

# **Pilton Youth and Children's Project**

## **An impact evaluation of holiday and out-of-school activity**

**September 2021**



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## About this report

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This report presents the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit's (SPIRU)<sup>1</sup> appraisal of the work of Pilton Youth and Children's Project (PYCP)<sup>2</sup>. SPIRU has no vested interest in the work of PYCP; this is an independent appraisal. This report comprises a single page of headline findings, a four-page Executive Summary, and a full 32-page report, including Annexes.

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## About SPIRU

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SPIRU is an interdisciplinary research group based at Glasgow Caledonian University, which often works in partnership with other stakeholders to investigate and develop effective responses to poverty and inequality in Scotland and beyond. SPIRU is committed to advancing GCU's mission to promote the Common Good and to align its research to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. SPIRU contributes to these ambitions through applied research, policy analysis and engaging with policy makers, campaign groups and community stakeholders.

SPIRU has a particular interest in food insecurity issues: it has written several reports on school food.<sup>3,4,5</sup> During 2020, it reviewed work in Scotland to tackle food insecurity during the coronavirus crisis, completing a nationwide review of local action<sup>6</sup>, and undertaking case study analyses of local partnerships<sup>7</sup> and local organisations<sup>8</sup>.

**For more information about SPIRU or this report:** Professor John McKendrick / [jmke@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:jmke@gcu.ac.uk)

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## Ten Takeaways

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- 1** Pilton Youth and Children's Project (PYCP) gained charitable status in 1997. It formed following a merger of two other local organisations. Together with its predecessors, it has served the community of Pilton in north west Edinburgh for over forty years.
- 2** PYCP is a traditional community-based youth service that provides a wide range of services to children and young people, including opportunities for (i) play; (ii) open access youth and children's work; (iii) alternatives to crime; (iv) intensive support; and (v) employability.
- 3** The community served by PYCP is one in which poverty and deprivation prevails. There continues to be a demand for the services and opportunities it provides.
- 4** Although primarily a service for children and youth, the benefits of PYCP extend to their families and the wider community.
- 5** PYCP is a stable presence in the neighbourhood. It is a trusted and reliable source of support for the community.
- 6** PYCP provides general and specialist services, with its specialist services complementing statutory provision and providing support to those facing 'challenging' circumstances, such as those who are at risk of engaging in anti-social behaviour, and others who benefit from intensive 1:1 support (such as those experiencing anxiety or ADHD).
- 7** PYCP staff understand their community. They are well connected, aware of opportunities and knowledgeable of the issues facing young people in their area.
- 8** PYCP contributes to efforts to tackle child food poverty and promote healthy eating in Pilton. For example, food is provided at each of its clubs, and it has organised a holiday hunger club during recent school holidays.
- 9** Over the years, PYCP has been adept at aligning its work to contemporary policy priorities. Notably, PYCP has a track record of delivering the equivalent of free school meals and activities for children and young people over school holiday periods, both of which are emerging as provisions of interest to the Scottish Government.
- 10** As with all Third Sector organisations, what PYCP is able to achieve is dependent on funding. Although secure for the present, there is the perennial concern of whether funds will be available to continue delivering the service it provides. The prospect of attending to increased local demand for its services as we recover from COVID-19 is a concern.

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# Executive Summary and Key Recommendations

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## About this evaluation

This is an independent appraisal by the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU) of the work of Pilton Youth and Children's Project (PYCP). SPIRU was invited by the Scottish Government in the Spring of 2020 to undertake this evaluation. Initial plans to complete the work over the Summer of 2020 were interrupted with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. The evaluation draws on five sources: the wider academic/applied literature on out of school provision; documentary evidence provided by Pilton Youth and Children's Project; interviews with staff; interviews with service users; and responses of Debbie Pilton (Business Manager) to the research team's ad-hoc queries. The sources consulted are listed in the Annex and are referenced throughout the report. This report was drafted in November 2020, revised in the first few months of 2021, and published by SPIRU in September 2021. Professor McKendrick managed the evaluation, in conjunction with Neil McNulty, a SPIRU researcher. The conclusions reached are independent.

## What we knew in advance

### *What are the key historical milestones of Pilton Youth and Children's Project?*

- **1997 - Charitable Status.** An amalgamation of two separate organisations, PYCP gained charitable status in 1997. As PYCP, it has been delivering services to the children and youth of Pilton for well over twenty years.
- **2015 - Free Meal Provisions.** PYCP began to provide nutritious hot meals during the school holidays in the summer of 2015.
- **2018 - Award-Winning Organisation.** PYCP was awarded Carmichael's Charity of the Year in August 2018.

### *What did we know about the work of Pilton Youth and Children's Project?*

- **Five inter-connected services.** PYCP organises its work around five inter-connected services, i.e. (i) play; (ii) open access youth and children's work; (iii) alternatives to crime; (iv) intensive support; and (v) employability.
- **Staffing.** PYCP has fourteen contracted staff, draws on sessional staff and volunteers to deliver its work, and has a Board of nine Trustees.
- **CYP users.** PYCP estimates that around 450 different children currently use its services.
- **Summer holiday programme.** PYCP's impact statement for 2018 reported that 1500 spaces were offered to children, with the 2018 summer holiday programme delivering 1400 dinners, suppers and picnics.
- **Covid impact.** The Covid-19 pandemic meant that PYCP had to deliver its 2020 summer programme online through Zoom. PYCP workers delivered baking ingredients and arts and crafts materials to users at their home address.

### ***What community is served by Pilton Youth and Children's Project?***

- **North West Edinburgh.** Based at the Greenhouse in West Pilton Brae, PYCP serves the Pilton neighbourhood, and the immediate surrounding area in the Forth Ward.
- **Deprived Neighbourhood.** Although PYCP is an asset in a neighbourhood that has many more, Pilton is among the most deprived neighbourhoods in the city of Edinburgh.
- **Serving young people from 5 to 18.** Although the wider community (and wider families) benefit from the work of PYCP, the services are targeted at school-aged children.

### ***What are the main goals of Pilton Youth and Children's Project?***

- **Principal activities.** PYCP's principal activity is to offer an innovative programme of personal and social development to children and young people aged between 5 and 18 residing in the Forth Ward in Edinburgh. It aims to provide opportunities to pursue activities and interests, not as an end in themselves, but as part of a wider development process through which children and young people learn about themselves and their relationship with the society in which they live.
- **Charitable Objectives.** PYCP's objectives are twofold: (i) work with children and young people to promote their social, emotional and physical well-being as they move from childhood to adulthood; and (ii) ensure children and young people's needs are being met through the resources of the Project, their families, the local community and other organisations.

## **What did we find?**

### ***What difference does Pilton Youth and Children's Project make?***

- **Providing and widening opportunity.**
  - PYCP provides a comprehensive and varied programme of groups and clubs for children and young people.
  - In 2018-19, 80% of children and young people in attendance were reported to attend regularly.
  - Core activity is delivered in Pilton, although opportunity is also provided for children and young people to venture beyond Pilton on PYCP trips.
- **Realising potential.**
  - PYCP seeks to overcome the barriers that are created from living and growing up in poverty.
  - PYCP aims to help young people to develop skills and self-belief.
  - PYCP provides volunteering opportunities.
  - Participants outlined how they had stayed on at school to complete 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year studies, which they attributed to encouragement and support from PYCP workers.
- **Reducing anti-social behaviours.**
  - The PYCP has an Alternative to Crime project called FACENorth.
  - FACENorth organises *Midnight and Beyond*, a club that runs from 7pm until 3am to ensure that those at-risk of offending are occupied and less likely to encounter trouble.
  - FACENorth also helps offenders improve employability skills, delivering Maths and English classes.
  - It is reported that there has been a 67% reduction in criminal charges by young people accessing FACENorth.

- **Supporting those from ‘challenging’ circumstance.**
  - PYCP provides intensive 1:1 support; a service 43 children and young people used in 2018-19.
  - Those receiving 1:1 support manage conditions such as anxiety and ADHD.
- **Tackling child food poverty.**
  - PYCP provides food at each of its clubs.
  - PYCP runs a holiday hunger club during school holidays.
  - It provided a food bank to support families struggling with the economic impact of Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Facilitating healthy eating.**
  - For some users who were not attending school and therefore had no access to free school meal provision, meals provided by PYCP was the only ones that they received.
  - Children and young people use the PYCP kitchen, renovated at the cost of £4,700 in August 2017, to learn how to prepare and cook healthy meals.
- **Benefiting the wider community.**
  - Although targeted at children and young people, it is argued that the wider community benefits as a result of this work (for example, through reductions in levels of anti-social behaviour).
  - Parents report that family life is less stressful on account of the opportunities and provisions that PYCP delivers to children and young people. For example, family income can ‘stretch further’ when families do not have to budget to meet the costs of participating in PYCP activities.

#### ***What influences how Pilton Youth and Children’s Project makes a difference?***

- **Stable presence.** The longevity and stable presence of PYCP is a particular strength. It is a trusted source of support for the community.
- **Context – unmet demand.** There is a demand for the services that PYCP provides. The wider context of deprivation in the city implies that its work has the potential to be impactful.
- **Connections.** Staff also have a local orientation. They are well connected, aware of opportunities and knowledgeable of the issues facing young people in their area.
- **Quality of staff and staff qualities.** The way in which the service is provided is as important as what is provided. It is clear that staff understand the challenges faced by the young people (and families) that they serve.
- **Funding.** As with all Third Sector organisations, what PYCP is able to achieve is dependent on the funding available. Although secure for the present, there is the perennial concern of whether funds will be available to continue delivering the service it provides. The prospect of increasing demand on strained budgets as we recover from COVID-19 is a concern.

## **What needs to happen now?**

### **Positioning PYCP to capitalise on holiday food provision investment.**

- There is growing interest in extending entitlement of the equivalent of free school meals to eligible children and young people over holiday periods. If funding materialises from this interest, then it may present an opportunity for PYCP to consolidate its work, as it has already demonstrated its capacity to deliver food alongside activity in holiday periods; however, it may also present a challenge to PYCP if alternative suppliers are funded to deliver an equivalent service. It may be prudent for PYCP to strengthen its evidence base to demonstrate its ability to meet the needs of children and young people in the Forth ward in Edinburgh over school holiday periods.

### **Aligning work to wider strategic goals**

- PYCP can demonstrate that it is fulfilling its charitable purpose and meeting the needs of many children and young people in Pilton. However, it may also be helpful for PYCP to acknowledge how its work already also contributes to wider local (City of Edinburgh Council), national (Scottish Government) and global agendas (Sustainable Development Goals) to strengthen communities, tackle poverty, promote wellbeing and achieve sustainable development.

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# 1. Introduction to this Impact Evaluation

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## Introduction

The aim of this report is to appraise the work of the Pilton Youth and Children's Project (PYCP). The starting point for our inquiry is an understanding that the Club has successfully delivered holiday/after school provision in its neighbourhood. Our objective is to undertake a rapid appraisal to answer the following key questions:

- What is the nature of the service that the PYCP provides?
- To what extent does provision meet local need?
- What is the impact – and claims to impact – of PYCP?
- What are the drivers of the PYCP's success?
- What lessons can be learned from the work of the PYCP that might help improve provision elsewhere?

## Pilton Youth and Children's Project and Pilton

PYCP is a traditional community-based youth service that provides a wide range of services to children and young people in north west Edinburgh, including opportunities for (i) play; (ii) open access youth and children's work; (iii) alternatives to crime; (iv) intensive support; and (v) employability.

PYCP began offering free nutritious cooked meals during the school holidays in the summer of 2015.

## Scottish Government Interests

The work of PYCP is of interest to the Scottish Government, which has shown growing concern over food insecurity and in the nature

of out of school provision/childcare in recent years.

With regard to childcare/out of school provision:

- The 2017-18 Programme for Government committed to publish a framework for after-school and holiday childcare.<sup>9</sup>
  - In response to this commitment, the Scottish Government consulted the sector in 2019,<sup>10</sup> and published a summary of report on this consultation in November 2020.<sup>11</sup>
- The Child Poverty Delivery Plan, 2018-2022 had a specific action on after-school childcare and holiday provision.<sup>12</sup>
  - In response to the commitment in the Child Poverty Delivery Plan, the Scottish Government introduced a £3 million *Access to Childcare* fund in 2020 to support childcare provision and activities in local communities. Managed by Children in Scotland, fifteen organisations were funded in September 2020 (through to March 2022) for work that aims to explore how childcare can become more accessible and affordable to low-income families.<sup>13</sup>
- £20 million has been allocated to fund a range of activities for children, young people and families, in what is being described as a National Summer of Play in 2021.<sup>14</sup>
- In the 2021-22 Programme for Government,<sup>15</sup> the Scottish Government committed to:
  - build a new system of wraparound childcare for school aged children. It committed to a five-year delivery plan, with details to be published before the end of 2021.
  - Expand free early learning and childcare to 1- and 2-year-olds – starting in this parliamentary term for children from low-income households

With regards to tackling food insecurity:

- Three questions on food insecurity were introduced to the Scottish Health Survey in 2017,<sup>16</sup> which provide data for the new National Indicator on food insecurity that was introduced in 2018.<sup>17</sup>
- The Poverty and Inequality Commission has offered advice to the Scottish Government on tackling food insecurity during the school holidays.<sup>18</sup>
- The 2019-20 Programme for Government committed to increase investment from £0.5 to £2 million to accelerate action on food insecurity in the school holidays.<sup>19</sup>
- In May 2020, the Scottish Government published research mapping organisations responding to food insecurity in Scotland.<sup>20</sup>

The Scottish Government is interested in projects, such as PYCP, where school holiday period provision comprises food and activity/childcare.

## ***Time to Prosper Impact Evaluation***

This evaluation is a key part of a broader project, funded by the Scottish Government, that aims to understand how different models of holiday/after school provision can generate positive outcomes for children and young people.<sup>21</sup>

PYCP is of interest as it an established children and youth project serving a defined neighbourhood in a large city.

Complementary evaluations of organisations operating under different models are being undertaken as part of this wider project:

- A small food-based charity that operated in rural Scotland<sup>22</sup>
- A large food-based charity operating in deprived neighbourhoods across the whole of a Scottish city<sup>23</sup>
- A large activity-based charity operating across large parts of a Scottish city<sup>24</sup>

## **Our Approach to Evaluation**

The approach adopted is that in the style of an appreciative inquiry, in which the objective is to explore ‘the best of what is, in order to imagine what could be’.<sup>25</sup> Adopting a ‘this works’ starting point, this appraisal focuses on identifying the drivers of success, in order that others might glean useful learning. Notwithstanding our starting position, we maintain a critical stance throughout.

This is a rapid evaluation, undertaken over a ten-week period in the latter half of 2020, a year in which the operations of PYCP had to adapt to the conditions introduced to manage public health in response to Covid-19. Consequently, it was not possible to observe operations during a school holiday period, as was originally intended.

Our approach is described more fully in Annex 1.

## **Structure of this report**

This report begins by describing Pilton Youth and Children’s Project and its work (Ch.02), before evidencing the need for its work in relation to tackling poverty and food insecurity, and providing support related to family employment (Ch. 03). The appraisal progresses through three sections:

- *Deliverables. Claims to Impact.* What does Pilton Youth and Children’s Project provide? (Ch. 04)
- *What Makes the Difference?* A review that aims to understand the deliverables in context (Ch. 05)
- *Mission Match.* Mapping the work of Pilton Youth and Children’s Project to the wider goals that work to serve the ‘common good’ in Edinburgh and Scotland (Ch. 06).

We conclude by reflecting what has worked and what others might learn from this work (Ch. 07).

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## 2. The Work of Pilton Youth and Children’s Project

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### Introduction

In this section of the report, we describe the activities, priorities, people, development and funding of Pilton Youth and Children’s Project (PYCP).

### Mission

The PYCP’s overarching aims and objectives are:<sup>26</sup>

- To promote social inclusion through supporting a positive start in the lives of children and young people, focusing on personal growth & development;
- To create engaging, educational experiences that broaden horizons;
- To ensure that its services are responsive to ever changing needs and priorities.

### Origins

PYCP has been a registered Scottish Charity since 1997. With roots going back to the 1980s, it formed from a merger of the Pilton Youth Programme (PYP) and the Pilton Adventure Play Association (PAPA). PYP was set up as an Intermediate Treatment project for those aged 12 and older. Its main remit was delivering intensive support to young people at risk. PAPA was formed in response to demand from local residents for a safe play area for the children of Pilton.

### Development

Table 1 summarises some of the key milestones in the development of PYCP.

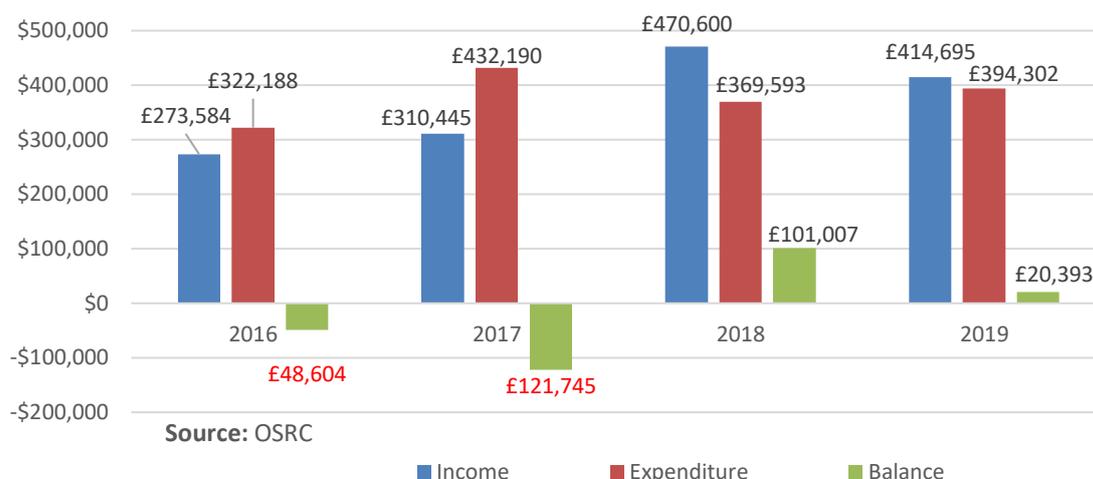
**Table 1: Timeline for the development of Pilton Youth and Children’s Project**

1997	PYCP attains charitable status 1:1 support service and youth and children’s clubs are established.
2015, April	<i>Focusing on Alternatives to Crime</i> Project launched.
2015, July	PY Dinners: Started to offer a nutritious cooked meal during school holidays.
2016	<i>Transition Support Early Links</i> Project launched.
2017, Aug	£4700 donation from Radio Forth funds new kitchen to provide free meals and cooking lessons to over 250 young people.
2018, Aug	Carmichael’s Charity of the Year.

### Finance

PYCP’s income is derived from grants from a wide range of funders including the City of Edinburgh Council, Scotland’s Children’s Lottery, the Sir Tom Farmer Foundation and the Robertson Trust.<sup>27</sup> PYCP generates an annual six-figure income (Figure 1). However, as with any charity, it incurs substantial outlays meeting its charitable purpose and governance costs. PYCP’s overall income, expenditure and balance from 2016 to 2020 is reported in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Income and Expenditure, 2016-2019**



## People

The PYCP has a Board of Directors comprising nine individuals who serve on a voluntary basis<sup>28</sup> and are responsible for the strategic direction of the charity<sup>29</sup>. The Board is comprised of local residents and individuals from a range of professional backgrounds.

PYCP has a staff of fourteen, comprising two Project Managers, a Business Manager, three Youth Development Workers, three 1:1 Support Workers, two Alternative to Crime Workers, an Intensive Support Development Worker, an Adventure Play Worker, and a Trainee Youth Worker.<sup>30</sup>

PYCP also has a team of sessional staff who work regularly within the clubs and groups, and during the school holidays. PYCP offers a variety of volunteering opportunities. While these are “open to anyone who wants to give back, get involved or learn new skills”.<sup>31</sup> PYCP actively encourages older young people who have used the service to become volunteers, with some volunteering over a long period.

## Provision

PYCP’s work is organised into five interconnecting strategic themes<sup>32</sup>. These are (i) Play, (ii) Open Access Youth & Children’s Work, (iii) Intensive Support, (iv) Employability, and (v) Alternatives to Crime.

PYCP offers children and young people aged between 5 and 18 years old residing in the Forth Ward of Edinburgh with a programme of personal and social development. Before lockdown, PYCP was open five days and seven evenings per week, operating from its base in Pilton, Edinburgh.

PYCP reports that 535 different children took part in its school term open groups and clubs for the year ending March 2019 and 43 young people received intensive 1:1 support, with 10 graduating from a 30-week transition programme. Every session includes the provision of free food.

School holiday provision was also offered in the summer of 2018; 3,000 children and young people were reported to participate. Activities were based in Pilton, but also included trips to Edinburgh Zoo, Dynamic Earth and Port Edgar (South Queensferry). A hot nutritious meal was also offered to all children and young people in the local area during the summer holiday. According to PYCP, “for many young people

*this is a lifeline when families on low-income struggle without free school meals".<sup>33</sup> As is discussed in Chapter three, this meets need which otherwise might be unmet in the Pilton area. The Coronavirus pandemic led to the six-week 2020 summer programme being delivered virtually. Ingredients for baking and resources for arts and crafts classes were delivered to the homes of children and young people.*

## **Conclusion**

PYCP has been supporting the Pilton community, in some form, for several decades. The decision to deliver the 2020 programme online was innovative in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

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## 3. Does Pilton Need a Pilton Youth and Children’s Project? The Socio-economic Context of Pilton in Edinburgh

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### Introduction

In this section of the report, we review the wider context within which PYCP operates in order to ascertain whether there is a need for its service. We review the prevalence of poverty and food insecurity in the area, and profile its working families.

### Pilton in Edinburgh

Pilton is a neighbourhood in the north of Edinburgh, Scotland’s capital city. Although situated in a prosperous city, Pilton is widely understood to be a part of Edinburgh in which deprivation and poverty has persisted for many years.

### Poverty in Pilton

According to the latest Scottish Government reports (for pre-Covid-19), it is estimated that over one million people are living in poverty in Scotland at the current time, equivalent to 24% of children, 19% of working aged adults and 14% of pensioners.<sup>34</sup>

There is no direct equivalent of these national data that would allow poverty in Pilton (let alone Edinburgh) to be compared to the national average. On the other hand, recent improvements to the ways in which estimates of child poverty for local authorities are calculated, give greater confidence and improved understanding of its distribution across Scotland.<sup>35</sup>

End Child Poverty’s estimate of child poverty for children aged under 16 suggests that child poverty in Edinburgh is among the lowest in Scotland (20.3% for the city as a whole), but is still far greater than the 2030 targets for

eradication of child poverty in Scotland.<sup>36</sup> Our analysis of HMRC’s ‘Children in Low Income Families Measure’<sup>37</sup> suggest that more intense pockets of poverty can be found in Pilton and surrounding areas, approaching one third of all children in some parts.<sup>38</sup>

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation provides a more broadly based summary of wellbeing, ranking small areas across Scotland in terms of levels of deprivation, and classifying them according to whether they are among Scotland’s Most Deprived areas.<sup>39</sup> Overall, just over one-tenth of datazones in Edinburgh are among Scotland’s 20% Most Deprived areas. However, much of Pilton is among the 20% Most Deprived parts of Scotland, with the most intense pockets found to the west of the area (Muirhouse) and north (Granton).<sup>40</sup>

### Food Security in Pilton

In July 2018, food insecurity was added to the list of National Indicators that suggest whether progress is being made toward achieving the eleven National Outcomes that are part of Scotland’s National Performance Framework.<sup>41</sup> The Scottish Government is committed to measure whether Scotland is making progress in tackling food insecurity and – together other stakeholders – to take action to make this happen.<sup>42</sup>

Almost one in ten adults in Scotland (9%), report that, at some time over the last year (pre Covid period), they were worried about running out of food, because of a lack of money or other resources.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, it was self-reported that the same lack of money or resources, also led to 6% of adults eating less than they should, and 3% of adults running out of food. As for child poverty,

there are no directly equivalent data for local areas.

One way in which we can approximate child food insecurity is to consider the number of pupils who are registered for free school meals. Although an imperfect indicator,<sup>44</sup> it might be reasoned that registration for free school meals beyond the years of universal entitlement (currently P1-P3 across Scotland, to be extended to P4 in August 2021, and to all primary school pupils by August 2022)<sup>45</sup> provides some indication of families need for support to feed school-aged children.

Again using pre-Covid data, to avoid any distortions, beyond the current years of universal entitlement to free school food, one in five children in upper primary school (19.5% of P4-P7)<sup>46</sup> and one in seven secondary school pupils (15.6%) in Scotland are registered for free school meals.<sup>47</sup> In Edinburgh, the respective proportions are 12.1% for upper primary and 11.8% for secondary school. Although below the Scottish average, a substantial proportion of children in Edinburgh are registered for food support.

In 2020 (pre-Covid data), registrations for free school meals (for pupils in P4-P7 for primary schools) is well above the average for Edinburgh for every school in Pilton:

- Forthview PS – 37.4% (3<sup>rd</sup> highest in the city)
- Craigoyston PS – 30%
- Pirniehall PS – 28.7%
- Granton PS – 24.4%
- St David's RC PS – 15.5%
- Craigoyston Community HS – 29.1% (3<sup>rd</sup> highest in the city).

## Working Families in Pilton

Two thirds of children living in poverty in Scotland are living in households with at least one adult in employment; the risk rate of this in-work poverty for families with children seems to have stabilised (68%), having risen

markedly in the five years between 2009-12 and 2014-2017.

In the wider city, just under 80,000 of Edinburgh's citizens are aged under 16, with almost an additional 8,500 aged 16 or 17; one in seven of the city's residents are children (16.7%).<sup>48</sup> One quarter of Edinburgh's 50,000 family households are headed by a single parent (25.1%).<sup>49</sup>

Local labour market indicators for the wider city,<sup>50</sup> estimate that three quarters of working aged adults in Edinburgh are in employment (75%). This is despite the city having a jobs density of 1.07 (the number of jobs for each adult of working age). Edinburgh residents typically earn £617 (median wage for full-time workers).

Pilton has three-times more single parent households than the Edinburgh average, 93% of which are headed by women. Women's poverty rates, and subsequently child poverty rates, are likely to have increased as a result of low-paid women being at particular risk of Covid-19 job disruption such as unemployment, enforced reduction in hours and being furloughed.<sup>51</sup> As there are a higher number of single parent, female-headed households in Pilton than the Edinburgh and Scottish average, the area is more vulnerable to the intensification of poverty that has resulted from Covid-19.

It is not only women-headed households in Pilton that are likely to have been adversely impacted by the pandemic. According to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, Pilton's residents in employment are often found in lower paid, low-skilled jobs. For example, at 26%, its residents are twice as likely than the Edinburgh (11%) and Scottish (12%) average to be working in jobs considered as 'elementary' or 'unskilled'. Furthermore, at 14%, working residents of Pilton are over three times more likely than the Edinburgh average (4%) to be working in the leisure and services industries – ones that have been most affected by Covid-19.<sup>52</sup>

The effects of Covid-19 on families with less secure work was powerfully illustrated by on family from the Pilton community in the research interview:

My partner [had worked] six years with the XXX, but he was made redundant last week ... due to COVID. ... Over the COVID period money has been tight. ... just with the kids being in, a lot more than usual, trying to find more money to cover all of that... I've been cutting down on all other bills or borrowing or selling stuff. COVID's hit us hard - my mental health is being hung out to dry but I just try and ignore it. I've got to get up in the mornings for them and do it for them [her children].

## **Conclusion**

With a sizeable child population, and many families at risk of poverty and food insecurity, and being vulnerably positioned in the labour market, it is clear that the services provided by PYCP could make a positive contribution to children, family and community life.

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## 4. Deliverables: Claims to impact

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### Introduction

In this section we describe the claims to positive impact that were made by PYCP and on behalf of PYCP.

### Earlier Impact Evaluations

Several studies have already reviewed and appraised the work of PYCP. Here, we consider the relevance of these studies to our analysis of holiday activity/childcare and food provision.

Carlin's doctoral thesis explored young people's experiences of transition into adulthood in Pilton, based on fieldwork conducted with the PYCP. He describes his work as "a case study with an ethnographic approach".<sup>53</sup> By conducting observation at the PYCP and interviewing 26 of its users, he was able to present a rich analysis of the collective and individual experiences of young people in Pilton. However, while Carlin's work included an overview of some of the out-of-school activities offered by the PYCP, it did not examine this directly. For example, although reference is made to the provision of free food at every PYCP session, consideration of the significance of this provision was beyond the scope of this study. Carlin drew on his PhD data in a co-authored article entitled, *'Steeling' Young People: Resilience and Youth Policy in Scotland*.<sup>54</sup> This paper also focused on policy, rather than out-of-school activity or food provisions. Other studies focusing on the Pilton area have examined the experiences of fatherhood,<sup>55</sup> and the work of the Pilton Partnership<sup>56</sup>.

This report on PYCP's out-of-school activities and provisions of food, complements and adds value to these existing studies.

### Community functioning

There was a perception amongst each of the PYCP workers who were interviewed that Pilton would be worse without the PYCP. These views were also shared by users and their families. The importance of PYCP services was stressed, with participants two and four, reporting:

If I'm being honest, I think Pilton would ... just crumble really. ... from what I've heard, it [Pilton] was absolutely chaotic, like you had people just going about smashing windows and stuff like that. Obviously, there's people that still do it, but not as much, because we've got a place to go (Participant two).

... the PY is a godsend in the Pilton area ... 'cause if it wasn't for them, the kids would just be running amok in the streets and causing havoc with the police (Participant four).

There was also a sense that the role of PYCP is supporting the community extended beyond offering 'diversionary activities' to offer role models and positive directions to the young people of Pilton:

... it would be terrible (if the PYCP no longer existed), because there isn't anything else in this area for them ... if they lose that ... I reckon the bigger ones will just go back to square one and the wee ones would follow in their footsteps ... I would say a lot of people in the area would find it difficult. (Participant four).

[The PYCP is] more than just a club - they're a support network as well. ... children ... they need the club. It keeps them out of trouble, they can meet friends after school, ... I think it would be deeply missed if it wasn't there anymore. ... as I said it's been in the family for many years. ... (Participant five).

## Reducing anti-social behaviours

FACENorth is PYCP's Alternative to Crime project. It offers participants a wide range of activities, as outlined by its Alternatives to Crimes worker:

... on a Monday we do a thing called 'Our Scheme of Work' ... quite a lot of the time we go round and do wee community clean. We teach them Maths and English 'cause often for them that's the most important thing. It helps them get into college. ... We're there ... for everything, 24/7 and for their families. Every year we go up to Aviemore and places like that and ... do outdoor work with them ... We go to courts with laddies; we go to social work with laddies; we go to panel appearances with laddies and their families to help them; we help families with their benefits; we help families without jobs; we help families on furlough; We also on a Monday and a Tuesday run an employability group, on a Thursday we've got two groups, ... one with much older laddies that we've worked with all the way through (and] another [with a] group of laddies called 'Midnight and Beyond'. ... We decided that we would put on clubs for them from 7pm at night until 10pm, then 10pm at night till 3am in the morning - we would take them out to the middle of nowhere and just let them charge about, talk to them ... and just build relationships

According to the PYCP's Annual Report, this Alternative to Crime project has been successful since its launch in 2015.<sup>57</sup> PYCP reports a 67% reduction in criminal charges by young people accessing the services.

The Alternative for Crime worker (participant Six), discussed these successes in great detail, highlighting how the project had helped one of Edinburgh's most persistent offenders into employment:

We've cut crime by 86%. One of the wee lads that came in at the start ended up getting a job with Community Job Scotland, a laddie who, when we first started working with was ... on track to a secure unit and then jail ... His family had been evicted three times from the area. ... The year we started working with

him he had accumulated 93 charges! ... We started working with the laddie and in two and a half years his offending was down to zero. For the last three years he's no' offended at all. [Now] he's got a house, he's got a family, he's got a wee kid that's nearly four now.

Quantifying the impact of such a service is not straightforward (the annual report estimate of a 67% reduction, contrasts the key worker estimate of 86%). However, precision asides, all stakeholders report a positive impact on crime reduction, as did each of the service users. Anti-social behaviour had not been eradicated (indeed the 'our scheme of work' activity aimed to deal with the consequences of some of this anti-social behaviour). However, a sense was conveyed that anti-social behaviour was lower than would otherwise be as a result of the work of PYCP.

## Providing opportunity and broadening horizons

It is clear from the PYCP documentation (Annual Reports and promotional literature) that it provides a comprehensive offering to young people in the area. This was confirmed in discussions with users and workers. Participant one, a project manager, provided a flavour of what was on offer at the PYCP:

... we've got various service areas. We do open access youth and children's work. So, that includes play programmes. We do intensive support, so that's like one to one and group work for young people with a wide range of ... issues that's really about supporting them [to achieve] a more positive outcome. We also have an alternative to crime service. So, that's working with an identified group of young people who are getting involved in antisocial and criminal activity in the community, and we also do progression routes for young people [that involves] volunteering opportunities and employability work.

These services are well used. The PYCP's Annual Report for 2018-19 outlined how out of the 535 different children and young people participating in open access and groups in the year ending March 2019, 80% attended on a regular basis.<sup>58</sup> This reflected the experience of participant three who reported having attended PYCP clubs, "*about three times a week*" for twelve years.

Participant five outlined how the PYCP had taken her son on "*a once in a lifetime*" trip:

They took him to the ... Hopscotch camp ... my younger son went to it. He was a bit scared to go at first because he hadn't been away [from home] and I said *if you don't go, you're going to regret it*. ... He went and he absolutely loved it. ... And, it's all free.

Participant three also recalled a PYCP trip:

... the girls group went on, like, a retreat sort of thing ... we went gorge walking. We went to Fox Lake. We had ... a house that we were in, and it had, like, a swimming pool and jacuzzi. ... Yeah, we got to use quite a lot of it. ... It was all free".

It is clear that these trips afford opportunities that were beyond the reach of many families in Pilton, and which are appreciated long beyond the point at which they were undertaken.

## **Providing critical support to young people facing challenging circumstances**

The PYCP's 2018-2019 Annual Report<sup>59</sup> stated that "*43 young people received intensive 1:1 support and reported outcomes such as getting on better at school, feeling more able to ask for help... and feeling less anxious*". This claim to impact was confirmed by participant two, who had been using the service for 13 years. As someone with ADHD and anxiety, he found school and classroom settings difficult. However, with the encouragement of his PYCP support worker, he was able to overcome the obstacles that had previously

impeded his education. He described a situation which required him to attend a large assembly with the rest of the school:

I couldn't make it into the room at all because ... it was massive. And I phoned up my youth worker and [said], "*I need your help, I need some advice. I can't get into this room because there is just too many people.*" ... He was like, "*here's what I want you to do, I want you to close your eyes, wait for ten seconds and then walk in. I want you to do this*". He just came out with all different ways for me to get round it and I eventually got into the room, after quite a bit of time, obviously. But I made it in.

The same user described how his support worker had been instrumental in his decision to stay on at school:

I was planning on leaving in fifth year but the youth worker I had was adamant on getting me to stay on.... He was kind of pushing me to stay on and trying to convince me to pass everything. So, I done it for him

The impact of this decision was reported to extend beyond a return on qualifications:

... it's made quite a lot of people look at me in a completely different light ... before I stayed on, they would always just kind of look at me and be like, "*Right, well he's no' going to go very far in school. And he's no' going to go very far outside of school either.*" But after I stayed on people kind of looked at me and went, "*He's actually trying to make an effort here and he's wanting to really adapt himself.*"

The effectiveness of such intensive one-on support was also clear in discussions with participant two, who had a PYCP support worker for thirteen years:

... if PY was just to close down ... I'm pretty sure that I would ... probably just go back into hiding. I'd just sit in my room. I wouldn't really go out. I mean I would go out eventually because I would be like, "*Right. PY has helped me, I can go out there and I can do what like they told me to do.*" ... It would be like losing a massive part of my family, really.

## Realising potential

PYCP also aims to help users overcome the impacts of growing up in poverty. To achieve this, the organisation seeks to improve skill set, confidence and resilience. This was articulated by Participant One:

Our longer-term approach and aim ... is to help children and young people realise their potential, overcoming the barriers that are created by growing up in poverty. So, that's things like helping them develop skills and self-belief, introducing them to new experiences and activities so that they can foster long term interests. Many of the children and young people we work with have experienced a range of adverse experiences and we aim to support them through these challenges and help build their resilience. I would say that everything that PYCP does is about promoting wellbeing and mental health.

It is acknowledged that this work may not lead to an immediate impact on reducing poverty, but rather than it may have a positive impact in the longer term. As participant one continues:

.. [I am] not saying that we can - and certainly not alone - we can't eradicate poverty and inequality. But what we can do is try and help children and young people be more resilient, have more coping skills, believe that they can have these aspirations.

Participant three is a final year high school student who had been attending the PYCP since she was five. Her testimony suggests that the PYCP has been successful in boosting aspirations. She described her ambition to attend university and noted the role of PYCP in encouraging and helping her to apply. Notably, her school (Craigroyston Community High School) has among the lowest proportion of pupils in Scotland achieving the standards typically required to enter university.

PYCP also employees many who used its services themselves when they were young:

We have a number of youth workers who ... live in the local area. They came to PYCP [as children] and we supported them. ... We get a number of staff ... and volunteers that have grown [up with PYCP] (Participant one).

It was demonstrated in the previous section how PYCP fundamentally altered the life course of users, providing critical support to users. Similarly, participant four reported support throughout the life course:

The PY have helped me mega. ... I wouldn't even know where to start to thank them, because they've helped me out when it comes to Christmas', birthdays. ... They get gifts donated to them from Cash for Kids, and they asked me how old the children, and [then] they give me some gifts for each age groups of the kids, so they're not having nothing for Christmas. Grateful isn't the word for it ... . I wouldn't know where to start when thanking them for".

## Providing relief for parents

PYCP is clearly targeted at children and young people. The core model is that families benefit through provision for their children. The benefits of PYCP for parents is acknowledged by parents themselves. PYCP provides relief from some caring duties, even if it is just for a few hours. Participant four suffered from medical conditions, which have prevented her from working for 13 years, although she provide care for her grandchildren. Attendance at PYCP was reported to give her time to *"sit and relax"*. When asked how she would manage if the PYCP no longer existed, she responded: *"If it was no there longer? Oh god, I dinnae' ken what I would do. I think I would try bury my heid in the sand and think, oh, what am I gonna do"*.

## Tackling child food poverty and facilitating healthy eating

PYCP food provisions are presented as vital to many children, young people and families in the Pilton community. Again, participant Four acknowledged the importance of this service:

... there's a lot of children in this area that wouldn't get fed ... because some of them will just get a meal in the school... there's a lot of parents out there who are drug users and things like that, they think where their next hit is coming fae' before they would feed their bairn ... But there's times when the PY has helped me lots of times ... they've helped with food donations and vouchers ... It's just I try and do my best, eh? But there's times when the PY has helped me ... I dinnae ken where I would be if it wisnae for them.

Participant Five also outlined how PYCP had helped her when she was struggling:

I sent them an email saying that I'm struggling for food this week, is there any help you can offer us and that it was a bit embarrassing because I'm not used to asking for help. I've never really asked for it in the past and they're like, "that's what we're here for" and they emailed me vouchers for Morrison's to go and get some shopping. ... we would have probably had to borrow money and stuff.

According to Participant Two, if he didn't have access to the fresh nutritious food offered by the PYCP, he would *"probably just jump round the corner to the fish shop.... I'd get a bag a chips and go home"*. Similarly, according to Participant One:

I would say that food is an integral part of what we do. ... it ensures that children and young people have at least one nutritious meal a day. We support many families that are in crisis all year round in terms of them not having enough money to buy enough food [including] things like making referrals to food banks".

Participant Seven, a PYCP youth worker, outlined the importance of food provisions for the children and young people using the service:

Food is a big thing. A lot of young people will come in, and ... often the first thing they'll say is, what's for food tonight? Or, what's for our dinner tonight? ... A lot of them ... don't get school lunches because they are not going to school, or some of them finish school at 12 o'clock because they are on part timetable. ... often a few of them haven't had anything to eat really.... So, food is definitely a big part of what PY does.

## Providing seasonal interventions

Participant seven referred to the work of PYCP during the school holidays, and the importance of this to those struggling to access food:

We have had a holiday hunger club ... during the school holidays. ... it's usually during the October break, the summer holidays. Any time the school is not on basically. So, each day there will be ... a lunch club between 12 and 1. ... there was a lot of under 12's that would come to that. It can vary in numbers. Each day it was changing so sometimes there might only be 10, sometimes there was 30 ... There was definitely individuals or families that would come every day ... sometimes we'd allow like their little brothers or sisters to come. As long as there was someone that could look after them ... So, it was kind of the whole family that were coming, and those families would come, like every day.

The interviews revealed a perception that coronavirus had resulted in increased demand in 2020 for food support in the Pilton area. This has resulted in the PYCP having to adapt their services and provisions. It is to these COVID-19 adaptations that this report now turns.

## COVID-19 Adaptations in 2020

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the PYCP's 2020 summer programme was delivered online. This included cooking and baking classes, arts and crafts, magic sessions, storytelling, bingo, keep fit and yoga. Materials and ingredients were delivered to users' homes. Participant five reported that her children had continued to engage with PYCP classes over the summer of 2020:

... my son and my daughter – my daughter mainly – she loved it. She liked it as it split her day up instead of just doing nothing or watching telly, she would have the PY stuff and they would drop stuff off at the door once a week for them to do ... My daughter absolutely loved it, my three-year old got involved in it as well.

However, not everyone benefited equally from the services that were delivered, as is suggested by the difference between son and daughter referred to above.

Similarly, when about the impact of the pandemic and the closure of the PYCP building on her grandchildren, Participant Four reflected that. "... *from March to now, [has been] a total nightmare because the kids are at a loose end. They dinnae ken what to do*". Participants Two and Three, both long-term users of the PYCP, also expressed sadness at not being able to attend the PYCP in person.

It is also important to recognise that a digital divide exists between those who live in poverty and those who do not. This is demonstrated by *Scotland's People* Annual Report which highlighted that households in the 20 percent *most* deprived areas are less likely to have home internet access than those in the 20 percent *least* deprived.<sup>60</sup> According to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, Pilton belongs to the former, which suggests that many children and young people in the area will not have home internet access, restricting their ability to participate in the PYCP's summer programme. This was the experience of Participant Seven:

We definitely lost quite a lot of contact with quite a lot of young people during that period [lockdown]. ... a lot of them have changed mobile phone numbers, a lot of them lose mobiles, ... A lot of the have never had internet. ....But I think a big problem was a lot of them don't want to come on to Zoom. ... It is all of those sorts of issues. So, we did lose ... contact with quite a few young people during that period.

Therefore, despite PYCP providing (a limited number of) free tablets and smart phones, many children are unlikely to have been able to access the 2020 school holiday programme. Furthermore, as a result of the provision being delivered online, it is less certain that children had home access to a hot nutritious meal as they did in previous summer holiday periods. It is clear from the interviews that the pandemic placed brought added strains to many families in the Pilton area.

We've actually ended up building up our own mini foodbank stock of food because ... referrals to foodbanks went 'through the roof'... families lost jobs very quickly, they lost their zero-hour contracts, just the whole crisis, families isolating for health reasons. We did a lot of delivery of food to families, getting additional grants to help with that and meal vouchers and things...We've had parents in tears because they ... literally don't have enough money to feed their kids (Participant one).

There has been an increase in families ... contacting us for food parcels and stuff. Before coronavirus, ... very few families would contact you to say we need some extra food or whatever. But during coronavirus, for those young people that [have been] used to come along, their families have been contacting, looking for food parcels which has become a big part of PY's work now. ... we never used to have a food bank ... Even though we are not calling it a foodbank as such, it is a food bank. (Participant seven).

The scale of this work and how many families benefit from this provision is not known, although it is not described as being insignificant, with Participant Six stating that, *"... during COVID we delivered thousands of food parcels; we delivered packed lunches; we delivered hot meals"*.

The impact that Covid-19 had has was also evident when speaking with staff:

I don't think you'll ever feel that you're doing enough and I don't mean that in a negative, 'we're not up to the job' kind of way, but just that, as I say, there are so many families in crisis at the moment and it's only been made worse by covid-19 (Participant one).

## **Conclusion**

PYCP staff and users confirm the 'claims to impact' that are made in formal reports and other PYCP documentation. PYCP services are presented as crucial to the Pilton community; perhaps best expressed in the words of participant four who described the PYCP as *"a godsend"*.

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## 5. What Makes the Difference?

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### Introduction

In this section, we review the drivers that underpin the success of PYCP.

### Stable presence

Some reported that the PYCP had been with them throughout their lives. Participant four, a 57-year-old grandmother, and participant five, a 46-year-old mother, recounted that they themselves had attended the PYCP when they were younger:

Well, it used to be called the Maggie centre when I was a kid and I used to go there and it changed and it went to the Greenhouse, then it went to the PY (Participant four).

I remember I went to it when I went to it when I was a young lassie ... Aye it's good, the PY has been in the family for years (Participant five).

### A neighbourhood in need

The PYCP has also supported the residents of Pilton to mitigate the impacts of poverty. Participant one stated:

... we're very much seeing the effects of poverty. It's very visible. We've got lots and lots of families in crisis, we've done a number of things around helping children acquire winter coats ... parents [are] sometimes quite distressed that they can't pay their bills, they're falling into arrears. [We are] helping signpost them to specific services to help with that. ... sadly what we're having to do a lot of is at the crisis end, but it's keeping our eyes on the longer-term view as well that PYCP is very much about preventing poverty in the future.

### Connections

Connections and collaborations with other organisations are crucial in helping the PYCP meet its objectives and enabling it to have a greater impact. As participant one explains:

We don't work in isolation as an organisation and it is about understanding our limits. I think [the PYCP's success] is about relationships, not only young people in families, but it's about relationships with local businesses and with other local organisations and with schools and all of these other agencies that are working with children and young people and families in different ways, and [understanding] what our part is in that and how we can strengthen what we do by working with others.

These connections also help the PYCP to recruit volunteers who are essential to its operation. Again, participant one states:

Sadly ... we don't have enough budget to hire people, so it's about things like linking and connecting with universities who have got final year students that want to get some experience and who are happy to volunteer.

Participant six, a frontline worker, also outlined how working with other organisations helped to improve PYCP staff members' knowledge and skills:

... other organisations will come in and ... do training with us and sexual health stuff or, the drugs and alcohol training.

These value of these wider partnerships is also acknowledged by PYCP's users. Participant four discussed how the PYCP's connections with other organisations had had a positive impact on her family:

They've helped me quite a lot with one of my grandchildren, because he is so hyper, they keep trying to get him checked for ADHD and the PY has ... taken a role in that one and worked with the school.

However, Participant seven highlighted how connections with other organisations could be strengthened.

See to be honest, the most challenging thing for us is working with, for example, councils or housing associations or police. ... we try and work in partnership with the police ... We would always try and have an arrangement with them where, if they want the laddie, we've probably got a relationship with ... the laddie, [so] let us know who it is. We go down, like we arrange to get them and go up to [Drylaw] police station ... take them in if they need to be charged, they get charged and they get things dealt with. ... the police in places like North Edinburgh, operationally, will kind of say they'll do this, [but] then they'll sort of charge around, crashing through doors and stuff like that instead.

This suggest that while the PYCP enjoys productive working relationships with many organisations, more can be done to strengthen its partnerships with local authorities and the police. This was further emphasised later in the interview with Participant Seven. When asked what would help him in his work he stated:

... closer working relationship again with places of statute like the Council, where we can often mediate in between the Council or the police or anything like that. Like we've facilitated lots of council meetings before and we hold the key to the relationships. If we can facilitate, then quite often there's an improvement in relationships.

Frustration was expressed that improvements have been lost, as a result of other concerns to protect citizens and other ways of organising services.

... Six years ago, seven years ago, Edinburgh Council and all these other organisations in North Edinburgh realised that the way that they approached things ... wasn't working and they needed a different approach ... and then GDPR came in and Localities for councils came in. And because we're not a starter agency as such, we were exempt from attending all these meetings that we used to be quite influential on? And we could bring in local knowledge, we could give our expertise, we could cut out bureaucracy and now, yeah, it's like it's kind of gone back again, and now we're exempt from everything.

## Quality of staff and staff qualities

PYCP staff deserve a huge amount of credit for the positive impact of the service. The interviews conveyed how workers and volunteers often go the 'extra mile' for service users. Long-term users discussed how the PYCP offered and provided support well beyond that which can be documented in an Annual Report. PYCP was reported to have significant positive impacts on their life and the lives of their family. Without the evident commitment of PYCP workers and volunteers, it is difficult to see how an organisation operating with its budget could have such a positive impact.

## **Funding**

Although PYCP delivers well with the resources at its disposal, the challenges faced should be acknowledged:

The funding landscape is becoming more and more challenging. There's less money to go around, and I think the greatest difficulty we face is the uncertainty ... [which] hinders planning and progress and creativity when we're not sure how long staff are going to be around, how long the organisation might be around. ... that makes life very difficult, and it also takes up a lot of time, for example, with the management team ... spending maybe less time on staff development, less time on strategic planning (Participant One)

Securing funds is a complex undertaking:

... if you look at our finance spreadsheets ... you'll see how diverse those sources are and a lot of the time now it's matched funding. One workers post could be made up of three different funders. It's a constant balancing act and a challenge. (Participant One)

Security of funding had been assured for the immediate future, but the concerns and issues that short-term funding brings has not disappeared:

... we just have been granted [local authority funding], that will give us some security for the next 2-3 years, but it's very difficult and also it means that staff are inclined to panic ... when they're getting near to the end of their contract and not knowing if the funding is going to be extended and then they move on. (Participant one)

## **Conclusion**

Unquestionably, PYCP's stable presence in the community, and dedicated staff have been instrumental in helping families in Pilton to overcome the worst effects of poverty. This has also been made possible by working with alongside statutory services, charities, universities and schools.

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## 6. Mission Match

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### Introduction

In this section we explain how the work of PYCP contributes to wider agendas at local, national and global levels of analysis.

### Tackling Child Poverty and Food Insecurity in Scotland

The *Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017* committed Scotland to eradicate child poverty by 2030<sup>61</sup> with the *Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-2022*<sup>62</sup> outlining the initial means through which this is to be achieved. Within this Plan is a 'driver diagram' which described three realms of anti-poverty actions. The work of PYCP can be described in terms of each realm:

- *Increase income from employment.* It might be hypothesised that children's participation in PYCP enables their parents to participate (or participate more fully) in the labour market, thereby increasing their income from employment.
- *Reduce cost of living.* It might be hypothesised that PYCP provides accessible and affordable (i.e. no-cost) activity that either removes or reduces expenditure for families (who might otherwise be spending on children's leisure).
- *Income from social security or benefits in kind.* The provision of food as part of the PYCP is a benefit in kind that removes a direct cost from household budgets.

More generally, food provision is an action to tackle food insecurity, which as noted earlier, is one of the National Goals that Scotland is committed to monitor and take action to address, as part of the National Performance Framework.

As was noted in the Introduction (section 1), through its *2021-22 Programme for Government*,<sup>63</sup> the Scottish Government has committed to strengthen the role of childcare in tackling child poverty in the years ahead.

The strongest impact of PYCP on tackling child poverty may be less direct, i.e. by engaging children and young people, providing focus, interest and direction that encourages personal development, and provides an alternative to pathways that lead to less positive destinations.

Others might simply assert the value of what PYCP provides is that it enhances the quality of life as lived, in the here and now.

Therefore, the work of PYCP could be considered to have a longer-term impact on tackling child poverty, or value for softening the impact of child poverty, at the current time. However, these observations are not inconsistent with the recognition that the work of PYCP delivers what is required in the national action plan to tackle child poverty and national aspirations to promote food security at the current time.

### Edinburgh's Local Child Poverty Action Plan/Report

At the time of writing, local authorities and their local NHS Board are preparing their third Local Child Poverty Action Report to report on progress in tackling child poverty locally in 2021 and to outline the specific actions to be taken in the year ahead.

Among the specific actions outlined in the first LCPAR for Edinburgh were the following actions for 2019/20:<sup>64</sup>

- The Third Sector through the EVOC and LAYC networks will ensure that the sector is informed and involved in helping co-ordinate and prioritise actions designed to impact on the drivers of poverty and reduce child poverty.
- The establishment of 13 new Neighbourhood Networks in Edinburgh will engage with local people and services helping inform interventions to reduce child poverty
- The Edinburgh Child Poverty Action Unit will continue to develop and implement actions that are informed by professional judgement and engagement with people, particularly young people with lived experience of poverty.

Notably, in the second LCPAR, reference is made to work in partnership with Edinburgh Community Food. The *Discover!* Programme aims to reduce the cost of school holidays for children living in poverty. It is reported that 186 families participated in the programme during the summer of 2020, with 631 deliveries made over a six-week period.<sup>65</sup>

The work of PYCP is also pertinent to the actions outlined by the Edinburgh Poverty Commission, which reported in 2020,<sup>66</sup> leading to the publication in December of the *End Poverty in Edinburgh Delivery Plan, 2020-30*.<sup>67</sup> The Delivery Plan comprises 55 actions, of which the following are particularly significant from the 'right support in the places we live and work' domain:

- The city should aim for small teams, drawing staff from statutory, third and business sectors operating at a neighbourhood level using simple existing methods to connect, assess need and build on local assets.
- Statutory and third sector support organisations in the city need to work better together in a way that is planned, comprehensive and responds to the strengths and voices of communities.

- Support structures should be responsive to the issues that matter to different people and be delivered as far as possible through one point of contact, a trusted relationship.
- City of Edinburgh Council must support community anchor organisations to enable human connections and build on the groundswell of citizens who have been moved to give at a scale we have not previously seen to continue to contribute to their community.
- City of Edinburgh Council, and Edinburgh Partnership members to develop new models for contracting with the third and private sectors to support organisations and alliances which support local economies, building community wealth and trusted relationships with citizens.

Actions in other domains outlined by the Edinburgh Poverty Commission (in particular, Equality in Health and Wellbeing; Connections in a City That Belongs to Us; and Opportunities that Drive Justice and Boost Prospects) are also closely aligned to the work of PYCP.

## Scotland's National Performance Framework

Each Scottish Government (and the Scottish Executive before that) has outlined its vision for Scotland. A National Performance Framework<sup>68</sup> was introduced in 2007 and re-launched in 2018. It defines the national purpose in terms of five goals, underpinned by three values. Providing focus to the framework are 11 National Outcomes and 81 National Indicators (a revision of the 16 Outcomes and 63 Indicators that provided focus from 2007-2018).

The work of PYCP is closely aligned to one of these National Outcomes:

- tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally

Furthermore, it might be argued that the way in which the PYCP operates also contributes to several others:

- grow up loved, safe and respected so that they realise their full potential
- live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone
- are healthy and active

Conceived thus, the work of PYCP can be understood as contributing to a range of Outcomes that are valued in Scotland in that they work toward the shared vision of what Scotland could be.

At a more focused level, the work of PYCP might also be hypothesised to make a more direct positive contribution on an improving 'performance' for a number of the National Indicators:

- Child wellbeing and happiness<sup>69</sup>
- Children and positive relationships<sup>70</sup>
- Child material deprivation<sup>71</sup>
- Places to interact<sup>72</sup>
- Social capital<sup>73</sup>
- Confidence in children and young people<sup>74</sup>
- Resilience of children and young people<sup>75</sup>
- Engagement in extra-curricular activities<sup>76</sup>
- Economic participation<sup>77</sup>
- Relative poverty after housing costs<sup>78</sup>
- Cost of living<sup>79</sup>
- Food insecurity<sup>80</sup>

Clearly, the work of PYCP would be of an insufficient scale to shift overall national performance. However, these are conceived as 'indicators', and there is merit in explaining how the work of the PYCP contributes to these wider national agendas.

## The Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, all member states of the United Nations adopted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, at the heart of which are 17 Sustainable Development Goals,<sup>81</sup> which are a call to action in all countries. It could be argued that these are more pertinent in nations such as Scotland, in comparison to the Millennium Development Goals, which they replaced. Scotland is fully committed to working toward achieving these goals.<sup>82</sup>

The 17 Global Goals, are monitored through a framework of 231 unique global indicators (some of which are shared across Goals). As for the National Performance Framework in Scotland, there is merit in positioning the work of PYCP against the SDGs to clarify how its work contributes to this wider global agenda: The SDGs that are pertinent are as follows:

- End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

## Conclusion

The work of PYCP contributes in many ways to a range of wider agendas at the local, national and global scales.

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## 7. Conclusions

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### Introduction

In this section, we reach conclusions on each of the five research questions.

### What is the nature of the service that the PYCP provides?

As a 'traditional' community youth service, PYCP offers a wide range of activity and provision for young people and their families. The offer is responsive to need and changing conditions, which is most clearly evidenced in its provision during 2020. It also offers bespoke interventions to engage particular groups of children and young people in Pilton.

### To what extent does provision meet local need?

As with much of urban Scotland, and in each of its largest cities, many families are struggling to 'get by' and many are living in poverty. There is a demand in Pilton and its neighbouring areas for a place that offer opportunities for young people – without incurring cost.

### What is the impact – and claims to impact – of PYCP?

PYCP benefits participants, their families and the wider community. It widens opportunity, catering for particular needs and children facing challenging circumstances (as well as those from less stressed backgrounds). It has evidenced positive impact for children who were deemed in need of 'diversionary' activities and provides opportunities to engage and extend young people's horizons.

More generally, and incidentally, its work contributes to wider efforts to tackle food poverty, reduce stress on family life and promote healthy eating.

### What are the drivers of the PYCP's success?

Demand for the service provided implies that it has the potential to be impactful. However, demand does not pre-determine success. The success of PYCP reflects the specific actions and approaches of those involved (personal skills and sensitivity to circumstance) and community orientation (community spirit and community connections).

The greatest strength of PYCP is its ability to meet the needs of a wide range of children and young people in the local community, providing a stable community presence that is responsive to needs at any particular point in time.

### What lessons can be learned from the work of the PYCP that might help improve provision elsewhere?

There is merit in new and innovative models of providing for children and young people. However, as is evidenced through the work of PYCP, there is also value in traditional models of engaging young people that provide a stable community presence, demonstrate a long-standing commitment to the area, and are adaptable to ensure design of services that meets contemporary needs.

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# Annex 1: Our Approach to Evaluation

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## Introduction

In this section, we describe and appraise the approach taken in this impact evaluation.

## Why PYCP?

As noted in the introduction, this evaluation is a key part of a broader project, funded by the Scottish Government, that aimed to understand how different models of holiday/after school provision generated positive outcomes for children and young people.

The Scottish Government suggested that PYCP was included as one of the case studies, as it was an established youth project that had been delivering this work for some time.

## Focus

As noted in the introduction, our objective was to undertake a rapid appraisal to answer the following key questions:

- What is the nature of the service that the PYCP provides?
- To what extent does provision meet local need?
- What is the impact – and claims to impact – of PYCP?
- What are the drivers of the PYCP's success?
- What lessons can be learned from the work of the PYCP that might help improve provision elsewhere?

## Appreciative Inquiry

As noted in the introduction, we have adopted an approach that in the style of an appreciative inquiry, in which the objective is to explore 'the best of what is, in order to imagine what could be'.<sup>83</sup> We do not claim to have undertaken work that adheres to all aspects of Appreciate Inquiry; rather, we assert that the broad objectives of such work framed our approach. Adopting a 'this works' starting point, the appraisal focused on identifying the drivers of success, in order that others might glean useful learning. Notwithstanding our starting position, we maintain a critical stance throughout.

## Activities

As noted in the introduction, our approach comprised four elements.

- A review of earlier appraisals
- An analysis of documentary evidence from PYCP
- Interviews with three stakeholders, at different levels in the organisation
- Interviews with four families.

Each is discussed in more detail in this Annex.

## Timeframe

Prior to the start of the fieldwork, John McKendrick met several times with the Scottish Government to agree project objectives, and contacted PYCP, who agreed to facilitate the evaluation.

The fieldwork started in 2020 on September 29<sup>th</sup> and concluded on December 7<sup>th</sup>, covering a ten-week period. During this period, Scotland tightened restrictions on mobility and interaction, in order to protect public health from Covid-19.

## People

The research was completed by Neil McNulty, under the guidance of John McKendrick.

Neil McNulty was employed 0.5 FTE for this ten-week period, although he was also responsible for undertaking a mapping of local provision of holiday activity/food provision in a case study beyond Edinburgh during this period. In effect, Neil committed 12.5 days to this impact evaluation.

John McKendrick managed and designed the overall project. John also reviewed all interview transcripts and supported Neil, who is lead author of this report.

Although jointly responsible for this report, John and Neil worked as part of a broader research team of five, which met weekly from September 29<sup>th</sup> through December 7<sup>th</sup> to discuss common interests and emerging issues across the four impact evaluations that comprised the broader project.

## Research Ethics

The Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Sciences at Glasgow Caledonian University approved the fieldwork. At each stage of the research design and administration, steps were taken to ensure that the research adhered to recommended practice for document analysis and key informant interviews. Specific steps taken included:

- Providing interviewees with information about the purpose of the research and the research requirements, to ensure that participation was based on informed consent.
- Only collecting personal details (names and contact details) for the purpose of arranging for the receipt of a voucher (for a store of their own choosing), as a token of appreciation for their participation.
- Asking for permission to record interviews and explaining the reasons for recording

- Storing research data securely, for example, password-protecting interview transcripts.
- Removing personal details (names and contact details) from data files and storing in line with General Data Protection Requirements.
- Ensuring that no service users are identified by name in the published report arising from the research.
- Offering interviewees the opportunity to receive copies of the final report.

## Working with PYCP to Facilitate the Research

Neil had an introductory telephone meeting with PYCP's Business Manager (Debbie McMillan) on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2020. PYCP was keen to support the evaluation, acknowledging that this would be a valuable exercise for PYCP, in addition to meeting the needs of the *Time to Prosper* project. Following this initial meeting, regular communication was maintained throughout.

A workplan was devised and approved by the PYCP. Edinburgh school's half-term (19<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> October) and other PYCP operational commitments determined that interview recruitment would be held over until early November.

Neil emailed the draft interview script/template, a participant information sheet and a participant consent form during the half-term break. On 3<sup>rd</sup> November, Debbie provided a list of interview participants to Neil, who set about contacting the individuals and organising suitable interview dates.

Following discussions with the wider research team, interview schedules for families/young persons were amended to ensure that they were user friendly and met the particular needs of the families using PYCP. Similarly, some modifications were made to the interview script for the workers based on their specific job role and area of expertise.

## Activity 1: Appraising Previous Evaluations of PYCP

Our first task was to review previous evaluation and commentary on Pilton and PYCP. These included a doctoral thesis,<sup>84</sup> academic journal articles,<sup>85</sup> and a report about fatherhood in the Pilton area.<sup>86</sup> The PhD thesis, at over 400 pages in length, was the most comprehensive resource. While not focusing specifically on the work of PYCP, it contained some information on it and its users. These data had been gathered from fieldwork observation (something this research was unable to undertake as a result of the pandemic) and accounts provided by its author.

## Activity 2: Evidencing Outputs and Outcomes from PYCP's Documentation

The latest Annual Report provided the research team with information on the services provided by PYCP.<sup>87</sup> This included participation data, outlining the number of children and young people who used the services. The Annual Report also helped us to decide what questions to ask and to identify which staff members might be approached for interview. For instance, upon learning of the reported success of the FACENorth project, we requested to interview an Alternative to Crime project worker.

The May 2020 newsletter<sup>88</sup> and the Summer 2020 Programme newsletter<sup>89</sup> were useful in outlining how PYCP had responded to the Covid-19. These newsletters informed us that the organisation not only delivered its summer programme online, but also demonstrated how it supported users and families during the pandemic - help with food, toiletries, bills and homework were provided. Attempts to help families stay digitally connected were also made. This information informed our initial interview schedule.

## Activity 3: Learning from Staff

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were undertaken with three project staff,

- Project Manager, who had worked for the PYCP for 15 years (participant one in the report).
- Alternative to Crime worker (participant six)
- Youth worker who had worked for the PYCP for six years (participant seven).

The interviews covered the following themes:

- Description of the work of PYCP
- Description of their work with PYCP
- Best things about their work with PYCP
- Most challenging aspect of their work with PYCP
- Who is reached and not reached?
- Who benefits most?
- What would make PYCP work better
- Advice to others who might adopt the PYCP way of working
- If PYCP did not exist, what would be the impact

The interviews lasted between 40 minutes and 65 minutes and were undertaken in telephone call format.

Staff readily accommodated the research and were engaging in the interviews. The information provided was valuable in enabling us to better understand the work of the PYCP and the different staff contributions. Staff were also open about the challenges of working with the PYCP, with all agreeing that funding was a particular problem (discussed in the main body of the report).

Interviewing staff also assisted with preparation for conducting further interviews with the families/young people. For instance, it became clear from discussions with staff that food plays a pivotal role in PYCP's work. Knowing this, enabled us to amend the draft schedule for interviews with families/young people to explore this issue in more detail.

## Activity 4: Learning from Users

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were undertaken with four families that had used PYCP.

- User who had been visiting the PYCP since five years of age. Current age is 18 (participant two in the report).
- User who had been visiting the PYCP since five years of age. Current age is 17 (participant three).
- Grandmother of six who has full-time caring responsibilities for one of her grandchildren. Five of her six grandchildren, as well as her 18-year-old niece (who received 1:1 intensive support), used the services of the PYCP (participant four)
- Mother of six whose nephew also live with her. All have been users of PYCP at one point (participant five)

The interviews covered the following themes:

- Introduction to self and background in Pilton
- Children's family circumstances
- Experiences of work
- Experience of financial stress
- Management of out of school care
- Initial awareness of work of PYCP
- Benefits of engaging with PYCP
- Costs involved in PYCP
- Time use when children are at PYCP
- If PYCP did not exist, what would be the impact

The interviews lasted between 13 minutes and 32 minutes and were undertaken in telephone call format.

Brent (2009) argued that describing deprived neighbourhoods solely on secondary evidence

from official documents, maps, bar charts and statistics fails to adequately tell the stories of people's lives and experiences and instead reduces them to diagrams and infographics<sup>90</sup>. By engaging residents who use PYCP, we sought to avoid this. This allowed us to capture the subjective experiences of users. For instance, we heard how the PYCP does more than *just* offer children and young people with a range of activities and free healthy meals (discussed in the main report).

This further outlined the range of additional services offered and was useful as it helped tailor questions which Neil would ask some staff members during the interview.

## Reflections

The Covid-19 pandemic prevented the research team from visiting PYCP, which limited the research to some extent. While we were still able to glean useful insights into the organisation, its services and impact by speaking with staff and users over the phone, we could have learned more by visiting the organisation and observing it in action. By observing the interactions between staff and users, we may have better understood how the organisations operates. This could have also helped us to more fully appreciate how crucial PYCP is in the lives of its users and their families.

## Conclusion

Notwithstanding the limitations of a rapid impact assessment, the research delivered to brief, enabling us to address each of the research objectives.

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## Endnotes

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