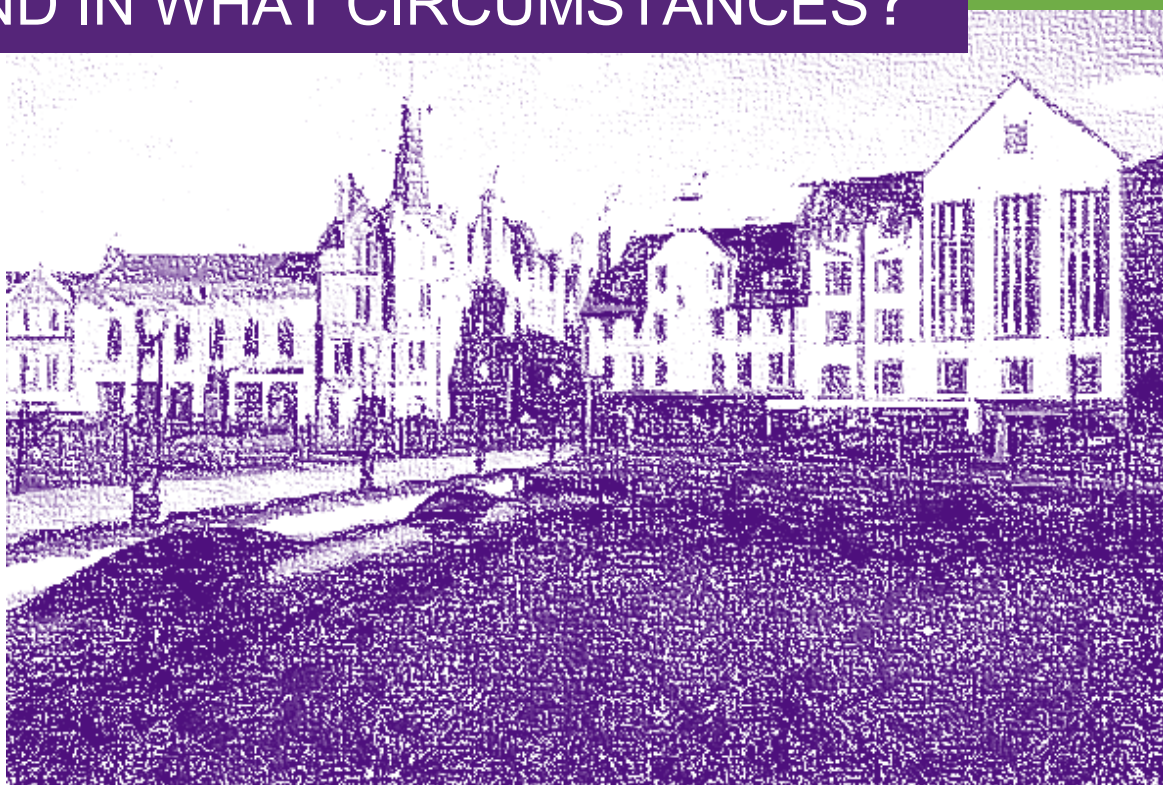




THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

OCTOBER 2018

THE JUNCTION: 'WHAT WORKS, FOR WHOM AND IN WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES?'



SCOTTISH COLLABORATION FOR
PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH AND
POLICY (SCPHRP)

BY JOHN McATEER, KATHLEEN
MORRISON & LAURA TIRMAN



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Junction provides assets-based health and wellbeing support for young people between the ages of 12 and 21 who live or work in North Edinburgh. This report describes evaluation research undertaken to test and refine the theory of change underpinning the Junction, drawing upon existing survey data and interviews with 15 young people attending the service, five members of staff and two board members. The research had three aims:

- 1. To specify the theory of change underpinning the Junction*
- 2. To explore whether the theory of change is working as intended, including for whom it appears to work best, and which contextual/circumstantial factors are required for it to work well*
- 3. To refine the theory of change in order to produce a working model of work practices that may be relevant to similar youth organisations*

Realist evaluation was used to identify the theory of change underpinning the Junction, drawn from existing work conducted by the organisation; explore whether the theory of change was working as intended through interviews with service users ($n=15$), staff ($n=5$), and board members ($n=2$); and to identify the need for further refinements to the theory of change (agreed with two senior members of Junction staff).

Findings suggest that the assets-based model of working adopted by the organisation has a range of impacts, including the development of coping skills, behaviour changes, and improvements in mental and physical wellbeing. Staff composition, the use of nested provision, variety of access points and tailoring of support to each young person's needs were identified as clear strengths. These findings were consistent with comments from two senior public health professionals, who provided support for the work of the organisation. Ways of working within the Junction have applicability to youth work and youth organisations in general as a model of good working practice.

THE JUNCTION: WHAT WORKS, FOR WHOM, AND IN WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES?

INTRODUCTION

The Junction provides health and wellbeing services to young people between the ages of 12 and 21 who live or work in North Edinburgh. Young people accessing the Junction present frequently with anxiety, low mood, self-harm, bullying, abuse and difficulties at home or school. If left unexplored, these issues may impact upon their abilities to maintain healthy friendships and relationships, reach their potential in education or employment, and maintain good mental and physical health and wellbeing. Services provided by the Junction include drop-in therapies, group work, alcohol services, street outreach, counselling, and sexual health clinics and information. Service provision takes an asset-based approach, in which the services are tailored and adapted towards the young person’s specific needs and requirements. This approach is built upon a number of principles which are: *non-blaming; relationship based; future oriented; diverse; reflective; relevant; realistic; private and confidential; community-based; facilitative; inclusive; respectful; choice diverse; responsive and flexible; participative; co-produced and collaborative*. This report describes evaluation research undertaken to test and refine the theory of change underpinning the Junction, drawing upon existing survey data and interviews with 15 young people attending the service, five members of staff and two board members.

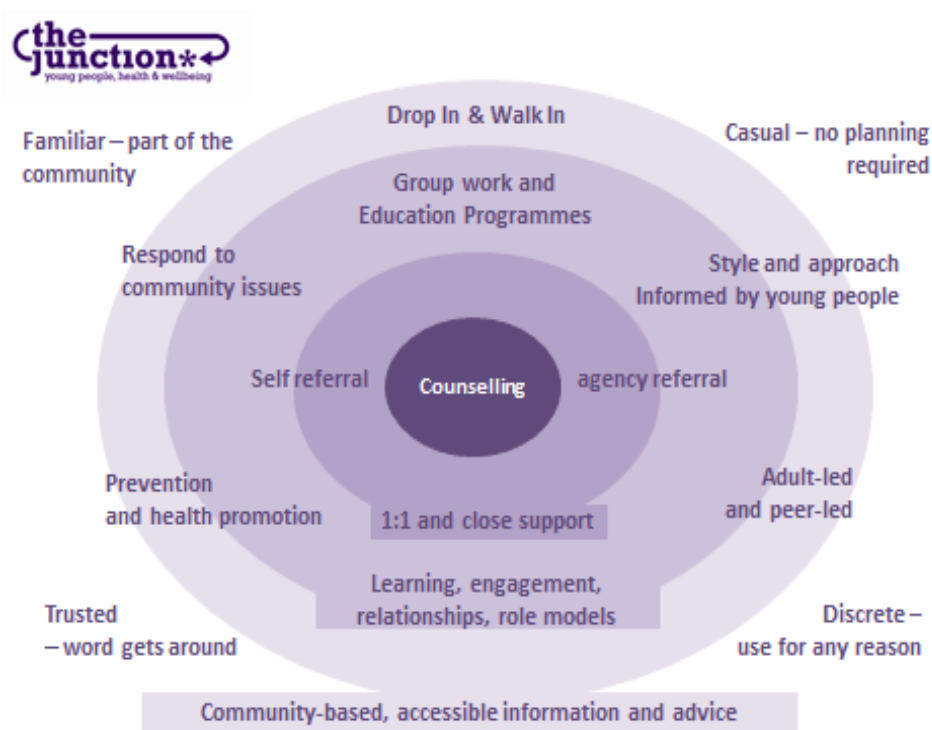


Figure 1. The Junction

The Junction grew out of an action research project in which young people in the Leith area of Edinburgh identified a range of needs for information, advice and support. These needs are reflected in current key data indicators. Leith is an area of high density housing and economic disadvantage where there is also a fear of crime. The Junction is situated in the bottom 15% of Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zones and faces particular health challenges, demonstrated below:

*DRUG RELATED DEATHS, **69%** ABOVE THE SCOTTISH AVERAGE;*

*SUICIDE AND SELF-HARM ADMISSIONS, **103%** ABOVE THE SCOTTISH AVERAGE;*

*TEENAGE PREGNANCIES, **228%** ABOVE SCOTTISH AVERAGE;*

*ADULTS UNABLE TO WORK DUE TO ILLNESS OR DISABILITY, **55%** ABOVE SCOTTISH AVERAGE;*

*PSYCHIATRIC FIRST-TIME HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS, **51%** ABOVE SCOTTISH AVERAGE.*

Within this context of widespread social deprivation, young people may develop negative or harmful coping strategies such as alcohol abuse and drug use; self-harm; isolation; anger and other forms of anti-social behaviour which negatively impact upon their mental and physical health, ability to learn and ultimately their abilities to reach their full potential. These effects are demonstrated by an increased number of teenagers (average age 14.5yrs) showing signs of depression; 46% of young people living in deprived areas of Edinburgh stating that they need support with managing emotions; rising rates of school exclusion and Edinburgh having the 3rd highest truancy rate in Scotland. Difficulties like these are exacerbated when young people have poor communication skills, low expectations of themselves and others, and less hope for their future.

AIMS

This aims of this report are described below:

- 1. To specify the theory of change underpinning the Junction*
- 2. To explore whether the theory of change is working as intended, including for whom it appears to work best, and which contextual/circumstantial factors are required for it to work well*
- 3. To refine the theory of change in order to produce a working model of work practices that may be relevant to similar youth organisations*

METHODS

The principles of realist evaluation were used over three phases (Pawson & Tilley 1997). Realist evaluation provides a method to identify the impact of a service and explains how impact was achieved. Specially, the method asks the questions: 'what works', 'how', 'for whom', and 'in which contexts'?

PHASE 1: SPECIFYING THE THEORY OF CHANGE UNDERPINNING THE JUNCTION

The theory of change underpinning the Junction was drawn from existing work conducted by the organisation as part of a workshop with staff, board members, and other stakeholders in 2017.

PHASE 2: EXPLORING WHETHER THE THEORY OF CHANGE IS WORKING AS INTENDED

The theory of change was explored through interviews and existing survey data.

EXISTING SURVEY DATA

In April 2018, the Junction conducted a survey ("Voice Your Choice") with young people engaged in the service. The survey sought to measure agreement and seek feedback in relation to the following statement: *"The Junction offer friendly, safe spaces and a consistent, confidential, yet flexible approach which provides a nurturing base from which to develop and sustain trusting relationships"*. Additionally, a number of open-ended items asked specific questions related to the young person's journey through the Junction service. Findings from the survey data are used in this report to supplement those from the interviews, described below.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted with service-users ($n=15$), staff ($n=5$) and board members ($n=2$). SA provided contact details for staff and board members, who were then contacted by KM/LT and invited to take part. For the recruitment of young people, KM/LT liaised with staff, who invited young people, already engaged with the service, to take part. Those who agreed were contacted by KM/LT, and a suitable date, time, format (face to face or telephone) and place for interview was arranged. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to interviews being conducted.

INTERVIEW TOPICS

The interviews explored a range of topics with young people, staff members and board members, which are outlined below:

Young People

- Perceptions of impact
- Expectations and reasons for accessing services
- Strengths and weaknesses of the services; what worked well; what they felt could have been better/improved

- Experiences of the organisation: staff; environment; procedures.
- Theory of change

Staff & Board Members

- Experiences of the Junction
- Perception of strengths of the organisation: what works well?
- Perception of weakness of the organisation – what could be improved?
- Theory of change

Interviews were held at the Junction or by telephone, and lasted a maximum of one hour. All interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder.

ANALYSIS

Interviews were transcribed and entered into a qualitative analysis software package (NVivo 11) to facilitate analysis. For each group interviewed (young people, staff and board members), key themes were identified, discussed and agreed by KM/JM. Findings are structured around the following headings, including illustrative quotes:

1. *Strengths; indicating that the theory of change is working as intended*
2. *Challenges; indicating a potential need for refinements, including suggestions where raised*
3. *Reports of impact*
4. *Other*

PHASE 3: REFINING THE PROGRAMME THEORY

In light of the findings from Phase 2, the project team met with senior members of the Junction staff, to agree suggestions for any theory of change refinements or future considerations. These are presented in the latter part of the report.

RESULTS

PHASE 1: SPECIFYING THE THEORY OF CHANGE UNDERPINNING THE JUNCTION

Figure 2. shows a detailed theory of change agreed by stakeholders attending a series of workshops during 2017. A number of principles (or ways of working) are embedded within each of a variety of activities centred around young people. These principles form the foundation upon which the Junction sets out to create change in the lives of the young people attending the service. Essentially, through the provision of a safe, nurturing and confidential environment, each journey through the Junction is tailored to meet the specific needs of each young person. This in turn, leads to increased awareness of self, strengths, and needs to encourage meaningful personal development and greater choice in relation to future opportunities.

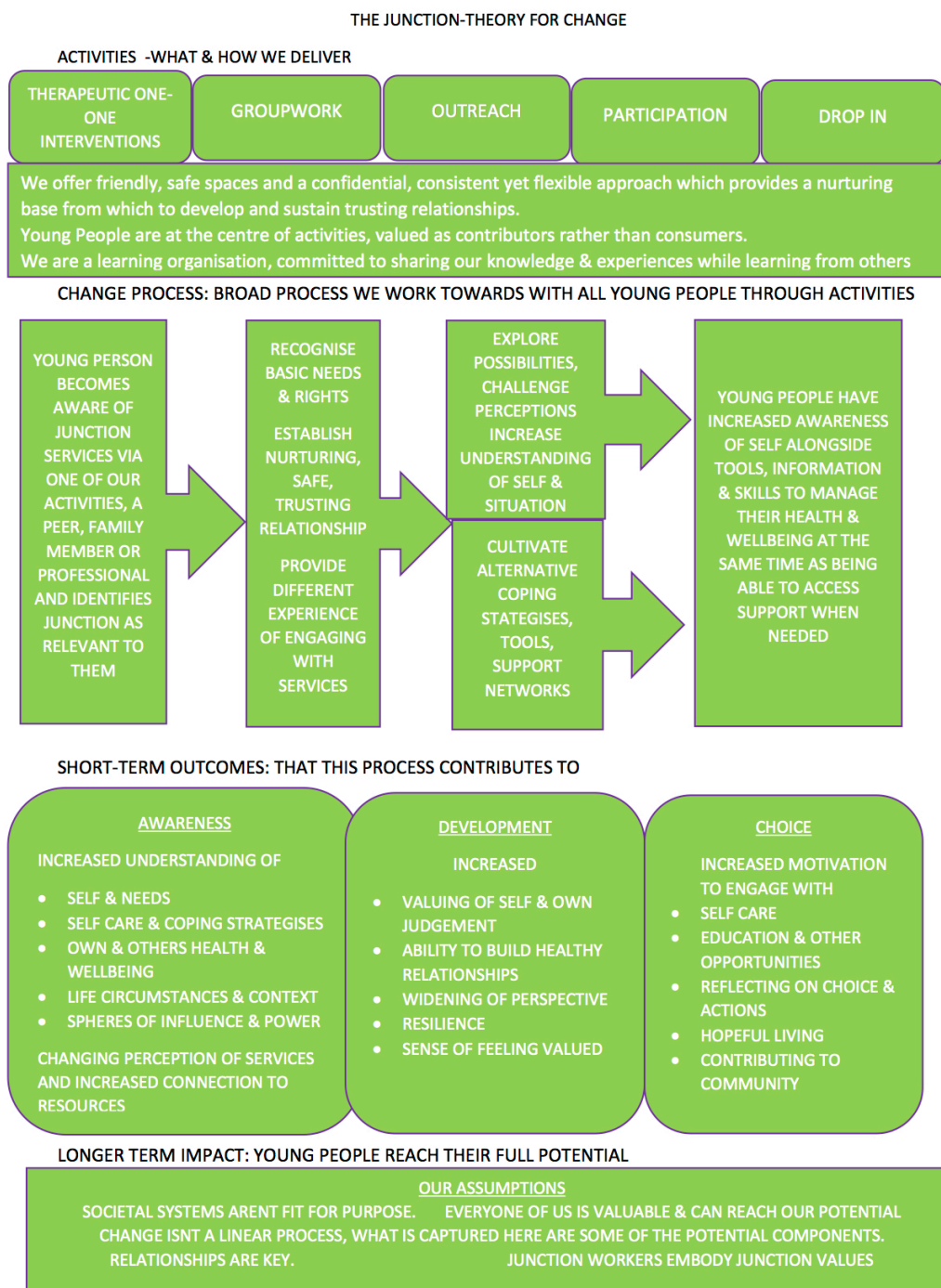


Figure 2. The Junction – Theory of Change

PHASE 2: EXPLORING WHETHER THE THEORY OF CHANGE IS WORKING AS INTENDED

1. INTERVIEWS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

A number of strengths were identified which provide support to the current theory of change. Strengths included the availability and number of access points and pathways, facilitated by the Junction’s Nested Provision model, which allow young people to access services in ways that they identify as most relevant to them. Waiting times for access to the counselling service presented as a challenge for the organisation. However, this was widely acknowledged as a reality of mental health service provision in the UK and participants

showed a great degree of understanding towards this. In a number of instances, young people reported waiting times to be less than they originally anticipated and described that they were often supported by alternative services available at the Junction, such as the drop-in and one-to-one sessions, during that time. The availability of alternative services and support therefore appears to have a significantly positive impact in mitigating some of the challenges and negative effects associated with long waiting lists, faced by the Junction and many other similar organisations.

Suggested refinements to improve service provision included requests for more opportunities for young people to attend group sessions or group therapy with peers who are facing similar issues. Some issues were raised in relation to the exterior of the premises, which some young people found to be intimidating and/or confusing. Other suggestions included providing more support for first-time goers attending the Junction and a desire from young people to boost awareness of the Junction and its services amongst their peers who they believe would benefit from it.

The 'Change Process' as described by the theory of change (Figure 2) is well supported from the findings, indicating that this approach is successfully working in practice. Short-term outcomes associated with this process are well-reported with examples of young people having an increased understanding of their own health and wellbeing; engaging in self-care practices and coping better; feeling valued; being able to reflect on their behaviour and choices; and engaging in new opportunities. It was clear from the young people that the Junction had impacted positively upon a number of different outcomes from reductions in risky behaviour, to securing employment or further education. These points are now described below, alongside illustrative quotes.

1.1 STRENGTHS - INDICATING THAT THE PROGRAMME THEORY IS WORKING AS INTENDED *ACCESSING ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES AT THE JUNCTION*

Long waiting lists have become commonplace in many counselling services across the UK. While waiting times are acknowledged here, the overall experience of young people attending the Junction is that the waiting period is relatively quick (see Quote 1). Nested Provision and the Junction's various access points also mean that any young person on a waiting list is able to attend the drop-in, one-to-one, and other services that the organisation provides during that time. This appears to be a successful method of mitigating the impact of long waiting times by providing young people with initial points of contact and support before they receive counselling.

Quote 1. Counselling Waiting Times

I: "When you sought out the Junction, were you able to be seen fairly quickly?"

YP6: "Yes, it was, sort of, surprisingly quickly. Well, I knew there was going to be a long wait. They said, you know, all the way through, they were like, this is how long you should expect, and they were very right about how long it took. I think I got a referral within weeks and then after an initial interview it was just a few months, maybe one month or month and a bit before I actually started getting proper sessions, so that was good."

-Young Person 6; Age 20

The range of access points afforded by the Junction's model of working and comprehensive outreach activities (see Quote 2) provide a number of options for young people to access information and support for their health and wellbeing. Supported by a wide range of activities, young people feel that the Junction provides opportunities suited to a wide range of interests and needs (see Quote 3).

"We had like a small Polish group in my school, in Leith Academy [...] It was volunteer from outside, she was like a teacher and she helped out people, Polish people mostly that came in Edinburgh, and she gave like a group in the school for us to meet once a week. We had a trip to the Junction at some point ... two years ago, three years. [...] And basically, we had an opportunity to come here, learn stuff about addictions, alcohol, drugs. That's how it started, tell us what we can do here and I just went for it."

-Young Person 7; Age 17

Quote 2. Various access points & example of school outreach.

I: "Are there any activities that you would like to do at the Junction, either ones that are already in place or ones that you think would be nice for them to have?"

YP9: "[...] it's always good that they have like, they've got pretty much like, not everything but they've got a lot of things. So, say you like art they will have something to do with art or, if you like reading they will have something to do with reading, if you like, sports they will even have something to do with sports. [...] I think there's enough 'cause I think everyone will have at least one small thing that will connect with them."

-Young Person 9; Age 13

Quote 3. Range of activities available.

Amongst the Junction's range of activities, sexual health services such as STI testing, access to C-Cards (condom cards) and information are widely available. Given that rates of teenage pregnancy in Leith and the North Edinburgh area are 228% higher than the Scottish average (NHS Health Scotland) it is vital that local services are able to provide support and education for young people in the region. It became evident that young people wishing to access more information or support relating to sexual health felt comfortable attending the Junction for this purpose and often preferred approaching the Junction over services such as those provided by schools (see Quote 4).

I: "Was there anything going on in your lives that made you want to come along to The Junction in the first place?"

*YP13: "Just that, I mean, I only had to come because I was growing up, I want to know about sex and stuff. And it's like, you're not gonna talk about that to your friends, know what I mean?"
[...]*

YP11: "Yeah. If you, like, go and have a chat about sex, and stuff, they would give you a C card, which is condom card."

YP13: "To keep you safe."

I: Okay. "Do you have access to these sorts of services anywhere else, or is this the only place...?"

YP12: "No, just The Junction."

YP13: "Yeah, I mean, you can do in school, the teachers always say. But I don't like talking to teachers, I prefer here."

YP11: "Yeah."

-Young Persons 11, 12 & 13; Aged 13 – 14

Quote 4. Accessing sexual health services and information.

In terms of additional support for young people, the Junction is well equipped to recognise and respond to a wide range of individual needs. Young people reported a variety of positive instances in which the Junction were able to respond to and support their specific needs (see Quotes 5 & 6).

"...[My Project Worker] helped me so much, she's got me loans, and stuff before, for clothing grants, and stuff. [...] 'cause I've moved around a lot, with my mum, and stuff, being addicted to drugs, I've had to leave the house and go and move and start over somewhere else, with completely nothing. So, and [My Project Worker's], like, got me grants so I can buy new clothes, because I had no clothes to wear to school, and stuff. So she got me that, and she got me, started to get, like toiletries, and stuff [...] she's been a really good help."

-Young Person 14; Age Unknown

Quote 5. Additional support.

I: *“You mentioned that you’ve accessed a few other organisations and services [...] could you comment on how they compare with The Junction?”*

YP10: *“So, I’ve had a wide range of experience within different organisations, and I would say without a doubt The Junction has been a great service and I feel [it] is the best service for young people in Edinburgh. Because, from my experience, it’s one of the only organisations that I haven’t had to...how do I explain this, where I’ve been fully supported and where I’ve felt, like, The Junction have listened to my needs and responded to those...whereas other organisations have struggled to meet my needs or to recognise what my needs are, The Junction have been brilliant in, yeah, noticing what my needs are and responding accordingly.”*

-Young Person 10; Age Unknown

Quote 6. Recognising and responding to the rights and needs of young people.

Quote 7. Comparison with external services.

YP6: *“I’m here because I have an eating disorder and I’m in recovery at the moment, but I’d previously had experience in an eating disorder clinic where I had out-patient therapy. I found that experience just really not very useful. Like I said before, it wasn’t a very, kind of, relaxed setting. I felt very forced into it and I just didn’t find it useful for me. I recently had like more of a kind of realisation that I still needed help so I came here and started therapy here. [...] I’ve done therapy before but that was at the Cullen Centre which is specifically for eating disorders. I had therapy at my university once. That was rubbish, really patronising, not very useful...”*

I: *“Generally, could you comment perhaps on how they compare?”*

YP6: *“Yes, so I think again there’s like the idea of having me coming here, making it my own decision, seeking it out for myself. That, and having complete, kind of, control over how the sessions are shaped and that kind of thing. I think the idea of respect so, you know, there wasn’t any kind of pre...she had no pre...what’s the word? No ideas about why I was here or, you know, why I did the things I did or whatever, you know. She just sat and she listened to me and I thought that was great. You know, allowed me to, kind of, really let out some stuff that I needed to without feeling judged. I think they deal with such a wide range of different things with a very, kind of, open mind. I think it feels a lot more, I don’t know somehow safe or, I don’t want to say free again, but like there’s no pressure to fit in any kind of boxes because there are so many different shapes here.”*

-Young Person 6; Age 20

A number of comparisons were drawn between the Junction and existing external youth services. Many young people reported having less positive experiences with some external services compared with the Junction and often referred to issues such as feeling patronised as well as a lack of autonomy, understanding and respect. Examples of other external services which have been attended by the young people interview include; school guidance

services, university counselling and CAMHS amongst others. Young people said that they most value being listened to and being able to speak in a non-judgemental environment at the Junction and indicated that other services often did not provide this for them (see Quote 7).

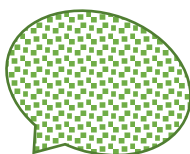
Young people report that they have in many ways benefitted from attending the Junction and are able to positively reflect on their experience with the organisation (see Quote 8). Young people describe how they were able to develop strategies that have been effective in helping them cope better (see Quotes 9 & 10).

"I feel like it definitely does help. Sometimes it can be hard to make yourself go because sometimes the thought of it is quite hard but once you're there, or even when you're in the session it can be quite hard but once you leave you normally feel a bit better or your mood can lift a bit. Sometimes you do come out and it's been hard and you just need to take a minute but I think it definitely has helped. I've learnt to cope better."

-Young Person 1; Age Unknown

Quote 8. Reflection on experience of attending the Junction.

Quote 9. Developing coping strategies.



I: "One to one, okay. Has that been helpful for you?"

YP9: "Yeah, it's been really helpful. [...] I have got a lot of ideas... there is very creative people that I feel are working here so they are very good for giving you ideas on stuff that you could do, ways that you can feel and techniques you can use and they've all, at least once, came into, I have used them and it's worked."

-Young Person 9; Age 13

I: "Have you learned any new skills or coping mechanisms?"

YP14: "Yeah, like, when I was younger, I got really bad...I don't know how to explain it. Like, I was really upset all the time, and I done some, like, bad things in the past. Like, I'd hurt myself, I would, like, self-harm, and stuff. And [My Project Worker] gave me different coping mechanisms, so that I would not do that anymore [...] I've realised that I don't have to hurt myself when I'm upset. Like, I wouldn't even think about hurting myself anymore."

-Young Person 14; Age Unknown

Quote 10. Developing coping strategies.



Development opportunities at the Junction are viewed positively and valued by young people. These include opportunities such as becoming a Junction Youth Advisor (JYA) which offers young people the chance to inform service development and delivery and develop skills and confidence by representing the Junction at stakeholder events (see Quotes 11 & 12).

“I was just looking for things that would help me in the future, like improve a CV and to gain new experiences. [...] I’ve met a lot of new people and I feel I am a lot more confident now than I was in the past. And, before I came here I wasn’t really 100 per cent what The Junction was but I know a lot more information about it and it’s given me a lot of good opportunities that I don’t think I would have been able to have without volunteering here.”

-Young Person 3; Age 16

Quote 11. Experience of becoming a JYA.

I: “Could you tell me a bit more about your role as a youth advisor.”

YP8: “I used my experiences with the service, and input from other people that benefit from the service, to help improve the service. Very much it’s like it’s showing off a young person’s voice, getting into the board of The Junction to make sure The Junction...you’re heading in the right direction at all times.”

I: “And, do you get a lot of opportunities being a youth advisor?”

YP8: “Definitely, I was in Glasgow on Tuesday for The Junction. [...] We went to visit another project that offers mental health services to young people, went to Castlemilk Youth Complex in Glasgow, and we just like contrasted and compared between the two services, like what they had, and we didn’t have, and we got some feedback about what they thought could make our service better, and then we fed back to them.”

-Young Person 8; Age 16

Quote 12. Opportunities for JYAs.

CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT:

The culture and the environment plays a crucial role in making the Junction an accessible and comfortable place for young people (see Quote 13). Participants valued having a service that is orientated around young people and describe the Junction as a friendly, non-judgemental space where they feel respected. This in turn, combined with the Junction’s flexible and consistent approach (outlined in theory of change), facilitates a greater sense of control and autonomy amongst young people accessing the service (see Quote 14).

I: If you had to describe The Junction to a friend how would you describe it?

YP1: As I've said it's quite a comfortable place and relaxing place, somewhere that you can open up and someone is going to listen and you're going to feel like they're on your side. They're not on the rest of the world's side, sort of thing. You can just talk about anything and it will be heard and if there's any help then it will be given to you, really.

-Young Person 1: Age Unknown

Quote 13. Describing the Junction.

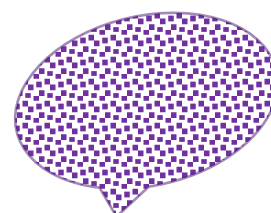
I: How did you first come to hear about The Junction?

YP6: It's a good question. I think I was searching online for some, kind of, form of therapy that was different from what I'd experienced before. Something that was a little bit more relaxed and orientated towards young people because I think it's, you know, if it's not... This is a very, kind of, young people orientated centre. It's not, sort of, patronising. It's not...I don't know, it feels very voluntary, like, you know, I came here off my own bat. It's all in your hands so, like I said before, it's not about being pressured into doing anything you don't want to do. It's very voluntary and because of that you feel, you know, less...you feel more respected. I think that's important as any young person feels like... You know, they're listening to you and I think that's one of the great things is that they're listening to you and you feel powerful because of that. You feel that yes, you have control but they're, sort of, there for you as well.

-Young Person 6; Age 20

**Quote 14.
Orientated
towards
young
people,
respectful
and sense
of
autonomy.**

Young people strongly value confidentiality at the Junction and positively view the organisation as a safe space (see Quotes 15-17). The Junction has also been described as a “calming, peaceful and accepting” environment and is a space where many young people feel comfortable, safe, respected and well supported. Young people found that having the freedom to express themselves creatively through activities such as *Creative Express* is a hugely beneficial experience which creates a more comfortable environment where they feel more at ease (see Quote 18).



I: “So, you’ve been able to come in every week, is there anything else that you feel is very important about that service?”

YP5: “Just that I know it’s like, a safe place to come and anything I say won’t get back to anybody else.”

Quote 15 –Young Person 5; Age 15

I: “Yeah, if you had to describe The Junction to a friend, how would you describe it?”

YP8: “A safe, confidential environment to talk about things, anything you want, pretty much.”

Quote 16 –Young Person 8; Age 16

I: “What are the most important aspects of these services to you?”

YP3: “I think the confidentiality is something that is very important here. It’s the idea that like nothing that gets said during meetings or anything, like during the one to one counselling, will ever leave that room. [...] And, also, the fact that it’s a charity and everything is completely free which is very good for young people. But, I think it’s mainly the idea that when you come to The Junction everything you say will just be between you and the worker and there is no place for judgement and your family or your friends don’t need to know about the things that happen like, with a worker here and it’s a really safe service. [...] I would highly recommend anyone with any issues to come here and get support.”

-Quote 17 –Young Person 3; Age 16

Quotes 15, 16 & 17. Confidentiality.

“...it’s easier to speak when I’m sitting doing something, I’m not really concentrating, I don’t get anxious because, one of my big things is anxiety [...] the art is relaxing and calming and, there will always be the option to put some quiet music on and it’s just a really really nice friendly atmosphere, it doesn’t feel like therapy. It feels like just going somewhere and doing some art, you know what I mean. Like, it’s really good but, there is also the aspect of it’s not just sitting drawing, you calm down for now, we talk about things, we resolve issues. Things get done a lot faster, I feel, because it’s like we can talk through it as we’re doing other things and it’s just really good to be honest, that’s the only way I can describe it, it’s just really really good.”

-Young Person 2; Age 15

Quote 18. Creativity and environment at the Junction

MEMBERS OF STAFF AT THE JUNCTION:

Young people describe having an adult to talk to and their relationships with members of staff at the Junction as the most important aspect of service delivery. Having a trusted adult to open up to is described very positively, with young people strongly valuing positive, non-blaming/non-judgemental, respectful relationships with their project workers at the Junction (see Quotes 19-24).

Quotes 19-24. Having someone to talk to, trusting relationships with staff, and being listened to.

“So, it’s just been a great experience, I’ve felt, that I’ve been listened to, and that I’ve not been judged, that I’ve just been able to come here as I am and speak about anything that I want to, and be heard, like, I’ve felt heard here which is, yeah. I’ve experienced a lot of different services, like, youth organisations and other organisations in my life and I just really feel I’ve benefitted so much from the Junction and that it’s been really a massive help in helping me to develop my confidence and develop, yeah and make me stronger.”

Quote 19 – Young Person 10; Age Unknown

“I feel like it’s more...not that I don’t ever have someone to talk to, but I feel like it’s more like, someone that’s... it’s good though because everything [isn’t] disclosed. So, it’s someone you can speak to, open up to, how you are feeling about anyone and the best part is that they’ll not tell anyone how, unless it’s very serious about your mental wellbeing. He’ll not tell anyone about what’s happened [...] you have got someone to speak to, you have got someone to listen to you and no one judging you. [...] It’s like a place where you can come and open up to people and the person that you speak to it’s not just like someone that’s like, you are just speaking to and telling about, it’s like someone that you get to know over the while and they get to know you and like, they are more like a friend at the end. Like someone, you feel that you can really speak to and open up to.”

Quote 20 – Young Person 9; Age 13

I: “Okay, is there anything in particular that you liked about the counselling service?”

YP5: “Just so how like, it was there every week and even if there was like nothing going on that week I still had a place to come and like, just talk, I could talk about anything. Each week we went over something different, so it was just nice to have that.”

Quote 21 – Young Person 5; Age 15

I: “And, what was it about the drop-ins or the counselling that you liked, was it relationships with the staff or...”

YP2: “I think it was just being able to speak with somebody who was outside my life and didn’t know anything so, it wasn’t exactly like...I couldn’t speak to my friends because girls at that age are bitchy [...] I don’t like speaking to my mum because I don’t like worrying her... and I don’t live with my dad so, it’s a bit difficult. So, it was nice to have somebody who is older who is not going to pass any of your information on who is just going to speak to you, obviously they have got the care of duty if they think you are in danger they will have to, but apart from that it was just nice to have somebody to chat with who wasn’t in my life, if you know what I mean.”

Quote 22 – Young Person 2; Age 15

“Yeah. My mum and dad both are, like, really bad drug addicts. And I was living with them, and it was not a nice environment for me. I needed space, I mean, I needed someone to speak to about it ’because it was a lot, I was very young and I had seen a lot since a very young age. So it was just playing on my mind, and it was just nice to have someone that, from a distance, like, a different view on it, like, other than my family members or my friends. Because it’s not something you really want to discuss with your friends or anything, so it was nice having someone else to be able to discuss it with.”

Quote 23 – Young Person 14; Age Unknown

“That’s one of the reasons I come here on Fridays. You can talk to them; they are really nice people working here and no judgement, that’s one of the best things here.”

Quote 24 – Young Person 7; Age 17

Young people talked about their project workers being very open, understanding and responsive to their needs (see Quote 25). They also describe the members of staff at the Junction as having a “caring and genuine” nature who they feel have their best interests in mind (see Quote 26).

I: “So were there specific things that you liked about the counselling such as the staff or the time of day? Are there specific things that you think the counselling service does well?”

YP1: “My counsellor’s really good. I think he’s got an understanding if I’m...I’m also suffering from fibromyalgia so he’s quite understanding of that and sometimes if I’m having a bad day and just say I’m finding it hard then we don’t have to go so deep into things and can just be... a time to talk just about anything, just a bit of breathing space, really, which is good. I think the rooms are good to do your counselling in because I feel like it’s not like being in a GP or anything like that. It’s more relaxed and more comfortable I think, which is good.”

[...]

I: “If you could say what your one favourite thing about The Junction would be, what would you say?”

R: “Probably my counsellor. Pleased about how well I’ve got on with him and it did take me a while to build the trust but I am there now and I have a good relationship with my counsellor. I think he’s really good at what he does and he listens. I think that’s really important because a lot of places try and throw different things at you but if I’m saying, no, I don’t want to do it, it’s not forced. So I think that’s important with him.”

-Young Person 1; Age Unknown

Quote 25. Staff members being understanding to young people’s needs.

I: “Okay. And, how do you get on with members of staff here?”

YP3: “I think they’re really good people. They seem like genuinely nice people who like their job and want the best for you. All the staff that I have met here and, I’ve met the majority of them, seem like really nice people. They are great to spend time with and they are really lovely people.”

YP4: “The Junction staff almost replicate a family. I mean I know everyone, like most people there may be like the one odd person that I don’t know like, I know everyone and I talk, even passing I still talk and it’s a really nice, as [YP3] is saying, it’s a really nice atmosphere and everyone is caring, actually genuinely care. They are not just asking, because it’s not staged, it’s not fake, it’s genuine and it’s really heart-warming when you hear that. It’s really kind and lovely.”

-Young Person 3 & 4; Ages 16 & 15

Quote 26. Staff members described as caring and genuine.

1.2 CHALLENGES, INDICATING A NEED FOR CHANGE, INCLUDING SUGGESTIONS WHERE RAISED:

EXTERIOR/INTERIOR OF THE BUILDING:

The exterior/interior of the building was generally viewed positively. However, young people suggested a number of ways to improve upon it. There was some confusion over which street-facing door to use. Young people suggested better signage to prevent this. One participant reported feeling “a little bit intimidated” upon entering the building, describing an empty corridor and the initial experience as like being in “a doctor’s waiting office”. This in contrast to the friendly ethos of the Junction and its working practices as specified in the theory of change.

I: “Okay, and if there’s anything you could change about The Junction what would it be?”

YP6: “Maybe, sort of, a notice on the door of which door you should enter through because I always end up going through the wrong one. I think...I don’t know, it is quite nice and relaxed. I’m trying to think. I was still a little bit intimidated when I first came here and I’m trying to think of a way that that could be lessened. I think you do come in and it’s just like an empty corridor and you do sort of sit there like in a doctor’s waiting office. I don’t know if there’s much they can do about that but, I don’t know. Yes, I’m not sure. I think it’s pretty good though. I don’t have that many faults with it.”

-Young Person 6; Age 20

Quote 27. Exterior/interior of the building.

AWARENESS OF THE JUNCTION AND SERVICES OFFERED:

The young people felt strongly about the benefits of attending the Junction, yet some felt that there was a lack of awareness of the services amongst those who would benefit from accessing them. A number of suggestions were made such as developing online materials (a video) to raise awareness. There was an acknowledgment that the decision to attend had to be made by each individual, but that certain modifications could potentially be made to increase the likelihood of someone attending, e.g. user-friendly changes to the exterior of the building.

YP3: “Yeah. There’s information about [the Junction] but it’s hard to be able to capture the feeling and the essence of The Junction in things like a leaflet. So, I know right now we are trying to work on an online video to promote The Junction but, I think it’s just we need to try and spread more awareness of it but I don’t think that’s really...I don’t think there’s much The Junction can do about that. [...] Because we already promote it at every event, where there will be people that will want to come here. It’s just, kind of like; we can’t force people to come here. We can just recommend it but sometimes that isn’t enough for people to decide to come here.”

I: “Is there anything you think would make that more helpful or any way?”

YP3: “I think an on-line video will help. I just think school drop-ins are very good at it, it’s just...it’s up to the person that wants help to get the confidence to come here. And, I think The Junction should just have like a, the only thing I think they could really do is get a better exterior and get more like, user friendly doors and stuff.”

-Young Person 3; Age 16

Quote 28. Awareness of the Junction.

SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS RELATED TO EXISTING SERVICES OFFERED:

A number of specific suggestions were made in relation to existing services, although it is important to note that young people may not have been aware of all existing services offered. These are listed below as bullet points:

- More group sessions
- More excursions, trips and group based social activities
- Need for timeslots in relation to the massage service
- Travel expenses for travel to and from the Junction
- More school outreach

1.3 IMPACT OF THE JUNCTION ON YOUNG PEOPLE:

The young people reported positive short and long term impacts in relation to their attendance at the Junction in terms of mental and physical wellbeing, the developing of coping strategies, and positive behavioural changes. Many of the young people reported feeling better equipped to deal with decision making, relating specifically back to the focus upon choice within the theory of change. Young people reported feeling more able to reflect upon their own strengths and behaviour, and reported a greater understanding of their own health and wellbeing needs.

I: "Since you started attending The Junction have you noticed any changes in yourself?"

YP6: "Yes, so I've noticed I'm more likely to reflect on my behaviour. I think I've sort of slowed down, which I think is what I really needed to do. Slow down and think about the decisions I was making. I think it is really good to have that, sort of, space and time to stop and think about what's happened and what you want to do in the future. I feel without this I probably wouldn't do it. I'd probably bury my head in the sand and just keep on going, la, la, la, la, la, nothing's happening, so I think, yes. [...] We've kind of been developing new skills so...I'm trying to think of actual skills I might have developed. I think it's more about thinking. It's not so much, sort of, specific skills because I know all this. I know all the things that you should do and you should do that. I think it's about, yes, sort of taking time out of your schedule to reflect. I guess that's a pretty good skill to have and taking a break occasionally and understanding that you can't always do like everything at once. Yes, so I guess they're not like skill skills but I guess they are sort of any skills."

Quote 29 –Young Person 6; Age 20

“ ”

I: "Okay. Have you felt any difference since you started coming along to The Junction?"

YP7: Relaxation, like the massage helps you a lot to just calm down, just sit there, organise everything else that's happening around... That's nice, all the space."

Quote 30 -YP7; Age 17

“ ”

YP14: "I was always so worried about what people thought, and like, so cautious and stuff, and embarrassed, and really shy. And now I'm like so much more confident and I don't really care about other people's opinions, because everyone's entitled to their own opinion. And [My Project Worker] has made me understand that."

Quote 31 –Young Person 14; Age Unknown

Quotes 29-31. Impact

2. INTERVIEWS WITH STAFF MEMBERS

A number of strengths were identified, providing support to the current theory of change. These indicated a positive culture and environment, both for young people (as per findings described above) and staff (in terms of staff development and organisational support). Communicating impact was identified as a challenge, due to the complexity of the issues dealt with through the service. It was felt that there is a need to “become better” at describing what the Junction does and the impact it has upon young people. These points are described below, alongside illustrative quotes.

2.1 STRENGTHS, INDICATING THAT THE PROGRAMME THEORY IS WORKING AS INTENDED: CULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT:

The culture and environment of the Junction was perceived to be a critical component of the Junction approach (Quote 1). This is very much consistent with the statement outlined in the theory of change which refers to a “*nurturing base from which to develop and sustain trusting relationships*”. Staff spoke of the culture and environment as one that recognises the diversity of young people and subsequent need for tailored support in contrast to a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. The Junction was described as a service that could be engaged with via multiple means, providing a confidential, nurturing, flexible, non-judgemental and respectful space for young people to be supported with a wide range of often quite complex issues.

“I suppose it’s difficult because, I feel sometimes we talk about young people like they’re a homogenous group, and they’re not so then I think what we try and do is, meet as many needs as possible. And, I feel, like, we struggle with it but it’s, this balance of the right level of flexibility but also enough level of boundaries, so it’s, like, that real balance between those two. Because, then when they get here I think, well I believe that they’re listened to and in some other spaces are not truly listened to, and that doesn’t mean that they’re not gently challenged sometimes, but, it gives them space to be heard and say things from their point of view, and that doesn’t...they’re not necessarily, their point of view isn’t always a truth.

And, then, I think, there’s just lots of different ways for lots of different people to try and engage as well, so if you can’t manage a regular appointment, that there is the walk in and drop in. If you don’t like coming to walk in and drop in and you need routine, then you can get regular support with the same worker, I think, the relationship’s really important with the worker, and I think that’s why we try and build it through, like you know, the street outreach and the school outreach, so it’s the same workers so it’s not, like when you get your appointment you’re, like, I don’t even know who that person is, or you’re like, well I don’t know who that person is, but I know Moira, I know Jack, or, I know Rob, and they’re all pretty cool, so this person should be.

I think just having that space that’s for them, I very strongly feel as well, like we’ve been tried to be pushed over the years, to provide more parenting support, etc. but this is a space for them, and that’s what we do, and parent support is massively important. But someone else needs to do that. We couldn’t do both, it’s their space. I hope the young people feel listened to, and there’s flexibility, so it’s not like, you must do this service, or this service. We try and negotiate with them as well. Obviously we’ve got skills and knowledge, so sometimes we can say, well actually with this service, would be better for you. And by then, if they’re like, nah, I’d rather just come to the drop-in, then you’re like, well if that’s what you’re ready for, then that’s important, and come to that, and we’ll still be here.”

- Staff Member

Quote 1. Culture and environment.

ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES (NESTED PROVISION):

A consistent theme throughout the staff interviews was that of nested provision – a central feature the Junction’s work (Quote 2). This is embodied in the description of young people “moving between” services after initial contact. Thus, a young person may access the Junction initially through street based outreach, but through that then gain access to a variety of other support services, e.g. the drop-in or other such services. This approach was seen to be complementary to the assets based approach, and was perceived as reliant on good relationships with young people attending the service. Again, this supports the theory of change.

I: “What do you think are the most important elements (for the Junction)?”

SM1: “Most important things. Well, relationship is I guess something I’ve already mentioned. And again, the asset-based approach but yeah, helping a young person recognise their skills and abilities and positives. Empowering them I suppose. And I do think the nested provision...I mean, I feel I keep on using just jargony things but I actually feel that a lot of it, it’s true and really does work. That once people are involved in the Junction they can see the different aspects that they can access and that does then empower them to make their own decisions about how they want to access support, because it’s not like, oh, you’re in this bit, this is the only bit that you can do. They can move between parts of service I think that...yeah, then making their own journey that’s appropriate for them when it’s appropriate.”

-Staff Member

Quote 3. Activities/services (Nested Provision).*SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR STAFF AND A SUPPORTIVE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE:*

The Junction was described by staff as a supportive workplace, with management providing encouragement and support for staff to grow in terms of personal and professional development (Quotes 4-5). This is augmented by what staff described as a “positive team environment”. The idea of skills development for staff and supportive organisational culture is not currently incorporated into the Junction theory of change, but appears to be a feature of the organisation’s practice which is likely to be contributing towards achievement of outcomes.

“I came back after two years away so it’s quite a special place to me, just having the nice culture where I think I’m learning all the time because of the nature of the work, part of the way that we’re kind of pushed in a positive way to reach...not to sit still but always to develop and build on our strengths. And so as a worker that’s really appreciated, it’s a safe environment. So what it says it does for young people, it also does for staff.”

-Staff Member

Quote 4. Skills development for staff.

"I feel, like, I have a lot of responsibility, well I do have a lot of responsibility for that, but also to look after myself to be able to do it, and I don't always manage that, but I've got an extent, like, I'm not...I know how to that I've got an external supervisor that's helpful, I know when to check in with the senior staff, if I'm, like, actually I'm really struggling with this, so yeah, but it feels...I wonder, like, it definitely did feel different from when I was project worker and senior project worker, 'cause there was always someone else, that line management thing felt different, but I felt well supported then, but also, like, challenged I didn't always get the answers I wanted, and that used to really annoy me. But, actually I can see how that's really benefited me, and has helped my growth...I suppose that's it, I've got my own Junction journey as well and so really... and then that's when, like, how I manage as well to try and help people find their own answers, and sometimes, I think, people just want me to tell them stuff but it's part of the learning though. And, it's the same with young people, you can be, like, these are all the options but I'm not going to tell you what the thing is to do 'cause that's your choice.

But, yeah, just appreciated the team environment, the support, as I link back to how much we are pushed and challenged I see that that comes from the top back in...it's just we're encouraged and we can probably push our self and there's lots of opportunities that we can feed into. So, as I say, anything at the Junction we'd say we do with young people we definitely do it with staff as well."

-Staff Member

Quote 5. Supportive organisational culture.

2.2 CHALLENGES: INDICATING A NEED FOR CHANGE, INCLUDING SUGGESTIONS WHERE RAISED:

Measurement and Reporting Impact:

It was generally felt by staff that a key area for improvement was around measurement and reporting of impact. It was acknowledged that the work of the Junction dealt with often complex issues with many impacts, and it was felt that this was a challenge to capture and communicate to others. Currently measurement and reporting of impact is not noted in the theory of change as an integral part of the service. It is worth considering how this might fit into the current theory of change.

"I think, all the work that we do and how good it is just lives in us all as individuals, and, I think, I'd like to change and, I think, we're going to try and change and we're having conversations about well how do we pull that premonition out of ourselves, so that it lives somewhere else and not in us, so if we left that we don't take all that with us, that we know the difference that we made. I've been speaking to the staff team about case studies a lot, it's not telling the young people's personal story, it's telling what the Junction and the young person did, and how do we do that better, I think there's some changes that we can do.

I know that we're making a difference, but it's that age old social science problem, how do you know you were the intervention that made the difference, and also you never get the follow up. But I suppose, what we do hear quite regularly is people who were young people here that are now adults that have their own children, and workers still work here that know them [and] they may meet them out on the street outreach, they're saying oh the Junction was amazing, you know, they're saying that's what's happening and then we have a lot of mum's, parents, even other professionals who are parents saying, "oh my daughter went" [and they] really value the Junction because their daughter, son, however they identify, came here. So, we hear that, and I do believe that the impact is wider, but I can't tell you how ...there's no measurable on that, that I know."

-Staff Member

Quote 6. Measurement and reporting of impact

2.3 REPORTS OF IMPACT:

Similarly to the interviews with young people, a number of positive impacts were reported. Relating to the previous point regarding measurement and reporting of impact, it is clear that there are impacts upon both mental and physical wellbeing, however these are often quite complex and challenging to fully encapsulate.

"I: You mentioned there the changes that a young person came to in terms of resilience and positivity and in general, the young people that you work with, what's routine, just you seeing them, maybe them coming up to the Junction and...?"

SM: I think depending on where they become involved I definitely think some of them just seeing the acknowledgement of they're actually talking about stuff. It's okay to talk about stuff or it's okay to share feelings about what's tough, especially some of the young boys that we maybe work with who haven't culturally felt comfortable in certain environments to share feelings or share...oh, express emotions and I think seeing people come in and say, oh, no, I didn't need to chat to anyone about anything, I'm just going to have fun in drop-in but actually opening up the idea, oh, you know what? They could go and speak to someone just briefly about a particular thing and then gradually opening up. I think that's a huge thing actually for people to experience that and be so unsure about it then be like, well, that was really helpful. And just the fact of talking to somebody in a coping mechanism that they can access is a huge thing. But also a lot of it, especially within a one-to-one support, is about coping strategies and things that they can practically do however difficult the situation is."

-Staff Member

Quote 7. Impact.

3. INTERVIEWS WITH BOARD MEMBERS

A number of strengths were identified, providing support to the current theory of change. These were generally consistent with the findings indicated from young people and staff (that the Junction is a valued organisation that consistently meets its objectives), although less detailed potentially due to the more distal nature of involvement required from these stakeholders. No weaknesses were raised. An important perspective raised by board members, not present in interviews with young people and staff, was that of external challenges, primarily funding. This was seen as an ongoing challenge for the Junction in terms of service planning, as funding sought for some services often has to be re-applied for when existing funding comes to an end. Development of a plan to fully capture the range of impacts achieved by the service, may help to secure further funding.

"Well, most of the things that I would like to change are external to the Junction so, I would say that for any charity, funding is right up there at number one. And, the problem is that we will get funding but we will get funding for a year or you will get funding for 18 months and then that funding will stop so, the service that is tied to that because it's usually through restricted funding then has to stop unless we can find someone else to take on that funding or we have to reduce the amount of hours that a particular counsellor or worker has. So, the frustration is that you can't plan strategically ahead because you are always trying to find new funding avenues. When you get a funding avenue cut off that could mean that we have to stop a service, think again, and generate a different service. Because funders like something new and shiny, they don't like taking over something that's already been done."

-Board Member

Quote 8. Funding & strategic planning.

4. SURVEY DATA

In April 2018, the Junction conducted the “Voice Your Choice” survey with young people engaged in the service. The questions were asked to test the “what and how we deliver” section from the theory of change. A total of 18 young people completed the survey; all had attended/were attending regular support. The average age of participants was 16 years old and were a mixture of eight males, eight females and one trans-male. Five of the young people identified as being from a black and minority ethnic (BME) background. The findings provided support for the theory of change and were consistent with findings from the interviews with young people (Figure 3).

All 18 respondents agreed that they feel the Junction offers them a **friendly safe space** where they feel **welcome**:

“I always felt able to discuss my feelings and experiences without any fear or judgement”

“The Junction staff are all so friendly and helpful which makes me look forward to coming”

17 young people agreed that the Junction offered a **consistent yet flexible** approach at the Junction:

“They have many programmes and can find one that suits you”

“I have my counsellor but can also see other workers.”

“Every week you have someone there but if you can’t make it, its fine”

All 18 young people agreed they are **supported and encouraged** by staff at the Junction:

“The Junction really believes in young people’s potential”

“The people are very supportive and can help you progress towards the person who you want to be. You are made to feel comfortable talking about tough issues”

All 18 Young agreed that the Junction is a **confidential service they can trust**:

“I feel like I can trust the service which is extremely important to me having been let down and had trust broken in the past”

At outreach (people who may or may not have used the service) the survey asked “I can trust the Junction. Agree/Disagree/Unsure.” - 39 people agreed. 6 didn’t answer. 3 were unsure. **Nobody said they didn’t trust the Junction.**

Figure 3. Findings from the “Voice Your Choice” survey.

PHASE 3: REFINING THE THEORY OF CHANGE

As previously stated, a number of principles (or ways of working) are embedded within the Junction's theory of change. These principles form the foundation upon which the Junction sets out to create change in the lives of the young people attending the service. Essentially, through the provision of a safe, nurturing and confidential environment, each journey through the Junction is tailored to meet the specific needs of each young person. This in turn, leads to increased awareness of self, strengths and needs, meaningful personal development and greater choice in relation to future opportunities. It is clear from the interviews that generally, there is considerable support for the theory of change. A number of findings suggest further consideration in terms of refinements. These are:

- **Consideration of the exterior and interior environment**

Interviews with young people revealed that the exterior and interior environment could at times be perceived at odds with the ethos of the Junction as a friendly and approachable organisation. Some simple steps could be followed to address this such as clearer signage.

- **Supportive organisational culture and skill development for staff as a bedrock to the service achieving its goals**

It became apparent through interviews with staff that the organisational culture and opportunities afforded to team members is particularly positive and arguably central to the Junction achieving its aims and objectives. This might fit best under the 'Activities and how we deliver' section of the theory of change which is currently focused upon the delivery of activities for young people. Behind this layer of activities, however, there is an organisational culture that potentially plays a key role in driving these activities forward.

- **Measurement and reporting of impact/ funding**

All interviewees described a range of impacts resulting from the work of the Junction. Staff interviews highlighted the challenge of measuring and reporting these, often due to the complex nature of some of the issues tackled. Whilst a measurement/formal evaluation plan is not part of a proposed theory of change, it is a useful add-on and something for the Junction to consider in terms of future planning. Funding was mentioned as a challenge by board members. Such a measurement/formal evaluation plan could assist in providing funders with an overview of the full range of impacts achieved by the organisation.

CONCLUSION

This report sought to explore whether the theory of change underpinning the Junction works as intended. Interviews were conducted with young people attending the service, staff and board members. Findings were positive, generally providing support for the current theory of change. Interview findings suggested that the Junction is working as intended in many respects and that the assets-based model of working adopted by the Junction impacts upon the development of coping skills and behaviour changes, in addition to young people's mental and physical wellbeing. The Junction's ways-of-working have applicability to youth work and youth organisations in general and serve as a model of good working practice. Particular strengths were highlighted, in particular the staff composition, Nested Provision approach, various access points, and tailored support for each young person. Young people talked about staff as 'trusted adults', emphasising the importance of the relationship between youth workers and the young people they engage with. This model of practice is relevant to current national youth policy and is a strong example of effective youth work in Scotland and beyond. A number of additions were suggested in relation to the current theory of change. The supportive organisational culture and skills development for staff offered within the Junction is likely to play a role in the effective functioning of the organisation and the achievement of its aims and objectives. While individual services are monitored and evaluated, the overall organisation may also benefit from the consideration of developing further measurement and evaluation plans in order to capture the range of impacts suggested in a wider context. This may also support the organisation with future funding bids.

The findings of this report are consistent with comments made by two senior public health professionals who the authors contacted for feedback in relation to the work of the organisation and this report overall. There was general agreement that the work of the Junction is supported by current research literature related to creating positive outcomes for young people through effective youth work practices. Much support was also made for the variety of services on offer, flexible ways of working and the young-person centred nature of the organisation: "The organisation provides a good range of services and is very flexible and willing to adapt and try other approaches depending on what works. The services have been designed to fit around young peoples' lives (e.g. drop in and outreach sessions) and take an assets based approach, which recognises and builds on young peoples' strengths". Both were very positive about the organisation, with one stating "I'm really struggling to think of any weaknesses, the Junction was never in my 'worry basket' when I worked with them".