

A *Dynamic Future* gaps analysis and impact summary

November 2018



1 Key findings

1.1 Demand for *A Dynamic Future*

Independent analysis of publicly-available data and project monitoring data suggests that the potential demand for a transition support service like *A Dynamic Future* is far higher than the demand levels which can be met by the current resources available to deliver the project. This provides a strong argument for continuing or even increasing the funding available to the project.

The project has supported an average of 40 young people per year over the last five years (2013-18) and has been at capacity for most of this period.

The key groups of young people who are likely to benefit from support from *A Dynamic Future* are:

Group 1: Disabled young people who are not in education, training and employment (NEET) and who would benefit from support to:

- a.) Build confidence, skills independence; and
- b.) Re-engage with education, training and employment (ETE) or with volunteering as a stepping stone to entering ETE.

Group 2: Disabled young people who are in ETE but who would benefit from support to:

- a.) Stay engaged or achieve their full potential in their current setting; and/or
- b.) Transition to another ETE setting or to volunteering as a stepping stone to further ETE; and/or
- c.) Improve their confidence, wellbeing and independence.

Total numbers of young people in group 1: Using publicly-available data we estimate that the total population of disabled young people aged 16-24 in Wrexham who are NEET in any one year is 330¹. This means that up to 330 young people in any one year might benefit from this type of support, which is more than 8 times the volume of young people currently supported by the project per year.

¹ Estimates calculated based on data available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland> and: <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/young-people-not-education-employment-training/?lang=en> Data is not available in relation to children aged 14 and 15 who are NEET, so this figure may be an under-estimate.

Total numbers of young people in group 2: Welsh Government statistics indicate that in the 2011-12 academic year there were 495 post-16 learners in further education and work-based learning in Wrexham who had a disability². It is not possible to estimate the proportion of young people in this group who might benefit from support from *A Dynamic Future* (because some of these young people might not be experiencing barriers to engaging with ETE or need support to improve their confidence, wellbeing and independence). If, for example, 50% of them would benefit from support this would mean that 248 young people might need support, which is more than 6 times the volume of young people currently supported by the project per year.

In addition, Welsh Government statistics based on local authority registers of people with a learning disability or physical/sensory disability³ suggest that levels of disability amongst the population of Wrexham are increasing. This may result in increased demand for a service like *A Dynamic Future* in the future.

1.2 Gaps currently addressed by *A Dynamic Future*

The gaps analysis and final evaluation identified a number of gaps which are currently addressed by *A Dynamic Future*⁴. This suggests that if the project were no longer funded it would leave a cohort of young people unsupported, or less well supported than they are at present.

- *A Dynamic Future* is the only local service offering transition support related to ETE which **specifically targets disabled young people** and where being disabled is one of the eligibility criteria. It also fills a gap by offering **support to young people who do not meet the threshold for statutory transition support** and who therefore would be unlikely to receive equivalent support from another service.

“I don't know what would happen without them. People often fall through the gap. I'm not sure of any services in Wrexham who do stuff similar. Maybe through school but think that's it”. (Service provider)

“Absolutely, vital service. So many people coming through with Autism or mental health issues and lots of those don't meet the criteria for social services” (Service provider)

- *A Dynamic Future* has **more flexibility than other local services to tailor support to individual young people and can offer a greater level of person-centred support**. All stakeholders who were interviewed about the project reported that the person-centred approach taken to support disabled young people created a friendly and supportive atmosphere which atmosphere was viewed as essential in helping young people to achieve the goals they wanted and to promote a successful transition.

² More up-to-date statistics were not available. These statistics are based on provider data on the numbers of post-16 learners in further education and work-based learning (excluding universities). They may be an over-estimate because they are not based on unique learners and therefore duplication of reporting of the same learner by different providers is possible.

³ Registration is voluntary so the figures may under-represent the actual number of people with a disability.

⁴ These gaps were primarily identified through: a desktop review of the websites and other online material relating to services whose remit might overlap with *A Dynamic Future*'s; and consultation with *A Dynamic Future* staff, young people and parents/carers supported by the project, and service providers working in partnership with the project. The gaps analysis did not involve consultation with other services with similar remits and therefore it is possible that there are components of these other services of which we are not aware.

“It is a lot more easy and comfortable than other projects I have done before - it is more relaxed and there is less pressure. Other projects there was lots of pressure to get things done quickly which was hard to handle and it was only once a week.” (Young person)

“We also work with other services but we link in more easily with A Dynamic Future. Don't know if it's because they are more local compared to other bigger services which have lots of centres or because they are more supportive and have a personalised touch.” (Service provider)

- In addition to offering support to engage with ETE, A Dynamic Future focuses on **enabling young people to identify and engage with volunteering opportunities**. This is not offered by other local services, and Dynamic staff reported that volunteering can act as a crucial stepping stone to accessing ETE.
- A Dynamic Future offers **specific support around building confidence**, which is also offered by one other local service focused on supporting young people into employment but does not appear to be offered by the other services aiming to support engagement with education and training.
- A Dynamic Future's **focus on practical/life skills** appears to be unique amongst local services supporting disabled young people. This includes elements such as transport training, domestic skills, money management, time-keeping, road safety, internet safety, healthy eating and self-defence. The majority of stakeholders interviewed about the project highlighted that these skills are vital steps in becoming more independent and that they often precede young people being ready for employment.

“Our programme is to reach out to vulnerable people in the community. Ours is more focused on employment so A Dynamic Future is a step before. [A Dynamic Future] works with people who aren't ready for our programmes.” (Service provider)

- Equally, A Dynamic Future's **emphasis on providing opportunities to socialise and reduce social isolation** appears to be a distinctive feature. All stakeholders interviewed reported that the social aspect of A Dynamic Future makes the service unique and is a vital step in building young people's confidence in preparation for transition.

“All the activities, getting together with other people and going out for meals or on trips. It gets me out of the house.” (Young person)

- A Dynamic Future offers **wellbeing support and advice** in relation to areas which are not offered by other local services focusing on transition, including sexual health and drug and alcohol use.
- A Dynamic Future is the only local service identified which has a **mechanism to enable young people to remain in contact with the service and re-engage for support if required**. This takes the form of ongoing attendance at monthly social events organised for young people who are currently working with the service or who have worked with it previously.

1.3 Further gaps in local service provision which could be addressed in the future

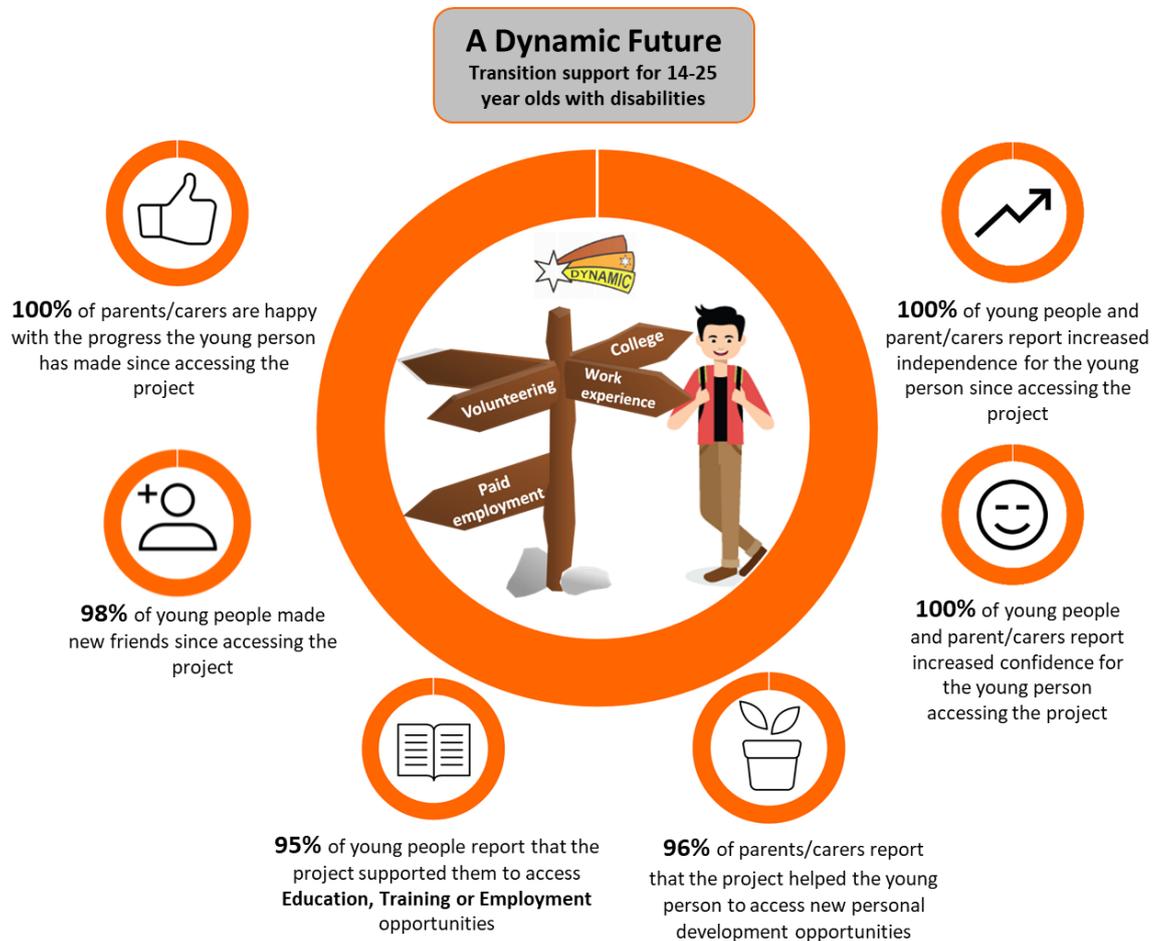
The gaps analysis and final evaluation also identified a number of additional gaps in local service provision which could be addressed by *A Dynamic Future* if continuation funding is made available. These are:

- **Engaging more intensively with local employers.** A number of stakeholders noted that the work of *A Dynamic Future* is inhibited by the limited suitable job opportunities which are available for young people, and specifically for disabled young people who might require adjustments. Stakeholders who discussed this area suggested that it would be useful if the service could focus more resource on working with employers to create and maintain suitable work experience and employment opportunities, in order to increase the pool of opportunities available locally
- **Providing young people with more intensive support to engage.** The evaluation findings suggest that the project already dedicates time and resource to supporting young people to engage but that a small percentage of young people might benefit from more intensive and specialist support to enable them to overcome barriers to engagement. These findings also indicate that it is important for the project to be able to offer the opportunity for young people to be referred to the project a second time or to re-engage.
- **Providing effective transition support to young people who have mental health issues.** Staff reported during evaluation interviews that they believe they would benefit from additional training to increase their skills and confidence in supporting young people who have mental health issues. Whilst this is a potential approach to addressing this challenge, it should also be acknowledged that there are likely to be limits to the level of specialist support which the project can safely and reasonably offer. Therefore, there may also be instances where it is more appropriate to acknowledge the parameters of support available at the project and to explore partnerships with other services for specific types of support which fall outside of these parameters.

1.4 Summary of outcomes achieved with young people

The final evaluation found strong evidence from a range of sources that *A Dynamic Future* is successfully achieving its intended outcomes with the vast majority of young people who engage with the project, and is also achieving outcomes with their family members. Figure 1 provides examples of some of the outcomes achieved with young people.

Figure 1: outcomes achieved with young people



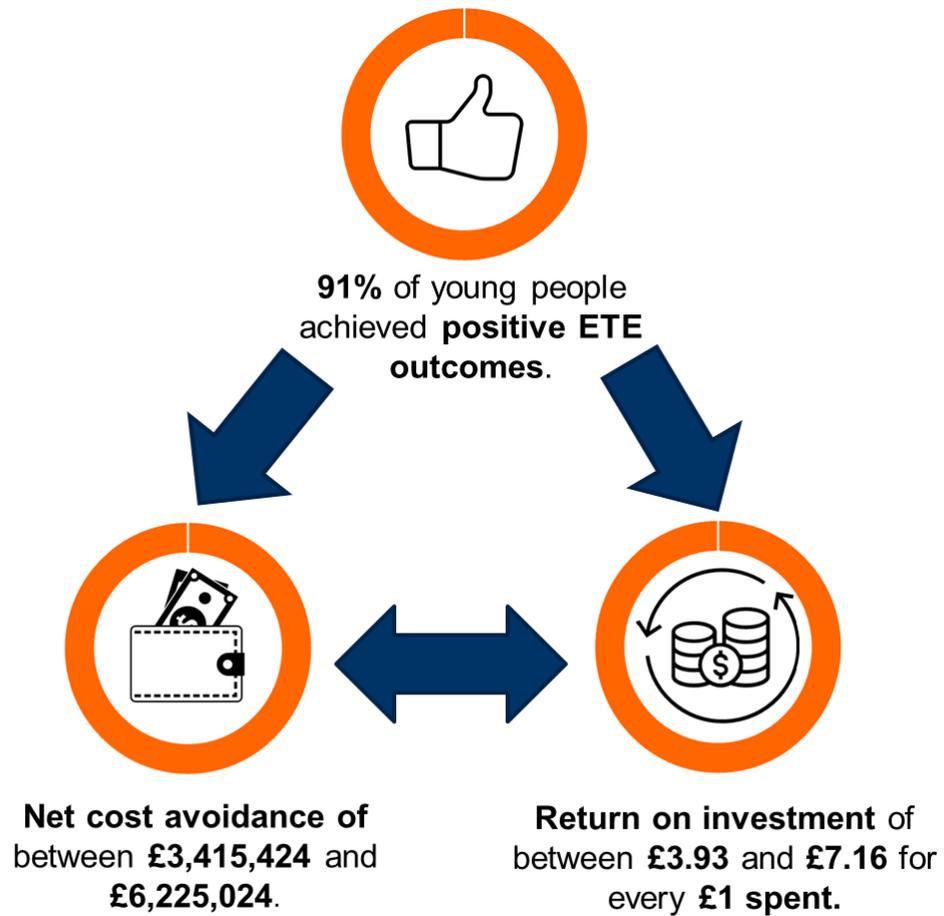
1.5 Return on investment

The final evaluation was able to estimate the number of young people who had achieved positive ETE outcomes at the end of their engagement with the project. It was also possible to estimate the number of young people the project had prevented from becoming (or remaining) NEET. Preventing young people from being NEET is important for their future life chances but also to reduce costs to society such as reliance on the welfare system.

Figure 2 summarises how the project's success in achieving positive ETE opportunities for young people and thus reducing the amount of young people becoming (or remaining) NEET has led to cost avoidances and a return on investment⁵. This focuses only on improved ETE outcomes for young people. It does not include estimates for improved social care outcomes, for instance, or for other outcome areas which might be attributable to the project and which might represent a return on investment, either financial or social.

⁵ Figures are based on an analysis of monitoring data completed by project workers in relation to 152 young people who had finished their engagement with *A Dynamic Future* by the end of year 5. There are a number of limitations in this approach to estimating cost avoidance and return on investment. As a result, the estimates produced should be treated with caution.

Figure 2: Return on investment



1.6 Views on value for money

As part of the independent evaluation process, it was found that all stakeholders believed that the project was good value for money for **four key reasons**:

- The project has achieved **positive outcomes** for young people and their families for **less money than planned**.
- The project is **filling a gap in services** through its ability to support young people who would not meet the threshold for statutory support.
- The project is unique in delivering very flexible and person-centred support with a focus on **soft skills** and **life skills**.
- The project **does not incur additional costs** for service providers working in partnership with the project.

2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The estimated potential demand for a transition support service like *A Dynamic Future* suggests that it would be beneficial for funding to be made available to continue or even expand the project.

Recommendation 2: *A Dynamic Future* addresses a number of gaps in local service provision. These include:

- Providing ETE support which specifically targets disabled young people, including those who do not meet the threshold for statutory transition support.
- Offering person-centred support which has high levels of flexibility built in so that it can be tailored to individual young people.
- Enabling disabled young people to identify and engage with volunteering opportunities.
- Providing specific support within a transition service around:
 - Confidence building.
 - Developing life/practical skills.
 - Areas of wellbeing, such as sexual health and drug and alcohol use.
- Providing opportunities to socialise and reduce social isolation.
- Enabling young people to remain in contact with the service and re-engage for support if required.

Should funding be made available to continue the project, it is recommended that this be of an adequate level to enable the project to continue to offer these unique elements of provision.

Recommendation 3: Should funding be made available to continue the project, it is recommended that this be of adequate level to enable the project to explore whether it can develop provision to fill three further gaps in the local service landscape. These are:

- Dedicating increased resource to engaging more intensively with local employers.
- Providing young people with more intensive support to engage.
- Providing more effective transition support to young people who have mental health issues.