dunne et al in Edinburgh Youth Work Consortium. 2015. *Universal Youth Work a Critical Review of the Literature*. Edinburgh. University of Edinburgh. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Bradford, S. & Cullen, F. 2015. *Positive for Youth Work? Contested Terrains of Professional Youth Work in Austerity England*. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, Volume 19, (1)

UNISON. 2017. *A Future at Risk: Cuts in Youth Services*. & Unison 2016 . *The U.K.'s Youth Services*. Unison. London.

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### EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation methodology was qualitative and focused on identifying and exploring the personal accounts and narratives of apprentices. The key questions which the evaluation sought to address were:

1. What was working well in relation to the apprenticeship scheme from the perspective of individual participants and what could be improved.
2. Was the apprenticeship equipping young people with skills and expectations that would enhance opportunities to build successful careers and lives.

Alongside these central questions, an evaluation carried out in 2015 had sought, at the request of SYC managers, to explore factors in the centre's environment which might encourage 'resilience' in young people. The 2018 evaluation continued exploration of this theme through a more detailed assessment and analysis of factors in the lives of young people which might foster the capacity for resilience.

#### Methodology analytical framework

An analytical tool was devised specifically for the project adapted from a resilience framework published by the Young Minds Organisation that was itself adapted from an earlier validated model.<sup>11</sup> Although the framework places emphasis on school and educational resilience, this theme was congruent with SYC's purpose and allowed for minor reconfiguration to align the tool with SYC's strategic objectives in a way which did not compromise analytical outcomes. Key categories of the framework are summarised in table I in relation to their relevance to SYC strategic objectives.

<b>SYC strategic objective: Health and Well-Being</b>	<b>SYC strategic objective Education and Career</b>	<b>SYC strategic objective Community Engagement</b>
Resilience Framework Category	Resilience Framework Category	Resilience Framework Category
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calming down</li> <li>• Enough money</li> <li>• Good enough housing</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Leisure</li> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Transport</li> <li>• Spirituality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achievements &amp; aspirations</li> <li>• Making learning as successful as possible</li> <li>• Making work as successful as possible</li> <li>• Career /life plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring / Network of people</li> <li>• Self-organisation and life skills</li> <li>• Accessing Information that can be trusted</li> <li>• Attachment to a place</li> <li>• Helping other people</li> </ul>

<sup>11</sup> Young Minds. 2012. *Resilience Framework (Children & Young People) 2012* – adapted from Hart, Blincow and Thomas 2007. *Resilience Therapy: Working with Children and Families*. London. Routledge

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**Data collection**

22 interviews with 15 apprentices were carried out, over 2 days in May and 2 days October 2018. The apprenticeships of all those interviewed fell within the timescales of current funding. The interview cohort was constructed so as to gain a spectrum of perspectives from young people at various stages of engagement with the scheme. Table 2 below illustrates how the cohort was structured during the two interview periods.

<b>Table 2 Apprentice Interview Cohort</b>	
<b>May Interviews</b>	<b>October Interviews</b>
5 apprentices who commenced in February 2018 and due to finish their apprenticeship in February 2019.	5 Repeat interviews with same apprentices who commenced in February 2018.
5 apprentices who commenced in September 2017 and due to finish their apprenticeship in September 2018	3 Repeat interviews with apprentices who had completed in September 2018
	4 Interviews with apprentices who had commenced in October 2018 to finish in May 2019.

Interview participants in May 2018 comprised 10 of the 11 apprentices then employed (column one). Interview participants in October (column 2) comprised 5 of this first group, who had just passed the midpoint of their apprenticeship. The October interviews also included interviews with 3 apprentices who had completed the scheme. The latter were arranged on the basis of availability during the interview period and no other selection criteria. The October interviews included 4 apprentices who had started the scheme at the beginning of October.

Evaluation data was obtained through semi-structured interview schedules based on the resilience analytical framework, SYC's strategic objectives and, the BL Grant outcomes. The October interview schedules were tailored to the 3 different perspectives of new, midpoint and completed apprentices. The SYC management team were consulted in relation to the content of schedules. This led to including a question exploring the relationships apprentices considered most important at SYC. Interviews also gave the opportunity to assess progress, from an apprenticeship perspective, in the implementation of findings arising from an evaluation undertaken in 2015.

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Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed to allow an analysis against the analytical framework. An interim report was circulated to members of the SYC management team after the May round of interviews.

At the beginning of the evaluation project apprentices were directly managed by a member of the SYC management team. However, during the period between May and October 2018 these arrangements changed with responsibility for apprentices, who started in October 2018 delegated to specific frontline youth workers. The evaluation was able to consider the likely impact of this development.

All apprentices engaged cooperatively with the evaluation and interview questions. They were open and frank about their previous lives, the apprenticeship experience and expectations for the future. Their responses were often wide-ranging and included topics such as the negative impact of social networking systems, the impact of Brexit on their life opportunities and the difficulties faced by young people in 21<sup>st</sup>-century society. Their views were delivered in a clear, articulate and reflective manner. Given the accounts the majority gave of their earlier lives during interviews, the nature of their presentation during most interviews impressed as a significant contrast to that which might have been typical of their earlier lives.

For all the apprentices the scheme was a significant opportunity. One commented:

*“Because nowadays even if you do have a job, even if you do have a qualification if you don't have experience nobody will take you. So, for me to get experience and a job together... and a qualification and experience it was like brilliant.”*

Finally, it is usual in an evaluation report to validate evidence through direct participant quotes. Whilst this method is utilised, given the small number of the cohort its use has been restricted to ensure the anonymity of participants.

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## **EVALUATION FINDINGS**

### **PREVIOUS EVALUATION OUTCOMES. 2015.**

A previous evaluation of the SYC apprenticeship scheme had been undertaken in October and November 2015. The findings and recommendations of that evaluation included the following.

1. The centre implements a philosophy of 'sticking with people' encountering a destructive cycle of circumstances and behaviour. This philosophy is critical in helping youngsters develop resilience to challenges, which might otherwise see them overwhelmed by adversity
2. Key successful features of the apprenticeship programme identified in 2015 were:
  - a. time spent away from Bermondsey,
  - b. the spirit of teamwork evident in the centre's work
  - c. the support apprentices receive as they learn and implement practical skills such as time management and self-discipline.
3. Priorities for improvement identified in 2015 were:
  - a. sustaining improvements in tutorial support
  - b. more focused person-centred planning to ensure a clear transition to the next phase of employment or education.

The 2018 evaluation revisited these issues to assess relevance and progress.

### **'STICKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE'**

The 2018 evaluation found that SYC had successfully sustained the capacity to maintain strong and supportive relationships with youngsters despite their challenging and sometimes self-destructive behaviour. This philosophy of 'sticking with people' appears increasingly rare in services to children and its value should not be underestimated. The SYC approach stands in contrast with a social policy and funding environment that appears to increasingly reflect a relationship between awarding funding and achieving immediate 'winnable' outcomes. Such an approach may generate attractive short-term results, but arguably, these can be at the cost of failing to engage harder to reach individuals, even though, in the longer term, their exclusion is likely to be costly. Evidence of this policy direction can be seen in a range of settings, for example, in increased numbers of school exclusions where analysis argues that the individual



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difficulties and associated poor performance of youngsters might detract from the overall institutional presentation of academic attainment.<sup>12,13</sup>

SYC's capacity to continue engaging with challenging youngsters provides an important counter narrative to this contemporary policy direction and the importance of SYC's approach is underlined in Heart's (2017) study of the relationships young people have with their youth workers and which can be understood through eight domains including:

*"... the youth workers role in the wider lives of young people, setting an example, offering respect, use of authority and power, prioritising needs and best interests and trusting young people."<sup>14</sup>*

Having an adult outside the family, such as a SYC youth worker who is committed to and concerned about a young person, especially when no other grown-up demonstrates much or any interest, is of great importance. This was clearly evidenced during the evaluation when apprentices made a regular reference to the consistent care and support, they had received from SYC staff despite their presentation of behaviour management difficulties. Whilst there may not have been an immediate positive outcome to report through this commitment of staff time, the longer-term benefits were evidenced in the personal accounts which apprentices gave of their long-term engagement with the organisation and the new sense of direction on their lives.

### **Findings**

1. SYC's policy of deliberately engaging and maintaining relationships with challenging young people continues to be consistently evidenced. A majority of interviewees described how the long-term interest and support provided by SYC had enabled them to engage with the apprenticeship scheme. This had, in turn, lead to fundamental and positive changes in their lives and futures.
2. There was evidence that the apprenticeship scheme was enabling individuals to develop personal resilience capacities by finding new ways of living harmoniously with themselves, their families and contributing to their communities.

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<sup>12</sup> D for E. 2018. *Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions. England. 2016 – 2017*. ons.gov.uk. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2016-to-2017>.

<sup>13</sup> Special World 2018. *Special Needs Remains Key Characteristic Of Pupils Excluded From English schools*. Available at <http://www.specialworld.net/2018/08/03/special-needs-remains-key-characteristic-of-pupils-excluded-from-english-schools/>

Hart, P. 2017. *The Reality of Relationships With Young People in Caring Professions: a Qualitative Approach to Professional Boundaries Rooted In Virtue Ethics*. Children and Services Review. 83 . 248 – 254. 248.

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### **KEY SUCCESSFUL FEATURES OF THE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME IDENTIFIED IN 2015.**

#### **Time Away from Bermondsey**

The importance of time spent away from the Bermondsey area, for example through adventure style trips, arose during the 2018 evaluation as experiences which apprentices enjoyed and valued.

#### **Teamwork**

A majority of apprentices interviewed in 2018 referred to their relationships with staff as crucial aspects of their apprenticeship experience and more experienced apprentices accurately conceptualised this as teamwork. The majority described the importance they attached to co-working with frontline youth workers in the planning and delivery of activities. The team environment extended to supporting individual initiatives. One described how, when they had suggested a new activity, they were told “*go ahead: get on with it*” and a number of people referred to having “*...permission to make mistakes...*” without an initiative being hampered by fear of failure.

This combination of advice and support and safety in making mistakes was noteworthy. When asked about aspects of the scheme which were most helpful one apprentice’s view was typical of the overall group experience:

*“I think having the staff team because obviously ... We all feel equal to all the other staff and obviously we know ... they are higher than us but no one makes you feel like that ... you can just go to them and go "help me with this", "how do you do this?" and you're never going to get told "oh you done that wrong." No ones going to moan at you.”*

Important ingredients of teamwork involved formal and informal support and supervision alongside being trusted and given responsibility. One commented how the level of trust and responsibility they encountered had directly improved their maturity.

Learning how to plan and then deliver a youth activity appeared, for some, to have become generalised across their lives. and was in marked contrast to the previously chaotic – “*I was all over the place*” – lives which many had lived. The support embedded in SYC’s approach to teamwork was important in learning and confidence building and appeared central for a majority of midpoint and completed apprentices in following a more settled and mature disposition.

#### **FINDINGS**

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1. SYC continues to provide a strong and supportive teamwork ethos where individuals can use their initiative and imagination without being inhibited through fear of making mistakes. This is in large part because the overall teamwork environment impresses as one where individuals can be safely given trust and responsibility. Although some apprentices had these elements imposed on the lives through caring responsibilities, for most this was the first time they had been positively encountered.
2. SYC teamwork enabled a climate of initiative, trust and responsibility and appeared to be a stimulus to developing personal maturity and resilience.

### **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT IDENTIFIED IN 2015**

#### **NVQ TUTORING**

The 2015 evaluation had identified action to tackle indifferent NVQ tutorial support to apprentices as a priority for improvement. SYC had subsequently recommissioned this externally provided service. During the 2018 evaluation all apprentices at midpoint in the scheme, or those who had completed their apprenticeship were on track to be awarded NVQ level II.

However, the 2018 evaluation found that NVQ tuition remains a major weakness. This finding has not been explored beyond the narratives of apprentices. However, some were disappointed that poor quality and irregular tutorial support had removed the possibility of achieving NVQ level III in youth work. Allied to this deficiency was the extent to which tutorial support appeared to have made no progress with at least one apprentice in developing methods and techniques to address significant learning difficulties.

The continued poor quality of tutorial arrangements represents a missed opportunity for a number of people and is addressed in a later section of the report as part of findings and recommendations arising from the 2018 evaluation.

#### **FINDINGS.**

1. There appears to have been limited progress on improving the quality of NVQ tuition. This external service should be re-specified and recommissioned and should include a focus on supporting apprentices with learning difficulties to learn strategies which will enable them to build independent careers.
2. A number of apprentices appear to have slipped through the special-needs interventions which should be available in schools. This failure has enabled statutory agencies to, effectively, 'shunt' the cost and responsibility for addressing learning difficulties from education services to SYC. There may be some grounds for approaching the local

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authority for financial and commissioning support to review and retender current arrangements.

### **PERSON CENTRED PLANNING AND NEW APPRENTICESHIP LINE MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS.**

During the 2018 evaluation SYC reorganised apprentice line management arrangements with frontline youth workers taking responsibility for new apprentices. Staff are supported in this task by the SYC management team and the overall culture of teamwork which encourages oversight and supportive apprenticeship and staff interactions and includes all staff making management interventions where necessary.

The 2018 evaluation concluded by meeting a small group of staff to explore how those with new line management responsibilities planned to tackle the task. New managers impressed as bringing clarity and thoughtfulness to their role. They described clear expectations and standards for apprentices to meet in relation to frankness, preparation for supervision and taking action to move career plans forward.

This evaluation endorses the new line management arrangements as ones which are close to the long-established principles and practice of key working, an approach designed to support and help people with complex needs. The new system should provide a sound and robust platform for increasing the level of personal planning which apprentices are likely to benefit most from.

### **FINDING**

This evaluation strongly endorses SYC's new approach to line management arrangements for apprentices. The development should provide a sound platform for achieving key improvements identified during the 2018 evaluation.

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### **2018 EVALUATION FINDINGS**

2018 evaluation interview questions were designed around the resilience framework (see methodology) with questions and themes structured to achieve a flow of interaction within which participants could relax. Questions were grouped into the following categories underpinned by exploration of the theme of resilience.

- The schemes value for money.
- Recruitment and the apprentice role
- Life before and since the apprenticeship
- Community and life skills
- What was going well and what could be better
- Future plans
- Other issues the participant chose to discuss.

### **THE APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME 'VALUE FOR MONEY'**

The evaluation found clear empirical evidence that the apprenticeship scheme provides young people with major opportunities. The resulting benefits are threefold. Firstly, through improved sustainable life chances for the individuals themselves. Secondly, improvement in individual capacity to provide secure and stable parenting for any future offspring, thereby acting to contain the impact of cycles of deprivation. Thirdly, the scheme is likely to have wider societal benefits through its preventative impact on reducing demand for expensive state resources and promoting social cohesion and well-being.

These conclusions could be criticised as too hypothetical and speculative. However, anticipating the impact of preventing events which have yet to take place, is one of the principle difficulties faced by organisations with a pre-emptive ethos such as SYC when demonstrating value for money. Yet the principle of preventing future misfortune based on history is well accepted. It is, for example, strongly evident in the requirement on public agencies involved in children safeguarding to predict the likelihood of future harm based on previous events. Using this principle, informed conclusions can be made on a 'balance of probability' basis in relation to how the lives of apprentices might have developed without the intervention of SYC and the scheme.

Across the group the continuing impact of unaddressed learning disabilities and exclusion were strongly evident. Allied to this was the extent to which some individuals were already developing ways of living associated with exclusion, including imprisonment and periods of acute mental ill-health. Given this it can be reasonably predicted that without the apprenticeship scheme some members of the group would be much more likely to interact with expensive state resources than their less excluded peers. Table 3 below illustrates the

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schemes intrinsic value for money through a comparison between the apprentice costs and the public expense involved in providing punitive and restrictive interventions which members of the group had already accessed or might be in potential danger of doing so.

<b>Table 3 Value for Money Comparison: Individual Costs</b>		
	Monthly	Annual
SYC apprenticeship	£780 (Including 20% on costs)	£9,360 (Including 20% on costs)
Cost of imprisonment	£4,562	£54,750 <sup>15</sup>
Cost of inpatient NHS mental ill-health treatment	£12,288	£147,460 <sup>16</sup>
Annual universal credit: one person under 25		£3,021 <sup>17</sup>

Given that an individual might experience both imprisonment and inpatient treatment in a year, the crude annual cost of an apprenticeship, irrespective of wider personal and societal benefits, can be argued as impressively competitive.

This evaluation does not seek to make a finding that the SYC apprenticeship scheme can guarantee an individual will never engage with expensive state resources. However, there was clear evidence that engagement with SYC and the nourishing, confidence building experience of the apprenticeship scheme is likely to significantly reduce the possibility of such events.

**FINDING**

Against the background of the reduction of universal preventative youth services there is a sound argument for the development and expansion of the apprenticeship scheme in order to reach more vulnerable young people.

<sup>15</sup> Sturge, G.. 2018. UK Prison Statistics. Briefing Paper CBP -C4334. London House of Common Library. 29

<sup>16</sup> PSSRU. 2017. Unit Costs of Health and Social Care. Personal Social Services Research Unit. University of Kent. Available at <https://www.pssru.ac.uk/pub/uc/uc2017/services.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> [tps://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-different-earning-patterns-and-your-payments/universal-credit-different-earning-patterns-and-your-payments-payment-cycles](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-different-earning-patterns-and-your-payments/universal-credit-different-earning-patterns-and-your-payments-payment-cycles)

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### **RECRUITMENT**

BL outcome one requires that: “50 young people facing multiple disadvantage will have enhanced life-skills and will pursue higher education, training and professional careers”. At the time of the evaluation some 12-18 months into the five-year funding period, this outcome had been achieved for 15 young people. Current progress suggest a capacity for the outcome to be exceeded.

All apprentices were asked about their experiences of the recruitment process to assess whether there were any barriers in accessing the scheme and to identify potential for improvement. All gave clear accounts of their engagement with the recruitment process.

Some had heard about the opportunity through ‘word-of-mouth’, for example through members of their family, or had seen the opportunity advertised on the SYC website or had been told about the scheme and encouraged to apply by a member of SYC staff. All described their appointment being based on an application form and an interview. Most apprentices referred to a period of direct work with children and young people within SYC where their performance was directly assessed by SYC staff and apprentices had the opportunity to ‘test the water’. For several people this mutual appraisal was important. One commented:

*“... I like young people and the first three weeks [as part of a young leader traineeship scheme] I actually done all the clubs as well. I stayed after work and I done all the clubs and I got to see how ... amazing this place is and yeah which decided that this is what I want to do.”*

For most apprentices this practical assessment was valued and was of mutual benefit in helping to assess whether a potential apprentice could deal with the demands and responsibilities of the role.

None of the apprentices interviewed reported any difficulty in navigating the recruitment process although one explained that a support worker had provided a great deal of practical help, to the point where it might be doubtful who was making the application.

#### **Recruiting apprentices at risk of exclusion**

SYC’s recruitment encourages and supports applications from the most disadvantaged youngsters, for example those who have been released from custody or who are homeless. 3 apprentices with backgrounds where such issues were a feature had, during the evaluation period, progressed through the scheme and moved on to securing permanent employment or access training to begin a professional career. SYC is to be commended for this practical

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expression of its values and from refraining from patterns of recruitment which would achieve successful outcomes by offering apprentices to more stable and less disadvantaged individuals.

However, the evaluation found that in at least one situation an apprentice with significant needs had been recruited and that this individual might be in danger of becoming overwhelmed by the demands of the role. This is not to say that such an individual with complex needs should not be recruited. Rather, SYC should ensure that offers of an apprenticeships are only made on a full and rounded understanding of the individuals' circumstances, detailed knowledge of existing care arrangements and a clear plan for the best way of supporting them. The principles of key working might act as a useful guide. <sup>18</sup>

### **FINDINGS**

The recruitment process should be reviewed with the following in mind.

1. Recruitment should be continued to be targeted at young people facing multiple disadvantage. It is legitimate that SYC staff should encourage applications from such individuals.
2. Practical assessment, of actual or potential youth work skills and motivation should be adopted as a mandatory element of the apprenticeship selection process. The Young Leaders program would be a suitable program within which assessment could take place.
3. When necessary, for example in relation to an applicant with learning difficulties, support in completing an application should come from SYC staff who are not otherwise involved in the selection process. This is important so that an assessment of motivation which is an important aspect of the recruitment process can be made.
4. The majority of apprentices have learning difficulties, and some may have additional needs in relation to mental ill-health. The recruitment processes should establish a clear information data set around each apprentice which includes details about significant individuals in other agencies involved in the apprentice's life. This dataset should include an assessment of whether an individual can manage the stimulating and active environment at SYC.
5. There should be clear achievable and realistic goals and objectives for offering the apprenticeship which are agreed with the apprentice at the time of appointment.

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<sup>18</sup> Open University, 2014. *Developing Key Working*. Available at <https://oro.open.ac.uk/40432/1/developingkeyworkingfinal.pdf>



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### **THE APPRENTICE ROLE AND LEARNING ON THE JOB.**

All apprentices helped to provide youth activities across all age groups. New apprentices in post for slightly less than 4 weeks during the October period of the evaluation were still finding their feet and experimenting with roles they found most suited them. Those at the midpoint or reaching the end of the scheme tended to indicate a clear preference for work with particular age groups and activities, for example dance with 6-9-year-olds, or wheelchair basketball.

There was evidence that as skills and confidence developed SYC staff encouraged apprentices to devise, plan and implement new activities. For example:

*"I started a girls football team ... me and another apprentice ... We wanted to make a girls football team" They [SYC staff] were like "Do it! Do whatever you need. If you need help you tell us, just go do it." And being able to do that is like cool, you're letting us actually take things on board ourselves and just go and do it like. It's like loads of responsibility as well "*

The evaluation found that this approach gave rise to experiences which for some apprentices were rare; the opportunity to initiate a positive action leading to good feedback and improvement in self-esteem. This outcome can also be understood through a relationship between trust, responsibility and developing maturity that was evident in a number of interviews.

#### **Trust, Responsibility and Maturity.**

The relationship between trust, responsibility and developing maturity emerged during the evaluation and was a clear outcome for most apprentices. This personal development was evident on both a professional youth worker and a personal basis.

On a professional basis apprentices found it necessary to deal objectively and calmly with the difficulties and challenges presented by a wide range of children and young adults. For some this contrasted with their previous learnt behaviour when dealing with emotionally challenging situations. On a personal basis there was evidence of improved relationships with families, career aspirations, developing helpful relationships and a settled community presence. Across the group the restorative impact of positive feedback achieved by helping others was evident. These features were in marked contrast to experiences interviewees described as being associated with previous lives.

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### **Acting as a Role Model**

It was noteworthy that apprentices described ways in which they 'role-modelled' behaviour (an important element of a youth workers interaction with young people) without fully appreciating the potential impact of this on children and young people. One apprentice who provided music tuition and recording sessions for youngsters appeared surprised to think of their contact with young people as youth work, even though their interactions involved modelling and encouraging life skills such as planning, creativity and self-discipline leading to the benefits of a sense of achievement.

Another apprentice explained how they had found working with children and young people who were aware of their previous life outside SYC to be personally challenging. The converse is possibly equally true: youngsters might well see an apprentice's progress in 'turning their life around' as a goal which they could also aspire to.

Some members of the group referred to being close to the age of some youngsters attending SYC as a challenge. For others being nearer the age of those receiving services was an asset. One remarked:

*"For me like being an apprentice here like is more about finding out stuff the workers won't necessarily find out about because I'm closer to their age...If you know what I mean...like I can connect with them a little bit more than the older workers can."*

This view was echoed by the majority of the cohort when they described their face-to-face work with children and young people and underlines the extent to which apprentices can be an asset in overall SYC provision.

It was clear from interviews that a number of apprentices had begun to use concepts of engagement and empowerment in their work with youngsters and were emphasising the importance of listening to children and young people. One completed apprentice had built on this experience in a new role in another youth work organisation where they had developed skills of engaging children by recruiting young people to interview panels with responsibility for staff selection. This former apprentice was clear in their desire to pursue a youth work career and had mapped out the employment and higher education options to support them in achieving this goal. In their view the SYC apprenticeship scheme had been the springboard for developing this clear sense of direction.

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### **Developing Life Skills**

Set against a background of diverse and often chaotic starting points, most apprentices evidenced the development of professional and interpersonal skills, transferable to a range of different career paths and to life outside work. Having to work in a team, get along with a wide range of people and deal with challenges in a calm and professional manner were important. For some these achievements represented new ways of engaging with the world.

Alongside this all the members of the group had developed skills, knowledge and experience in planning and reflecting on their work. Even when called upon at short notice to provide an activity for a group of children they were able to anticipate need and plan accordingly. Apprentices had also developed time management and self-organisation skills which are similarly transferable. Whilst most would accept that these were not yet 'state-of-the-art' achievements they reflected, as with other findings, the extent to which the apprenticeship brought a sense of order, structure and direction to their lives. The contrast with the previous lives of some of the group is noteworthy.

### **FINDINGS**

1. There was clear evidence that being shown trust and given responsibility had stimulated the development of a quality described by apprentices as 'maturity'. The majority of apprentices derived significant positive feedback from this dynamic. For some this was a unique experience.
2. The SYC environment of teamwork and line management supervision impresses as a safe space for the opportunity to give apprentices appropriate trust and responsibility
3. Apprentices were successfully modelling appropriate behaviour to children and young people, although they may not have been aware of their impact in this context.
4. For some being near the age group of children they were working with had been a challenge which had been successfully overcome. There was evidence that this closeness in age is an asset to SYC service provision provided it is framed by support and supervision.

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### LIFE BEFORE AND SINCE STARTING THE APPRENTICESHIP

The majority of apprentices gave a positive account of life since starting their apprenticeship that was in marked contrast with their earlier experiences. One commented that:

*...” before the apprenticeship I stopped going to school. So I finished my year and I then I had some um problems. Then I decided that I couldn't go to work or school, college or nothing and I stayed away from that for a bit. [ so, it sounds like you've really turned your life around?]. Yeah I've tried.”*

Another person with learning difficulties explained:

*So, I have dyslexia and global delay and with that it was quite challenging obviously because with not having this correct support... And obviously I have behavior issues as well, but it was more I think not finding something that I want to do...before I became an apprentice, I was at ... a Pupil Referral Unit which is for people who get kicked out of mainstream.*

This apprentice had subsequently come into contact with SYC, engaged with the apprenticeship scheme and developed skills in music production and individual work with young people. They explained:

*“So, me then finding the fact that I want to do lighting and sound helps me a lot and then having Salmon as a place to be able to go to and get help and people care and you know that whole thing”.*

All members of the cohort talked freely and openly of the positive contrast in their lives before and since starting the apprenticeship. One interviewee described the experience of embarking on the apprenticeship shortly after being released from a period of youth custody. Another described how the scheme had given them purpose and fulfilment from the starting point of living in a hostel. One described the pleasure they had derived from being able to give a parent experiencing long-term financial hardship most of their apprenticeship salary so that rent could be paid.

Interviewees commonly described two positive elements in their life since becoming an apprentice. One was the support and structure provided by Salmon. This led to a second, the opportunity to 'give' and was manifest in being able to contribute to the development of younger people. One person's explanation was typical of the group:

*“Because of, they are the future isn't it like. I'm not trying to sound cheesy like. If you can help them now and kids do remember when they are adults and whatever and they go through certain situations, and they look back and think "Oh this is what [name] told me*

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*when I was... It just. I feel like every time I help a young person, I'm kind of like leaving a little bit of a legacy."*

More could be written about the positive contrasts evident across the majority of interview narratives between life before and since the apprenticeship. Achievements ranged from interpersonal skills with young children, improved self-management skills, a clearer sense of purpose and direction and renewed contact and engagement with families. Understood through the evaluation framework for developing personal resilience this sense of achievement and forward movement is crucial in coming to terms with the trauma of previous life, and developing a settled way of living in the present and how the future might be shaped. Central to this was clear evidence that life might not involve repeating cycles of destructive behaviour.

### **FINDINGS.**

1. There was clear evidence of the development of personal resilience. This was apparent in a sharp contrast between life before and since starting the apprenticeship
2. The opportunity to receive personal support and 'give' in return were important factors in people moving away from self-destructive cycles of behaviour.

### **COMMUNITY**

#### **Geographical**

Attachment to and a feeling of security within a geographical area is an important factor in promoting resilience. Most apprentices presented as feeling settled in communities where they lived with family or partners. Communities were in general seen as being reasonably safe and contented areas and a number described positive contacts with neighbours.

A number of the group had a daily commute of some distance to reach SYC. Whilst this was good evidence of their personal motivation it underlines the benefits of access to a good transport infrastructure, an asset which many communities outside the London area do not benefit from.

Most apprentices commented that the income they received from the scheme was limited and, in some cases, less than they had learnt in previous roles, for example in catering and hospitality. However, reduced income was compensated for by the learning and career opportunities the scheme provided. All the apprentices interviewed during the May round of interviews tactfully raised the possibility of improved salary!

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### **Salmon as a Community**

A minority of apprentices had been living in hostel or homeless persons accommodation before starting the scheme. For this group the less spatial sense of community represented by SYC was important. Most members of the cohort spoke of strong, often lifelong, attachments to SYC and to staff members. For some, engagement with the Salmon community represented a plateau of calm, order and nurture within previously chaotic and disrupted life experience. Given this, great care is needed at the completion of an apprenticeship to ensure that any movement away from the Salmon community is carefully managed and supported if personal resilience is not to be undermined.

### **FINDINGS.**

1. The majority of apprentices had a clear and settled attachment to their geographical communities and they benefited from access to a good transport infrastructure.
2. For some apprentices their sense of community can be understood through their engagement with SYC. Care needs to be taken when people take further steps in their lives to ensure that this sense of community is not lost.

### **LIFE SKILLS.**

Developing life skills such as self-management, keeping calm, asking for and giving help, are important features of developing personal resilience. Interviewees were asked to give an assessment of their strengths and needs in these areas.

#### **Self-Organisation and Time Management, Anticipating and Planning.**

Apprentices were asked to give a self-assessment score in relation to self-organisation skills and especially time management on a scale of 0 (poor) to 5 (excellent). This self-assessment method was not utilised with completed apprentices and with one apprentice who had just joined the scheme.

All the group returned a ranking of 3 or above. For midpoint apprentices these were consistent with or slightly improved between the May and October interviews.

Discussion of self-assessment scores indicated that all the midpoint apprentices saw themselves as having learnt important skills in relation to self-organisation, time management, anticipating and planning for future events. A minority of apprentices also referred to learning personal budgeting skills and strategies for living on a reduced income.

SYC staff may see the self-assessment outcomes as generous, since encouraging punctuality and time management is a regular preoccupation of apprentice supervision. Several

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apprentices distinguished between timekeeping and punctuality in relation to SYC attendance and other areas of their lives, explaining that the former is a priority. Claiming good time management skills was not always borne out by the capacity of apprentices to attend evaluation interview appointments on time.

Overall, apprentices demonstrated important learning in how to bring self-organisation skills into their day-to-day work. However good outcomes were more successfully achieved with some individuals than others. Variables affecting performance included individualistic characteristics such as self-responsibility or possessing highly engaging interpersonal skills with the capacity to deflect remonstrations when issues such as timekeeping were poor. These variables underlined the extent to which the day-to-day management of apprentice's should be an SYC team, and not just a line management, responsibility. Apprentices commented positively on their interactions with staff, who are not line managers, telling them to get "get busy".

### **FINDING**

All apprentices had developed a good understanding of self-organisational skills although some claims of achievement were likely to be more aspirational than realistic. Since good timekeeping is a major employability asset, SYC staff should continue to maintain a focus on requiring timeliness and punctuality.

#### **Becoming Calm and Staying Calm.**

For some apprentices, staying calm and not losing their temper had previously been an issue. Developing skills in relation to staying calm in challenging circumstances will have a positive impact on future career, education opportunities and life chances and is an important component in developing personal resilience.

Overall apprentices were able to describe good skills in this important area. Again, an important driver of development was the extent to which SYC staff married trust and responsibility with expectations as to how the apprentice role should be performed for the benefit of children and young people. One explained that:

*"The apprenticeship has been a big turning point. I am trying to be a youth worker now. You can't look after young people if you lose your temper. If you're having a bad day you can't behave like that in front of children. You can't tell a young person off, say 'you shouldn't be behaving like that' when I'm behaving like that myself."*

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### **FINDING**

1. For those individuals where becoming or staying calm had been in issue important skills had been developed. The stimulus for this learning is linked to the previously identified relationship between teamwork, trust, responsibility and maturity and expectations of appropriate behaviour.
2. It is likely that learnt behaviour involving staying calm will be transferable to other areas of an apprentice's life.

### **Helping Other People and Accepting Help**

Helping other people, knowing when to ask for help and having somebody to turn to when necessary are further components of developing personal resilience. The evaluation explored these issues with all the apprentices.

#### ***Helping other people***

All the group described solid and enduring satisfaction and enjoyment in their work with young people. The interactions which they developed and enjoyed gave rise to important positive feedback. The impact of improved self-image arising from making a positive contribution to the SYC community stood in marked contrast to previous life experience and its value should not be underestimated. Receiving positive feedback is an important aspect of developing personal resilience and all of the apprenticeship group had gained much benefit from the experience.

A number of apprentices were helping other people beyond SYC. Some already had life experience of being a young carer in demanding circumstances such as the terminal illness of a close family member or caring for a younger sibling. A number gave examples of giving practical help and other forms of support to family members. Since starting the apprenticeship, this practical giving and receiving of help was, in some cases, taking place in the context of rebuilding family relationships. One apprentice who had been estranged from family members was engaged in a new relationship involving the mutual exchange of practical support and interest.



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### ***Asking for and receiving help***

A further element of promoting personal resilience is the extent to which people know when to ask for and accept help. One interviewee commented:

*“...when I was younger and being naughty, I wanted lots of help. Inside I was screaming for help, but I wouldn’t ask anybody. I think lots of young people are like that. You’ve got to notice it”*

All those interviewed were able to identify key individuals either within their families, SYC or both who they could approach when they felt in difficulties. For most people this extended beyond advice in relation to being a youth worker and included personal problems they encountered in their lives.

### **FINDINGS.**

1. The personal resilience of individual members of the group had been enhanced by opportunities to help other people. For some this extended into their personal lives with potentially long-lasting impact.
2. All the apprentices had an established network of individuals to turn to when they needed help.

### **SPIRITUALITY**

Given the presence of faith within the SYC community, apprentices were asked about the spiritual aspect of their lives. This led to some interesting theological discussions about issues such as the perceived difference between Catholicism and Christianity! Whilst faith belief was common across the group most were careful to distinguish between the spiritual aspect of lives which they related to interaction with SYC, and their experience of what can be understood as ‘organised religion’. At least one member of the group whilst not engaging in organised religion had begun private bible study.

### **FINDING**

Most interviewees, including those who proclaimed no faith, impressed as gaining a sense of calm and quietness when interacting with the faith element of SYC and the majority expressed growing interest in the spiritual aspect their lives.

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**IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS AT SALMON.**

SYC management staff were interested in exploring key relationships which apprentices formed with members of the staff team.

Interviewee responses occurred against the background of their management arrangements having changed between the May and October with line management by a member of the Salmon's Management being changed, for new apprentices, to them being directly managed by a frontline youth worker.

All the apprentices valued their relationship with their line manager and the extent to which formal supervision took place on a planned and structured basis. Formal supervision takes place every fortnight but there was evidence that apprentices, especially those recently recruited and who were particularly needy, were being seen on a weekly basis.

For midpoint apprentices and those who had completed the scheme relationships they had with members of SYC staff including administrative management and support staff appeared to have a similar value to that which they placed on formal line management.

Some of the relationships important to apprentices had a historical context and had been developed over a number of years. Others had sprung up through close contact with a youth worker through planning and running activities. Others were geared around personal choice, for example staff who were known to an apprentice outside SYC. The latter appeared to contain an element of what might be described as 'role modelling': learning from and respecting the experience of staff members who had overcome difficulties of the sort experienced by an apprentice. For one interviewee, the life experience of a member of staff whom they admired gave the staff member an authenticity which chimed with the apprentice's life experience.

**FINDINGS**

1. Informal relationships appeared to be at least as important as formal line management ones for supporting and guiding an apprentice.
2. The importance of informal relationships alongside formal line management, emphasises the importance of an SYC teamwork approach to the management and support of apprentices.

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**WHAT APPRENTICES COULD HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY AND ADVICE TO SOMEBODY STARTING AN APPRENTICESHIP.**

Midpoint and completed apprentices were asked what they could have done differently and what others could have done differently. Those at a midpoint were clearly content with current arrangements but when interview questions directed their attention towards the future, showed anxiety about making plans for life after their apprenticeship finished.

When completed apprentices were asked what advice they would give an apprentice who just started the scheme, interviewees were unequivocal that new apprentices should be urged to make the best possible use of their time. One commented:

*“...give it your all: try and get the best and most you can out of the apprenticeship. Now I have left I should have asked for more courses I could do. They can really provide you with a lot here.”*

The theme of making the best use of time was observed by several midpoint and completed members of the group. One commented:

*“it’s really easy to be distracted around here... It a youth centre... I could have done more, and I took my year apprenticeship a bit for granted.”*

One apprentice made an insightful comment:

*“Playing pool can look like you are doing youth work, or you might just be playing pool!”*

Two interviewees commented that being encouraged by any member of the staff team to use their time purposefully, and not just their line manager, had proved to be beneficial. This view further reinforces the importance of an SYC team and line management approach to supervising apprentices.

One apprentice had found difficulties in transitioning to a youth work role when they were well known to many of the children and young people in their life outside SYC. The adjustment required in learning to feel comfortable in a professional relationship with youngsters was challenging but appeared to have been successfully negotiated. There was much in this person’s account which indicated growing personal resilience; finding a new way of living with the past. Their feedback might be helpful for future new apprentices from the same communities as the young people who attend SYC.

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### **FINDINGS.**

1. Apprentices appear to gain most from the scheme when a whole staff team staff team approach encouraged them to make the best use of their time.
2. Apprentices appeared to respond well to the requirement to make the best use of their time, especially when this was delivered in a supportive but assertive manner.

### **WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN DONE DIFFERENTLY BY OTHERS.**

#### **NVQ Tutoring**

SYC externally commission NVQ level II and III tutoring. NVQ awards are a central component of the apprenticeship scheme.

Most members of the group described a poor experience in relation to NVQ tutoring. For the majority this area was the most important, and sometimes only example of an aspect of the apprenticeship scheme which should have been better. The group commonly referred to the poor quality of tutoring, delays in work being marked and long gaps between teaching episodes. One apprentice who had wanted to complete NVQ level III complained they had been left with insufficient time during the apprenticeship to achieve the award because of delays in providing tutoring sessions. A number commented they had completed their portfolios but had yet to receive their award.

Generally, the group gave the clear impression of externally commissioned NVQ support as casual and indifferent. Whilst evidence to support the depth of this assertion has not been probed beyond the narrative of apprentices, unanimity of poor experiences points to this aspect of the scheme as a weakness.

The failure to provide good quality and appropriate NVQ tuition is a significant for three reasons.

- Firstly, most apprentices have a history of poor educational achievement. In the narratives of interviewees where this was an issue, negative experience was related to a toxic combination of failure to assess or address learning difficulties, poor quality teaching and consequent diminished personal motivation. Given this, becoming reacquainted with education and learning should be a golden opportunity to redress the balance of disadvantage. Instead, for some apprentices, history appears to have repeated itself. Were it not for other elements of the apprenticeship providing major compensations, the impact of the scheme on the life chances of apprentices could have been significantly diminished.

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- Secondly, some apprentices wishing to embark upon a career in youth work saw the NVQ route as being an important stepping stone. Risking the achievement of this goal through avoidable poor quality NVQ tutoring is inconsistent with the overall ethos of the apprenticeship scheme and the services which SYC provide.
- Thirdly, some new and midpoint apprentices have significant learning difficulties associated with challenges such as dyslexia. One articulate individual interviewed at the beginning and towards the end of their apprenticeship still found dealing with text and documents challenging. They appeared to have had little help during the NVQ which could enable them to learn strategies to address their learning difficulties.

The importance of providing tutoring in a way appropriate to an individual's needs was underlined in the narrative of one apprentice with clear learning difficulties whom had never even been formally assessed during their school career. The evaluation appreciates that a situation of this sort represents a failure of wider policy which has seen educational services fail to comprehensively address aspects of educational need. For some apprentices the cost and responsibility for doing so has been 'shunted' to SYC by statutory agencies. However, given the situation 'is what it is', every opportunity for remedial action should be taken.

### **FINDINGS.**

1. The specification for providing NVQ support should be reviewed and the service recommissioned.
2. Potential future providers should be required to demonstrate skills and knowledge in relation to helping students learn strategies to address learning difficulties.
3. The inputs and outcomes of any new service provider, including apprentice evaluations, should be closely and assertively managed by a member of the SYC management team.
4. The pace and content of NVQ tutoring should, in part, be informed by findings relating to exit planning and placements which follow.
5. Consideration should be given by SYC to include the direct employment of an NVQ tutor in any future funding bids. NVQ tutoring should not be seen as an 'add-on' but rather as an intrinsically important element of the overall apprenticeship scheme.

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### EXIT PLANNING

All apprentices relished the immediate opportunities provided by the scheme and a number had clear, although not always realistic, goals to pursue a future career. These were most clearly articulated where they concerned youth work.

Outcomes for apprentices who completed the scheme during the evaluation involved leading a youth work service development project, working as a front-line youth worker, starting an access course leading to teacher training, and employment in the service industry. These accomplishments evidence the achievement of BL funding outcomes.

However, during interview discussion assessing the capacity of individuals to realistically plan for life when the apprenticeship finished, apprentices at the midpoint showed uncertainty, anxiety and drift. These individuals had yet to develop a clear idea where their future might lie outside SYC. For some progress in achieving even the loose goals they aspired to was in danger of being undermined by lack of support in addressing learning difficulties. More generally midpoint apprentices appeared to lack focused and coordinated exit planning. Some apprentices impressed as being content to stay at SYC indefinitely. This is not realistic.

Some individuals interviewed in May and again in October when they were nearing the end of an apprenticeship did not appear to have made enough progress towards turning career aspirations into practical goals. One new apprentice explained, in a way typical of overall responses for this segment of the group, that they were:

*“... Very committed to being a youth worker... It’s what I’ve always wanted to do.”*

This individual articulated strong resilience capacities

*“... Always be on time...commit to doing what I’m asked to... don’t depend on anyone else.”*

Their narrative suggested a sound platform of motivation on which to capitalize. However, despite probing, they were unable to articulate forward planning which would build on this. This is not to say relevant discussions had not taken place, or that the supervisor was not developing a strategy. However, based on the evaluation evidence there appeared to be a danger of the individual moving towards a contented ‘drift’. This possibility was strongly evident in the discussions of a number of mid-term apprentices.

It is realistic to expect that some individuals will gain better outcomes through their engagement with the scheme than others. This variation is related to the variety of their life experiences and especially the extent to which individuals have experienced different types of trauma which they have responded to in their unique ways. Successful outcomes will also be

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in part determined, by the capacity and disposition of different individuals: for example, some being more determined than others. However, whilst accepting such variables the evaluation analysis found there was scope for SYC to take more assertive action that would help ensure the more equitable achievement of good outcomes.

The diversity of the apprentice group argues that a 'one size fits all' approach will be of little value to more vulnerable individuals. Rather, the important goal may be to address any drift or uncertainty through a need's led approach, geared to a pace that individuals can accommodate as they move away from disadvantage. This perspective emphasises the importance of new line management arrangements. A review of process and methods as set out in the following findings is recommended.

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Plan as Soon as Possible**

1. The evaluation found that it is vital to begin planning an exit strategy for life after the apprenticeship, especially those apprentices lasting 9 months, from day 1 of an individual joining the scheme.
2. Planning from day one should take place in formal supervision were an exit plan is steadily and carefully built up, developed and reviewed. The new management arrangements should provide an excellent opportunity to achieve this at a pace relevant to an individual's needs, whilst being an assertive and direct way of engaging an apprentice with future career opportunities and the action necessary to achieve good outcomes.

#### **Placements**

3. The majority of apprentices referred to the value they placed in "*learning on the job*". Most had a poor experience of learning through formal and traditional teaching methods. Given this a practical way forward is to build on SYC's range of existing external placement opportunities so they are developed into a structured and coordinated programme. The aim would be to use placements to help apprentices and their line managers identify and develop realistic goals for future career and educational progress through accessing a range of real-life work experiences. It may be useful to designate a member of the SYC management team with responsibility for the development, management and coordination of a placement program.

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4. It is suggested that each apprentice should undergo a placement of a minimum of one week, once every 3 months. Planning and preparation for a placement should take place between an apprentice and their line manager as soon as an individual joined the scheme.
5. For apprentices interested in a youth work career at least one placement should include a period in services for children and young people in settings which provide a significant contrast to the experiences available at SYC. Examples might involve placements in a school, or children's safeguarding, or youth offending or CHAMHS. The aim would be to broaden an apprentice's knowledge and understanding of how other organisations work.
6. A final placement should have a clear link to possible employment opportunities or access to further education.

### **External Courses**

7. Some apprentices reported that they had achieved extra sports qualifications through courses. Others whose interests lay, for example, in music production, made reference to the need to enrol on a 'course' but appeared to have made little progress in doing so during the evaluation period. Arranging access to courses should be integrated into the exit planning that begins from day one.
8. A structured approach to encouraging learning opportunities through external courses should be encouraged and developed in the context of line managers formal supervision as part of building up a clear exit plan. Furthermore, consideration should be given to how external courses and external qualifications fit within NVQ training arrangements since they might help to move an apprentice to a higher level.

### **CV Preparation**

9. The evaluation found that greater emphasis should be placed on CV preparation and development. This could be achieved through a planned series of workshops at three monthly intervals where apprentices review, revise and update their CVs. It may be possible for SYC's extensive networks to engage individuals with HR expertise to run such events.
10. External colleagues with HR expertise may also have skills apprentices would find helpful in dealing with formal interviews. When asked what help and support would be useful to them, one apprentice at the end of their scheme and without a clear idea as yet of the next steps commented

*"... I don't know... I suppose it's all on me really... some help with interviews would be good."*

11. Developing CV and interview support might be a practical way of focusing attention.



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### **EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS**

The evaluation set out to address 2 key questions

- What was working well in relation to the apprenticeship scheme from the perspective of individual participants and what could be improved.
- Was the apprenticeship equipping young people with skills and expectations that would enhance opportunities to build successful careers and lives.

#### **What was working well.**

1. 15 young people had completed or are currently engaged with the apprentice scheme during the first year of the funding period. The scheme is well on course to achieve the required outcome of 50 completed apprentices by 2023.
2. A major finding of the 2015 evaluation was the importance of SYC's values and policies of sticking with people from disrupted and often chaotic backgrounds, who frequently demonstrated behaviour which challenge some services. This policy is continuing to pay dividends. The evaluation firmly endorses SYC's enactment of its values in deliberately setting out to engage youngsters who might be considered 'hard to reach'.
3. The emotional, financial and social cost of failing to engage with needy youngsters is evident across the UK in the lives of youngsters who have not had the opportunity of taking part in such a scheme. By contrast the apprenticeship program continues to represent excellent value for money.
4. Some apprentices had loving and supportive families but poor experience of educational achievement because of learning difficulties. Other apprentices had additional needs arising from the experience of disruptive family backgrounds, homelessness and imprisonment. Set against this background there was clear evidence that engagement with the SYC community and staff through the apprenticeship scheme enabled life chances to be developed and realised. For all the apprentices there was a significant positive difference between their lives in the present and their past. Apprentices who had left the scheme during the period of the evaluation had developed a clear sense of career direction and a more settled life. The majority had implemented practical plans for working with children and young people.
5. There was clear evidence of apprentices developing personal resilience that moved them away from destructive life cycles. Enabling trust and responsibility within a strong team work ethos was described by a number of interviewees as a maturing experience. Being settled in communities and having access to public transport meant apprentices were well

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placed to take advantage of the scheme. A network of individuals able to provide help, and knowing when to ask for support, was an important outcome.

6. Apprentices were developing important life skills in terms of self-organisation, time management and staying calm which are likely to be valuable in their transfer to personal lives and future career opportunities.
7. The apprenticeship scheme provides an opportunity, unique in the lives of some, to make a contribution, to help others and to receive positive feedback. This positive dynamic develops and enhances self-esteem and a sense of achievement. The practical development of youth work skills which underpinned this dynamic were built, in part, through personal motivation and modelling behaviour on that of other members of the staff team. This gave the opportunity to develop a new and professional way of interacting with children and young people.
8. Given growing levels of need amongst young people and considering the centres expertise SYC may wish to consider a focused expansion marketing and targeting of the apprenticeship scheme on those with actual or potential interest in youth work.

### **What could be improved**

9. Areas for improvement discussed in the evaluation findings involve:
  - a. NVQ tutoring
  - b. Exit planning
  - c. A more structured and coordinated approach to placements away from SYC.
10. Consideration could be given to developing 'in-house' NVQ resources. Potential funders should not see NVQ support as an 'add-on' but rather an intrinsic aspect of the overall scheme and potentially a key ingredient in its success. Furthermore, developing NVQ tutoring on an in-house basis would allow more assertive and targeted direction of support to individual need.

### **Was the apprenticeship equipping young people with skills and expectations that would enhance opportunities to build successful careers and lives.**

11. The evaluation identified evidence that the SYC staff team were making excellent use of BL lottery funding in developing the skill set of young people working as apprentices.
12. All members of the group had begun to develop expectations and opportunities that, if pursued, would be likely to improve emotional and material well-being. The contrast between the chaotic nature of previous lives, the sense of purpose relevant to the present and the development of future plans was obvious. It is hard to see how a group of individuals with diverse needs could have made such achievements without the apprenticeship scheme.

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13. This evaluation found that the majority of outcomes from the 2015 evaluation had been sustained and developed. This is particularly so in relation to maintaining focus on the most disadvantaged young people, a strong team work ethos, and new line management arrangements with the potential to bring more person-centred support and guidance to the progress of individual apprentices.
14. More broadly, the evaluation endorses SYC's continuing positioning in universal services as the best way of meeting the needs of as many youngsters as possible, rather than adopting targeted short-term initiatives of the sort which are developing around issues of public safety such as knife crime.
15. However, there may be scope to consider outreach work with parents and communities where there are concerns in relation to substance misuse, crime and antisocial behaviour. Advice is available in relation to 'Community Guardian' and community mediation schemes which might strengthen SYC's whole system approach.
16. It was clear that SYC are addressing a range of needs, for example learning difficulties and mental well-being, that arguably might have been addressed by statutory agencies either in the past or at present. Examples of such agencies include statutory education services and CHAMHS. Given this it may be timely to review partnership arrangements to ensure such agencies are certain they are making an appropriate contribution to the services provided by SYC.
17. There was clear and sustained evidence identified across the evaluation that the apprenticeship scheme is successfully delivering SYC's 3 strategic objectives of promoting health and well-being, education and career prospects, and community presence.

**DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

18. The apprenticeship scheme has established a sound knowledge base and strong credentials for delivering successful outcomes with disadvantaged young people. In the past the scheme has followed a clear objective for helping such youngsters develop into urban youth workers. The goal of developing urban youth workers is firmly endorsed by this evaluation.
19. Given the scheme's successful track record of interventions with challenging young people, the background of reductions in resources available to universal youth services and the projects capacity to deliver real value for money the evaluation found clear grounds for expanding and doubling the capacity of the apprenticeship scheme.
20. Such an approach would require careful costing and should include additional staff time in order to ensure that extra commitments were deliverable, and the project continued to achieve value for money.

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### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the evidence identified during the evaluation the following recommendations are made.

### **IMMEDIATE ACTION**

#### **NVQ programme**

1. SYC's NVQ programme should be respecified and recommissioned. Future providers should be closely scrutinised in relation to their previous outcomes, experience and qualifications of their teaching staff and the quality of their learning resources. Scrutiny should include expertise and capacity to develop practical strategies which individuals with learning difficulties can utilise.
2. Given the apparent 'cost shunting' involving individuals with learning difficulties and associated mental ill-health there are grounds for exploring relationships with other agencies with a view to sharing expertise and cost.
3. Given that the NVQ programme is a central element of the apprenticeship program consideration should be given to directly employing appropriately skilled NVQ tutoring resources.

#### **Exit Planning**

4. New line management arrangements should focus on beginning planning for the end of the apprenticeship at the very beginning. Exit planning should be needs led and proceed at a pace appropriate to the apprentice. Drift and anxiety rather than forward planning appear evident at the midpoint of the apprenticeship. Line managers may wish to note this in the supervision of apprentices.

### **OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Placements**

5. Allied to exit planning, SYC should review its placement arrangements in order to bring a more structured and coherent strategy to each individual. It is suggested that a structured programme could include 3 placements for each individual. It is also recommended that a final placement should have a clear relationship with employment opportunities. A member of SYC's management team could take responsibility for overseeing and coordinating placements.

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**Courses**

6. SYC should review the range of courses provided to apprentices in order to ensure that each individual has the opportunity to build on the learning and life skills being developed during the apprenticeship period. It is good practice for apprentices to be enrolled on courses they are interested in, for example sports qualifications or which arise through opportunities such as the Duke of Edinburgh award. However, there should be a closer relationship between learning needs arising through NVQ tutoring, line management supervision and exit planning, and placement experience.

**PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

7. SYC should give consideration, with funders, to expanding and doubling the capacity of the apprenticeship scheme.
8. The goal of an apprenticeship scheme developing urban youth workers is firmly endorsed by this evaluation.

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