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## **Conversations. "The story I want my life to be"**

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# Conversations

**“The story I want my life to be.”**

**Queen’s University Belfast Innovation Zones &  
Shankill Children and Young People Zone**

**November 2022**



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# Foreword: Vice Chancellor

At Queen's University, we have been making a difference to the lives of people since our foundation in 1845. From that time we have been driven by the challenge laid down in our motto, Pro Tanto Quid Retribuamus: "What shall we give in return for so much?"

In 2017, when we launched our Social Charter, we reaffirmed our commitment to making a meaningful, positive contribution to society. I am delighted that building on this, our Strategy 2030 prioritises working in partnership for societal benefit.

The 'Conversations' project is a wonderful example of how communities and academia can collaborate for effective change.

Born from a strategic partnership between Queen's University and the Greater Shankill Children and Young People Zone, a relationship dating back to the Zone's inception in 2014, this project has been designed, shaped and driven locally, with our researchers providing academic rigour and a framework for delivery.

By placing children and young people at its core, Conversations has afforded a voice to, and is shaping a vision of, what the future might look like. I wish all the children, young people and their families well on this journey and look forward to helping you achieve your ambitions.



**PRESIDENT AND VICE-  
CHANCELLOR  
QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY  
BELFAST  
PROFESSOR IAN GREER**



# Foreword: NI Commissioner

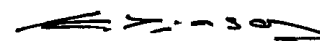
“There is no such thing as the ‘voiceless’. There is only the deliberately silenced or the preferably unheard.”

Arundhati Roy

You know that any publication that is called Conversations is going to be a worthwhile read and I am not saying that because I love a natter. I am saying it because all change must start with conversations with and between the people that are at the centre of that change – children and young people.

Firstly I want to congratulate all involved who have worked diligently and methodically on this process. I became Commissioner for Children and Young People in 2015 at the beginning of the Shankill Children and Young People’s Zone and it has been interesting to watch their journey since that time. Significant reform is incremental and must begin with a change of attitude and mindset hence the importance of conversations. They build an understanding of what children and young people are experiencing and what they want and need for their present and their future.

The Shankill Children and Young People Zone is determined to demonstrate that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) can be implemented within a community. The UNCRC demands that governments and services recognise the individuality of the child alongside the importance of family and place. All three are reflected in this report and remind us of the importance of co-operation across government to deliver on the eight well-being outcomes of the Children and Young People’s Strategy.



**KOULLA YIASOUMA  
NORTHERN IRELAND  
COMMISSIONER FOR  
CHILDREN AND YOUNG  
PEOPLE**



Article 12 of the UNCRC addresses the right of children and young people to have their voices heard in all processes affecting their lives. Although it is more than that article 12 has more recently been translated into co-design. If serious about co-designing services with children and young people then tapping into these conversations is the best place to start.

The report confirms what I have learned about the children and young people of Northern Ireland that whilst they are very aware of the challenges that they, their families and communities face they remain resilient, funny and hopeful for their future. Therefore, when deciding on an outcomes framework it is incumbent on us to mirror their optimism and humour.

It is impressive that the Zone has not yet arrived at an outcomes framework for the children and young people of the Shankill. They are not ready, and for the co-design process to work others need to reflect on these conversations.

The Shankill Community through these conversations are determined to see all their children regardless of their circumstances. They have refused to have 'voiceless' children and young people on the Shankill. Can there be a better starting point?

*'Tell me what's more important than being present for children and listening to them. I'll wait.'*

Maxime Lagacé

*'I hope to be happy, I will be happy, I'm getting somewhere in life'.*

Shankill Girl Age 18



## Authors and Acknowledgements

Authors: Dr Liam O'Hare, Dr Karen Orr, Sarah Jane Waite, Dr Leeanne O'Hara, Daryl Sweet, Dr Aideen Gildea, Dr Jackie Redpath, Rowan Davison, Dr Laura Dunne, Professor Sarah Miller.

The authors above represent staff from Queen's University Belfast Innovation Zones and the Greater Shankill Children and Young People Zone. This report presents a genuinely co-produced piece of research. All aspects of the research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation and implications have been conducted through a long-term community-based research partnership. From the outset it was agreed, that in order to truly represent the voices of the children and young people in the Greater Shankill, this level of partnership was required. As a result, it is difficult to separate QUB and Greater Shankill's contributions and therefore it is simpler to see it as a single group having produced this work.

It is also worth noting that Davison, Dunne and Miller were not involved from the inception instead they were asked to join during report writing stage to review and produce the final set of implications. Although these authors are from QUB and Greater Shankill, this was an effort to reduce bias and increase independence of the final implications. However, the authors encourage the reader to judge the implications based on the logic, rationale and grounded nature of the voices and desires of the children and young people of Greater Shankill and the story they want their life to be.

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The authors would like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the Children and Young People and the Pathfinders who participated in this research. Also, to acknowledge Professor Paul Connolly who facilitated setting up the Innovation Zones in 2015 as Founding Director of The Centre for Evidence and Social Innovation at Queen's University Belfast.



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# Executive Summary

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## Background

There is awareness and evidence that children and young people (CYP) living in disadvantaged communities face more challenges than their peers from more affluent communities. The Shankill community ranks amongst the lowest in Northern Ireland (NI) across a range of poverty indicators, including low income, unemployment, health inequalities and educational underachievement. The CYP of the Shankill community are particularly affected by a third generation of cyclical poverty caused by the collapse of heavy industries, redevelopment displacement and conflict through the 'troubles'. The Greater Shankill Children and Young People Zone is a framework to transform the lives of a generation of CYP. It brings together the different elements and partners required to effect transformation with a generation of CYP in the Greater Shankill area.

The following research has been co-produced between the Greater Shankill Children and Young People's Zone (the Zone) and the Innovation Zones at Queen's University Belfast. In 2014, the Greater Shankill community designated itself as a Children and Young People Zone. The Zone is a place based, whole community, partnership approach focused on transforming the lives of a generation of children and young people in the Greater Shankill area of Belfast. It did so to chart a way forward for all 5968 CYP in this current generation. By doing this, the Shankill was stating that the transformation of this generation was the top priority for their community.

The Innovation Zones are two community place-based partnerships between Queen's University and disadvantaged communities in North and West Belfast (one in each of the Shankill and Colin areas). The partnership began in 2015 with an investment from Queen's University focused on building a two way pipeline of learning between the University and its local communities. The Innovation Zones approach is underpinned by

three guiding principles of interdependence (identifying shared goals), critical thinking (using evidence and evaluation) and creativity (driven by multiple perspectives).

## Introduction

This report details the findings of research into the Conversations process. The Conversations process involves individualised and one-to-one engagement (a conversation) between children and young people in the Greater Shankill community and a qualified and trained adult ‘Pathfinder’. The goal of this process is to encourage and support the child to consider, from their own perspectives, their current and potential future lives, or to put it simply, to help them discover ‘the story they want their life to be’. The Conversations process aims to encourage transformational change, using a child-centred and bottom-up process to establish children’s goals, aspirations, challenges and pathways for support.

The Conversations process has two levels of transformational change, i.e., at the child/young person level and the population (community) level. Furthermore, each level has several stages (summarised in the theory of change diagram below).

### The levels and stages of the Conversations process (Theory of change)



At the CYP level, initial Conversations are used to explore what each specific child or young person wants for themselves their families and their community in the short, medium and longer term. In other words, 'the story they want their life to be.' Next, the Conversations are used as a basis for a Pathfinder to support individuals on their pathway towards the story they want their life to be. Furthermore, it is intended that the Conversations are multiple and ongoing with CYP, connecting CYP to individual support as long as required for them to achieve their desired goals.

Population or community level change is achieved through collective analysis of all of the individual Conversations. This collective analysis is intended to produce a child-centred, bottom up, collective outcomes framework for the Shankill's CYP. Ultimately, this outcomes framework will inform and shape future service provision for the whole community. It will help release community assets for supporting CYP towards their desired outcomes. In addition, the collective analysis will help inform policy development and its implementation in the Greater Shankill, across NI, the UK and internationally through collective networks and research outputs. Finally, there are opportunities in place for reflection at each stage to help continually refine the Conversations process.

The Conversations process is influenced by a range of academic theories and best practice models that aim to address inequality and increase child development. Being embedded in the Shankill, the Conversations process with CYP draws on the literature linked to place-based approaches to child development and consequently the Conversations adopt a child centred and child rights perspective. Aspects of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) is referred to several times in this report. Other characteristics of place-based approaches to CYP's development that feature in the report include: partnership; targeting causes (prevention), engaging with children and families; and being evidence informed.

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## Research Questions

The aim of this research was to understand the stories CYP in the Shankill want their life to be. With the goal of providing them with pathways and support to reach their desired future selves. In addition, the research questions are set at an individual and collective level (like the Conversations process).

At the individual CYP level, it was simply:

1. What is the story you want your life to be?

At the collective level, it is twofold:

2. What outcomes and aspirations do CYP in the Greater Shankill want now and in the future for themselves, their family and their community?
3. Are there patterns (pathways) in the outcomes and aspirations of CYP in the Greater Shankill?

## Methods

Trained Pathfinders conducted all the Conversations and collected all the data from CYP that is analysed in this research report. All Pathfinders participated in professional development workshops (facilitated by Innovation Zones and Shankill Zone teams) which focused on the 'Art' and 'Science' of the Conversations process. Over the course of the research, 22 Pathfinders participated in the workshops and were given the opportunity to become community-based researchers.

To collect robust and consistent data (across Pathfinders), a Pathfinder Guide was co-designed, involving the Greater Shankill Zone, Innovation Zones and the Pathfinders. The guide included a large amount of detail and concise summary guides about having Conversations with CYP about the story they want their life to be.

Between 2018 and 2021, there was a total of 98 Conversations with CYP aged between 5-19 across 10 output areas in the Shankill community. Of the 98 Conversations, 87 CYP had one conversation and 11 more had a second follow up Conversation. It should be

noted that the CYP who participated in the Conversations were all linked to families currently engaged with Integrated Services for CYP team in the Shankill, but not in crisis. So, this is a specific cohort of children and generalisations are limited to that population. However, it also represents a sample of participants who are some of the hardest to reach, that is, CYP within families who are in sustained support, living in one of the most disadvantaged communities in NI/UK. In short, some of the least heard voices in the UK.

The analysis methods took four forms: a grounded analysis; a content analysis; a factor analysis; and a narrative analysis. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (EST) was used to structure much of the analysis highlighting the different spheres of influence in CYP's lives with them at the centre but parent; families, communities and society as whole shaping the story they want their lives to be. The aim of the data analysis, as incorporated in the research questions, was to explore the stories CYP wanted their life to be and investigate if there are collective themes and possibly an outcomes framework for this population of participants.

## Findings

Looking back at our first research question:

1. What is the story you want your life to be?

Firstly, it is important to highlight that there was almost complete engagement in the Conversations process by the CYP. Trust and existing relationships with the Pathfinders were crucial to this engagement. Also, it emerged that it was the first time the CYP had been asked a questions like these in such a wide sense and not just what they wanted to be when they grew up.

Overall, Bronfenbrenner's EST worked well for structuring the data and providing a narrative framework for what the CYP wanted the story of their life to be. Generally, the CYP had a positive outlook and aspired to lead happy lives. There were also significant references to personal autonomy, agency and independence. It was evident that the central most important thing in their current and future lives was their family. Also

apparent was how influential the family environment was in future planning (above all other factors). The wider layers of EST in terms of community, society, culture and policy were less well developed in the CYP's thoughts around their current and future circumstances.

The CYP also reflected on negative things. Most negative issues raised were due to current family context (death, conflict etc.) and environmental circumstances (e.g., crime and sectarianism), but instead of using that to define their future they often constructed pathways to a different place for themselves in the future.

Another key point was, role models often provided the vision for the CYP for their future selves. These role models were mainly people in their schools and local community organisations that they had relationships with. However, there was less discussion of current or future links (and role models) in power structures like higher education institutions, the professions, government and the corporate world.

Focusing on the second research question:

2. What outcomes and aspirations do CYP in the Shankill want now and in the future for: themselves; their family and their community?

It can be said that the Conversations covered many areas with a high degree of nuance. The evidence highlights that learning, achievement, play, mental health, economic wellbeing, and safety were some of the most discussed outcome areas. With physical health, stability, rights and good relations less often discussed. One of the key areas for the CYP were good outcomes for their current family and their own future families, which is often overlooked in practice and policy concerning CYP.

Regarding the 3<sup>rd</sup> research question:

3. Are there patterns (pathways) in the outcomes and aspirations of CYP in the Greater Shankill?

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Despite the depth and variety of analyses it was not possible to discern outcome pathways with any great clarity. The stories are largely at an individual stage with some degree of overlap but probably not comprehensive enough in terms of numbers and re-occurrence. Therefore, it is not possible at this stage to identify a concrete set of pathways for the community to shape its outcomes framework or service provision.

## Conclusions

There has been significant progress with the Conversations process. Having completed 98 Conversations this is amplifying the voices of seldom heard CYP. This work would greatly benefit from further design, implementation, research and investment. Despite this, the research clearly demonstrates the capacity for children to engage in these Conversations about their lives and their future, as well as demonstrating the ability to rigorously and reliably investigate these issues on a one-to-one level. Put simply, we now know it is possible to have Conversations with CYP about the future they want their life to be. Also, it is possible to be invited in and have the Conversations with CYP in their own homes. These seldom heard CYP are usually behind many gatekeepers and often don't or can't share willingly with strangers or researchers. Pathfinders have taken the stigma out of the process and allowed the free flow of genuine information from the CYP.

Despite significant progress there is still a need for the wider and greater numbers of the Conversations to produce a community wide outcomes framework. Also, there is a need for power structures like government (national and local), universities and industry to integrate with the Conversations process to transform service provision in the Greater Shankill area.

There was a substantial investment of time and expertise in holding and analysing Conversations. This has built significant research and practice capacity in Pathfinders, the Greater Shankill Zone and Queen's Innovation Zones. This capacity building has been bi-directional. For example, the Shankill CYP Zone staff have built capacity in the design, delivery and reporting of research. The Pathfinders have gained experience conducting Conversations as field researchers. The Innovation Zones team have been given access to



high level expertise in community support and data from the voices of seldom heard children and young people. All partners have also shared in capacity building in partnership working in community based co-research. As well collaboratively making real world research impact.

All the benefits, i.e., collecting data from the seldom heard, research capacity building partnerships and the insights the data is producing, would suggest scaling and translation of Conversations is an appropriate next step. Social innovations like the Conversations process require scaling to improve the process and maximise its impact. In addition, translation of the Conversation process with other communities could drive wider development with CYP, research capacity building locally and globally and build more community/university partnerships.

## Implications of this Work

This work has resulted in a clear set of implications for what we can do now (practice), what we should do next (decision making), and how we can continue to build the evidence base (research).

### Implications for Practice in the Greater Shankill

1. The Conversations process has now been piloted and shown to be an engaging process for CYP in the Greater Shankill area.

**Next step: Continue to embed the 'Conversations' process in the Greater Shankill, so that each child or young person can co-design their own pathway and be supported on the journey towards their desired outcome.**

2. The Conversations data collection and analysis has produced useful and important information for understanding the stories that CYP in the Greater Shankill want their lives to be, but more Conversations, and corresponding data, is required to produce community wide transformation.

**Next step: Extend the 'Conversations' to gather more voices of CYP, resulting in the creation of an outcomes framework to inform policy development and**

programmes to impact positively on the lives of CYP in the Greater Shankill area.

### Implications for Practice in Other Communities

3. Engaging with children and young people of all ages and backgrounds *works*, and is an effective way to understand young people's individual and varied aspirations for their life and future.

**Next step: Plan to incorporate the views of children and young people in co-designed processes when designing initiatives to improve opportunities and outcomes for young people. Future initiatives, like Conversations, should be informed and underpinned by the UNCRC (1989).**

### Implications for Building the Evidence Base

4. This research highlighted the need for voices to be heard in disadvantaged communities. There is a need for investment in ongoing research like this to ensure that policy priorities are accurate and timely. This includes a need to develop a sustainable way for educators and community workers to build conversations into day-to-day practice, from the early years and primary school, ensuring that CYP learn to express hopes and aspirations from an early stage. These findings, and those from other research, indicate that training could benefit teachers and practitioners to intervene at an early stage to build capacity among CYP in this area.

**Next step: Invest in ongoing research and practice in the area of talking to CYP about their aspirations for the future and develop evidence informed training for practitioners within the community and education sectors.**

5. Community and university partnerships are an important and effective way to generate relevant, meaningful, and rigorous data that that can be applied to local issues as well as generate social innovation that can have global impact.

**Next step: Strengthen and invest in community-university partnerships. Ensuring that community knowledge and research expertise are shared and embedded in the development of future initiatives locally and globally.**

6. Investment in the longitudinal follow up of this cohort will shed further light on developing aspirations and next steps for these CYP, what is realised and what is not. This will help identify what facilitates and hinders the journeys of CYP to where they want to be. Agile policy and practice response should align with the needs of the community.

**Next step: Government Departments and agencies commit to listening and responding to the needs of this and other similar communities, as articulated through the voices of children and young people themselves (as required by the UNCRC), in an ongoing way. This requires a long-term, sustainable financial and policy commitment, based on a continued relationship with research institutions and communities.**

### **Implications for Decision Makers**

7. As evidenced by the range of important outcomes identified by young people, aspirations are much *broader* than simply education and employment (where government and NGO agencies tend to focus their priorities), thereby underlining the importance of a wider understanding of what a young person wants for their life, families and communities.

**Next step: Consider the *full range* of young people's aspirations across all aspects of their life, in future approaches to improving outcomes for young people (A Fair Start, 2021).**

8. CYP involved in sporting, cultural and social activities outside home appear to have broader horizons and are better able to plan, and articulate future aspirations than those who do not engage in such opportunities.

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**Next step: Plan local sporting, cultural and social activities to build community capital for future generations based on the needs identified by CYP in the community, and supported by appropriate social infrastructure.**

9. CYP in this study expressed a strong interest in accessing a range of educational pathways, but also identified potential barriers. Community partnerships with universities and colleges are crucial to enabling the fulfilment of these aspirations.

**Next step: Consolidate links with higher education institutions to ensure that widening participation strategies are co-designed, maintained and extended to meet the needs identified by CYP in this study.**

10. Many of the CYP expressed an interest in contributing to their own community in the future. Several young people felt connected to - and expressed a desire to stay and work in - their community by becoming, for example, teachers, tattooists, nurses. Findings from this research suggest that the investment in the development of community-based initiatives to encourage the 'next generation' to stay, could pay rich dividends for this community.

**Next step: Invest in local opportunities and incentives for young people to stay in (or return to) their community.**

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# Greater Shankill Children and Young People Zone

The Greater Shankill Children and Young People Zone (Shankill Zone) is a place based, whole community, partnership approach to transform the lives of a generation of children and young people in the Greater Shankill area of Belfast. Previous generations in the Shankill did not need educational qualifications. Pathways for those born in the Greater Shankill until the late 1970s were a given. There was employment for people in the linen mills, shipyards and engineering plants. There was a saying that ‘your education started with your apprenticeship’.

In the late 60’s and early 70’s there was what we now call the ‘perfect storm’, which came to the Shankill. Old industries collapsed. The process of redevelopment hollowed out the Shankill community of its most mobile by reducing its population from 76,000 to 26,000 over a 20-year period. Alongside this, the Shankill was at the epicentre of the NI conflict in North and West Belfast. This ‘perfect storm’ resulted in turmoil in the community. Over the last 50 years, we have had three generations of CYP growing up with only fractured pathways available to take their lives forward.

The Shankill community ranks amongst the lowest in NI across a range of poverty indicators, especially in health & educational inequalities (NIMDM, 2017). This level of disadvantage has been largely immune to various initiatives over the decades.

In order to reverse the trends a long term, holistic and focused solution is required. In 2014, the Greater Shankill community designated itself as a Children and Young People Zone. It did so to chart a way forward for all 5968 CYP in this current generation. By doing this, the Shankill was stating that the transformation of this generation was the top priority for their community.

The Greater Shankill Children and Young People Zone is a framework and space within which the transformation can take place. It is formed from the different elements required to effect transformation with this generation of CYP. The Zone brings together a 'coalition of the willing' inside and outside the Greater Shankill community. This includes external partners, such as Queen's University Belfast who were the first external partner in the journey of the Zone. Others have joined along the way, including Ulster Orchestra, Ulster University and Save the Children.

### Zone Meeting in Spectrum Centre on the Shankill Road



It is one thing to get the right people around the table, it is another thing to find out what is right thing to do. Over the last 20-30 years, there have been dozens of attempts trying to address these deficits. The depth of these deficits has meant that they have been immune to those initiatives. In the Shankill, we had a moment of realisation, that over the years working with CYP and their families we have never come across a parent or family, regardless of how difficult their circumstances, who did not want something better for their child. That moment of realisation was that we could find out what that something

better is from the CYP themselves. Hence the 'Conversations' process in which children and young people share their desired outcomes. It is very simple - we have started a process called 'Conversations', in which we talk to CYP, or their families if they are very young, about the story they want their life to be. We have trained Pathfinders in the art and science of the Conversations process. The Pathfinders are listening, discovering, exploring and documenting. Our partners in the Innovation Zones at Queen's University are working with us to co-design the process and analyse the data from the Conversations. All of which is presented in this report.

### Zone Meeting in the Spectrum Centre on the Shankill Road



The next stage, following from conversations with each child, is to co-design a pathway towards their desired outcome. Having designed that pathway, and as they take their first steps, the Greater Shankill CYP Zone aims to put sustained support around them, one child at a time and for as long as it takes. The sustained support will come from the range of partners who are working with us in the Zone and policy realisations emanating from the gathered voice of the CYP. On that journey forward, as it builds up into a critical mass it will have the potential to develop into an outcomes framework right across the

community of the Shankill, which will have the energy to regenerate the community itself and inform policy makers. We are on the early steps in that journey. We do not have a full blueprint. However, we do have an emerging set of methods and principals. First, it begins with the child. Our commitment or promise to the CYP is to stay with them one step at time and for as long as it takes. We will provide the sustained support on their journey whether it be light touch or more intensive. Secondly, it starts with the outcomes that belong to the CYP and not someone else's outcomes for them. The third important thing is that this is not a quick fix. It will take a generation to change a generation. It will need to be a 25-year plan. Finally, it is a journey of exploration, we are learning in an emergent situation that will always be under development. This is about justice for this generation of CYP not afforded to previous generations. This is about creating an equitable society in NI that we ought to have...it is about building the peace.



# Innovation Zones

## Who We Are

The Innovation Zones are community place-based partnerships between Queen’s University and the Greater Shankill and Colin areas of West Belfast. The Innovation Zones began working with the Shankill Children and Young People Zone in 2015 with an investment from the University focused on engaging local communities (facing disadvantage) with research, evidence and social innovation. It is driven by a vision of equal partnership and the building of a two way pipeline of learning between the University and its local communities (underpinned by theory, informed by evidence and informed by lived experience).

## What We Do

The Innovation Zones' approach is to work with community partners to drive social innovation in the form of scalable evidence-based programmes, practices and processes that have considered not only what works, but also who it works for and in what circumstances (see Figure 1 for summary of Innovation Zones approach.)

**Figure 1: Summary of Innovation Zones Approach**



Together the Innovation Zones and their partners are enhancing and/or realising untapped community assets (i.e., the resources, skills and services in the community) through capacity building in research and social innovation skills. Similarly, they are building capacity within the university about understanding the key challenges communities face and how to work with community members to address these challenges. The Conversations process outlined in this report is an example of this work. Another example is Crescendo a music, social and emotional learning programme (Poland, O'Hare & O'Hara, 2022).

### **Children, Parents, Carers and Families from the Greater Shankill and Colin Areas Attending End of Year Performance of Crescendo with Ulster Orchestra in Ulster Hall**



### **How We Do It**

The Greater Shankill Zone is an essential and widely connected community asset. So, when combined with the best available evidence and research methods (available

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through the Innovation Zones) it is an ideal mechanism for producing world class social innovation. There are several important theory informed principles that underpin the collaboration. The first is setting interdependent or shared goals (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). This is an important principle because it develops social innovation that is relevant to the community but importantly also provides research impact for the University. These shared goals ensure that they are conducting research *with* communities and not *for* communities, which leads to greater relevance and impact of the work for the community and university.

Another benefit of interdependent goals is that it fosters co-operative learning and good relationships. This is reinforced over time as they achieve more and more goals together. In fact, the length of time establishing community university collaborations is consistently reported as a key factor for successful partnership (Buys, and Bursnall, 2007; Olabisi, Wentworth, Key, Wallace, McNall, Hodbod, and Gray, 2022). As time is required to build relationships and trust (Blackwell and Stanberry, 1999). As such, it is important to recognise the longevity of the current partnership as the Shankill Zone and Innovation Zones have been working together since 2015.

The strength of these relationships provides the environment for the next principle, critical thinking (O'Hare, 2004). In order to improve, collaborators need to challenge each other using analysis, evaluation and lived experiences to produce inferences and conclusions that can help them develop as researchers and communities. However, partners should keep an open mind and take care how we use any new generated knowledge to avoid unintended negative consequences. All this thinking is best done when relationships are strong, long-term and interdependent.

The final core principle is creativity. The Innovation Zones and collaborators are made up from people across sectors, i.e., researchers, practitioners, policy makers and community members. These multiple different perspectives foster an environment for creativity (Alves, et al., 2007). This creativity is further enhanced by working across interdisciplinary research areas (e.g., education, psychology, health and the arts) as well

as adding creative influences by connecting to a wide range of partners both locally and globally.

### **What We Achieve**

The Innovation Zones have a core mission of improving the outcomes of children, young people and families in the most disadvantaged communities. There are many opportunities taken for granted across society not afforded to people facing adversity. Core to the work of the Innovation Zones is that we ensure social innovation includes those who are typically not provided a voice and engagement in these opportunities (e.g., Crescendo engages young children from disadvantaged schools with orchestras, classical music and with elite musicians from around the world).

### **Our Theory of Change**

Finally, to ensure we improve outcomes we actively seek and incorporate theory, frameworks and models that help guide our work. For example, 'ecological systems theory' (EST - Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is evident in the Conversations process. By that, we mean that we are placing children and young people at the centre of the work, ensuring they have the support from their families, community and wider society to ensure they flourish in all aspects of their life. Another framework underpinning Conversations, is a children's rights-based approach informed by the principles articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

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# The Conversations Process in the Greater Shankill

The Conversations process involves lifelong engagement (in the form of the Conversations) with children and young people to establish their goals and aspirations and provide wraparound support where necessary. All of this is focused on the Zone's 20-year vision to transform the lives of those within the Greater Shankill community, starting with a commitment to the children and young people.

The Conversations process has been co-designed by the teams from the Innovation Zones at Queen's and the Shankill Children and Young People Zone including protocols, guides, tools, resources and training mechanisms for 'Pathfinders' (i.e., those significant adults having the Conversations with the children and young people).

The Conversations is a process for transformational change in the Greater Shankill. Conversations with CYP are foundational to that process but they feed into a wider set of aims at different levels and stages (see Figure 2). At an individual level the first stage is that the Conversations with CYP (Figure 2 - 1a.) are used to explore what the CYP want for themselves their families and their community in the short, medium and long-term. In other words, 'the story the want their life to be.' The Conversations with CYP are ongoing and the first cohort of these are presented in this report. The next stage is that the Conversations are used as a basis for a Pathfinder to guide an individual child on the pathway towards the story they want their life to be (1b.). The final stage at this individual level is that the Conversations are multiple and ongoing with the CYP, connecting the CYP to individual support as long is required for them to achieve their desired outcomes (1c.). So these first three stages are focused on individual CYP and their desired outcomes. However, a second population level can also draw on the Conversations. Through collective analysis of the individual Conversations it is envisaged that a child-centred,

bottom up outcomes framework for all the Shankill’s CYP can be developed (2a.). At a further stage in this second level, an outcomes framework will inform and shape future service provision to help realise community assets for supporting CYP towards their desired outcomes (2b.). In addition, the collective analysis will help inform policy development that has an impact locally in the Greater Shankill and across NI for other communities (particularly those communities in similar circumstances). Furthermore, the models, frameworks and research insights provided by the Conversations process can inform policy and practice across the UK and wider world through existing networks, future collaborations and research outputs (such as this report) (2c.). Finally, there are reflective processes in place at each one of the steps to help continually refine the process.

**Figure 2: The Stages of the Conversations Process (Theory of Change)**



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# Evidence and Policy Review

## Disadvantage and Outcomes

The work presented in this report addresses key issues recognised in both the academic literature, as well as challenges and priorities recognised in local NI policy. In Northern Ireland, the Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-2030 (Department of Education, 2020) sets out how children's wellbeing can be improved under eight outcome areas, namely:

- Physical and mental health
- Enjoyment of play and leisure
- Learning and achievement
- Living in safety and with stability
- Economic and environmental well-being
- Making a positive contribution to society
- Living in a society which respects their rights
- Living in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted

It is interesting to note two of these areas. Firstly, 'Living in a society which respects their rights' is stated because there is a strong interest in NI in taking a child rights based approach to improving CYP outcomes. Furthermore, 'Living in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted' has particular relevance to NI because of its history of conflict and inequality.

Research evidence highlights that children from more disadvantaged communities will not enjoy the outcomes set out in the NI CYP strategy to the same extent as their more

affluent peers. The links between disadvantage and people's long-term outcomes are widely researched (Poulain, 2020). There is substantial evidence of the link between increased socioeconomic status (SES) and improved outcomes in health (Adler and Ostrove, 1999), wellbeing (Tan, Kraus, Carpenter & Adler, 2020), education (Sirin, 2005) and employment (Hale Bevilacqua and Viner, 2015). It is also widely understood that the home and community are significant sources of risk and protection between SES and the outcomes of CYP (Devenish, 2017).

The inequality in CYPs' outcomes, between disadvantaged and more affluent communities, is particularly tangible in learning and achievement outcomes. The disadvantage 'attainment gap' is well reported locally, (Harris, Purdy, Jones, Walsh and Rowan, 2021), nationally (EEF, 2017) and internationally (Sullivan, McConney and Perry 2018). Despite a range of interventions and initiatives funded by government, a recent and critical report from the Northern Ireland Audit Office highlighted that despite a spend of £913 million on Targeting Social Need Funding, the disparity in achievement between those entitled and not entitled to free school meals remains largely unchanged (NIAO, 2021). Recent political efforts in NI, as recommended in the New Decade New Approach deal (Smith and Coveney, 2020) specified the need for a review of educational underachievement. The expert panel conducting this review published their report 'A Fair Start' in 2021 (Purdy, Logue, Montgomery, O'Hare & Redpath, 2021), in which key recommendations and actions are provided for tackling educational underachievement.

The work of the 'Conversations' process directly targets several of the key issues raised in these locally relevant policies and reports. Firstly, each of the outcomes referenced in the CYP strategy are recognised (to varying degrees) within this work. For example, issues around mental health, wellbeing, civic contributions and children's rights are all recognised in the Pathfinder Guide (O'Hare et al., 2022) that is used to implement the Conversations process. Additionally, the work presented in this report aligns closely with several of the identified action points presented in the Fair Start report (Purdy et al., 2021). For example, one recommendation of particular interest to the Shankill Zone and the



Innovation Zones, is to adopt a whole community and ‘place-based’ approach to education.

## Place-based Approaches

There are number of place-based approaches to child development and education nationally and globally. For illustration purposes, Table 1 shows some examples. These selected place-based approaches vary in nuance, but they share more than they differ. Approach characteristics are shared across quite a few of the initiatives, with partnership, targeting causes of poverty, engaging with children and families and being evidence informed some of the most frequently cited characteristics. Table 2 highlights some of the common outcome focused on by the initiatives and some of theories of change employed in their communities. In terms of outcome foci most if not all, have a holistic approach. Some have a greater focus on education, health or economic factors but there is a generally reference to the holistic links between these outcomes. Regarding theories of change, most of the area-based approaches have a child centred and prevention approach to change.

**Table 1: Illustrative Place Based Approaches to Child Development and Education**

NAME	Approach Characteristics
Shankill Children and Young People Zone (Belfast) <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child centred</li> <li>• Long term commitment</li> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Collaborative/partnerships</li> <li>• Outcome focused</li> <li>• Evidence informed</li> </ul>
Colin Neighbourhood Partnership <sup>2</sup> (Belfast)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical, social and economic development</li> <li>• Enabling change for children and young people</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> <https://shankillzone.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.newcolin.com/>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative/partnerships</li> </ul>
Childhood Development Initiative <sup>3</sup> Dublin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcomes focused</li> <li>• Quality integrated services</li> <li>• Evidence-informed</li> <li>• Workforce development</li> <li>• Collaborative/partnerships</li> <li>• Innovation</li> <li>• Child rights</li> </ul>
Children’s Neighbourhood Scotland <sup>4</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holistic,</li> <li>• Climate aware</li> <li>• Participatory</li> <li>• Empowerment</li> <li>• Collaborative/partnerships</li> <li>• Integrity/transparency</li> <li>• Focused on poverty</li> <li>• Evidence Informed</li> </ul>
West London Zone for Children and Young People <sup>5</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative</li> <li>• Local</li> <li>• Evidence-Led</li> <li>• Accountable</li> <li>• Relational</li> </ul>
Children’s Community Network Smallshaw-Hurst, Pembury, and Wallsend <sup>6</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership</li> <li>• Strategic</li> <li>• Holistic</li> <li>• Symptoms and causes</li> <li>• Participatory</li> <li>• Evidence informed</li> </ul>
Harlem Children’s Zone <sup>7</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End intergenerational poverty</li> <li>• Mobility and prosperity</li> <li>• Holistic services</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cdi.ie/about-us/mission-statement/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://childrensneighbourhoods.scot/about-us/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.westlondonzone.org/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.childrenscommunitynetwork.org.uk/our-communities/smallshaw-hurst>

<sup>7</sup> <https://hcz.org/>

<p>The Promise Neighbourhoods<sup>8</sup></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cradle to career</li> <li>• pipelines of programs, services and supports</li> </ul>
<p>Children and Youth Area Partnerships (Victoria Australia)<sup>9</sup></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information sharing</li> <li>• Service coordination</li> <li>• Commit co-design</li> <li>• Community engagement</li> <li>• Performance monitoring</li> <li>• Policy-making.</li> <li>• Individual cases</li> <li>• Pooled funding</li> <li>• Service commissioning</li> <li>• Planning for all clients and services</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Common foci and theories of change across CYP place based initiatives**

<p><b>Common CYP Outcome Foci across initiatives</b></p>	<p><b>Common theories of change across initiatives</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holistic</li> <li>• Asset Based</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Wellbeing</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Social, Emotional and Academic Learning</li> <li>• Reducing Child Vulnerability</li> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Economic Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecological Systems Theory</li> <li>• Children’s Rights</li> <li>• Prevention and Early Intervention</li> <li>• Community Led</li> <li>• Capabilities Approach</li> <li>• Link Workers</li> <li>• Social Justice</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> <https://promiseneighborhoods.ed.gov/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://youthlaw.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Children-and-Youth-Area-Partnerships-overview.pdf>

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## Community-Based and Child Centred

This work is a product of partnership and collaboration since 2015 between the Greater Shankill Children and Young People Zone and researchers from the Innovation Zones. The research presented in this report is underpinned by conceptual, methodological and practical guidance offered within our approach as set out in Figure 2. Incorporating our key mechanisms for change i.e., interdependence, critical thinking and creativity.

Additionally, this work is guided by the governing framework of children's rights particularly, Article 12 in the UNCRC and the Lundy model of child participation (Lundy, 2007). Recent years has seen a welcomed shift in conducting research *with* as opposed to *on* children. The value in co-produced research can be seen in terms of creating more valid and authentic knowledge from more inclusive and more ethical practices (Aldrige, 2017). Central to this work is that a child-centred and child-led practice is adopted. The children and young people (CYP) involved are paramount; they are core to the process and the resulting policy and practice implications.

Article 12 of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) stipulates that children have the right to be involved in all matters affecting them and their input be given due weight. However, often policy makers do not (adequately) involve children in their decision making processes. This work is guided by Lundy's (2007) conceptualisation of Article 12 of the UNCRC, which advises that 'voice is not enough'. Rather, it is important that: children are provided with a safe and inclusive 'space' to form and express their views; they must be facilitated to 'voice' their views; their views must be listened to by the appropriate 'audience'; and these views must be acted upon as appropriate ('influence').

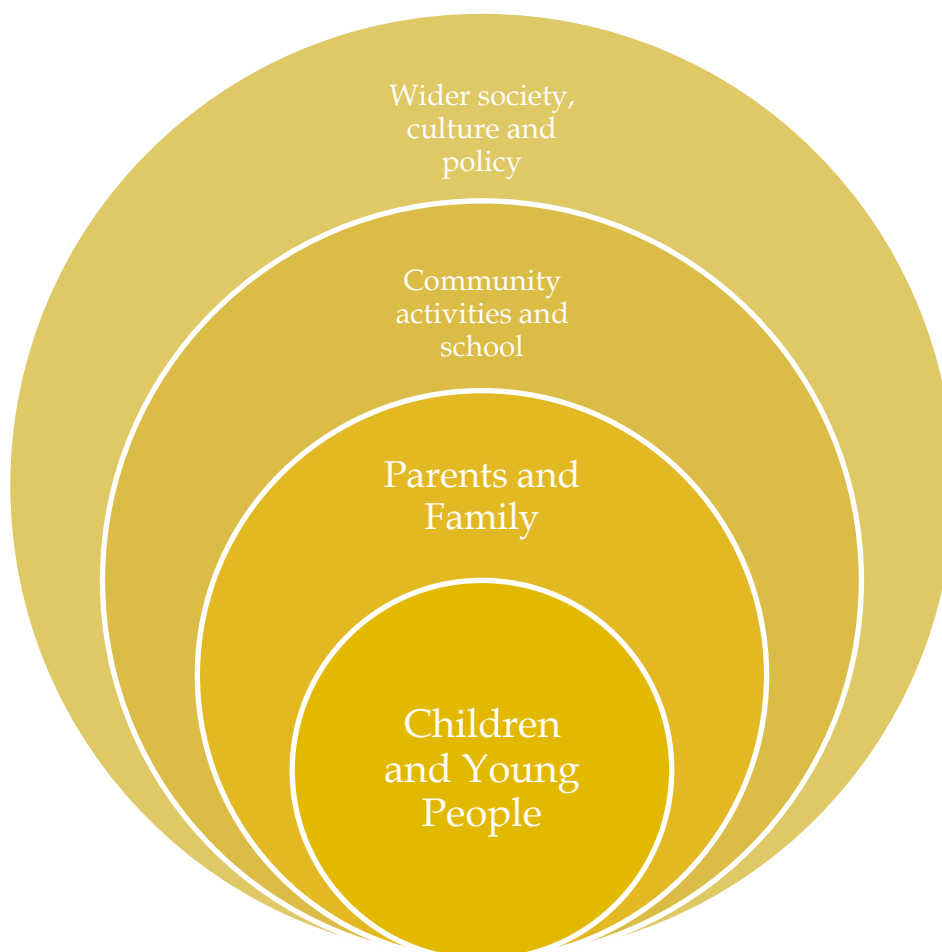
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## Theoretical Context

The theoretical underpinnings of this work are based upon two core sociological perspectives: Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory EST (1979), and Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 2004).

Whilst CYP are central to this project, they are also considered within their broader environments and contexts. The research aims to understand the child as an individual, nested within their family, their community and wider society. To thrive, children need to have good housing, economic and food security, high-quality health care and education. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (EST) provides a descriptive infrastructure for understanding the multiple environments within which the CYP in this project exist. The systems that influence these outcomes in relation to the child is illustrated in Figure 3 (see appendix A for more detailed diagram). The focus of the Conversations moves from how life is like for them at present, encompassing the child as an individual, within their family unit and the community and extending into the future, to how they would like their life to be in the future for themselves as an individual, within their family unit and their community. It is important to note that the child is an agent for change in this reciprocal model, where they influence the systems around them, as well as being shaped by them. Bronfenbrenner described this as an interaction among process, person, context, and time (PPCT) (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006) and has synchrony to Lundy's 2007 model of child participation. It is also analogous to the way the Shankill Zone and the Innovation Zones are working together.

**Figure 3: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory**

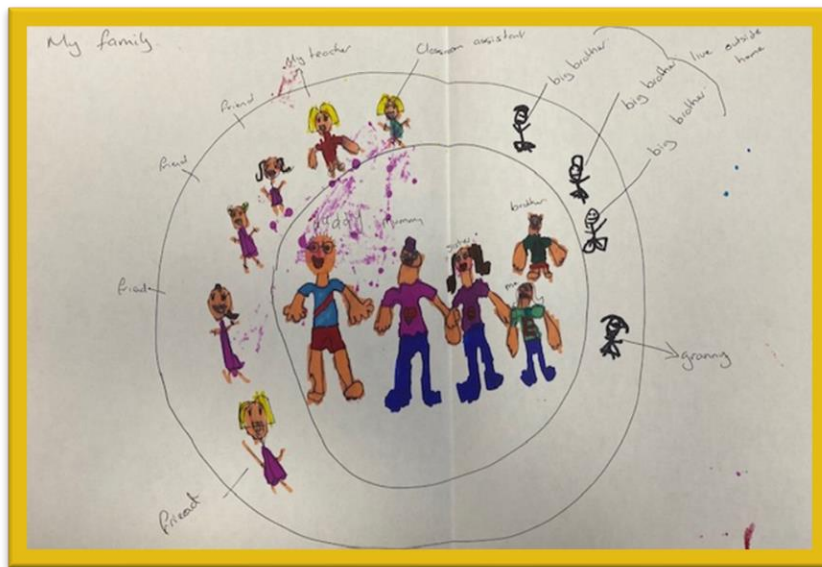


Additionally, Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 2004; Putnam 2000; Woolcock, 2001 and others), also underpins this work. In particular, the notion that social capital is divided across three main categories, i.e., bonding, bridging and linking. Bonding capital are the CYP's social support and connections to people with a common sense of identity, e.g., family, friends etc. Bridging capital are their links stretching beyond this common sense of identity, e.g., colleagues and peers and linking capital are their links to those people with power and resources further up the 'social ladder'. This theory of social capital is represented in Figure 4 below. It shows how the three categories are linked together and show how social ladders link people to higher forms of power and influence.

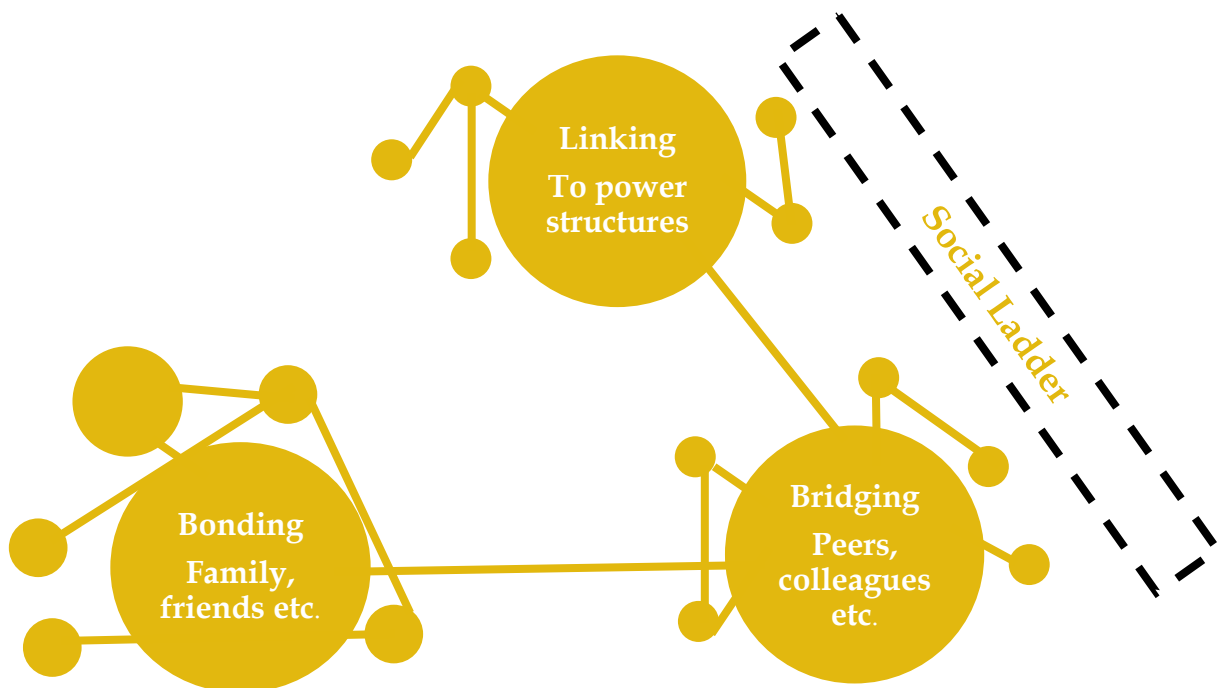
All three forms of social capital are important for health and wellbeing outcomes (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). Individuals in more disadvantaged areas report lower levels of all three categories (Poortinga, 2012). As a framework to understand life pathways and

outcomes in children and young people, access to bridging capital has been associated with a widening of aspirations (Ellison, Wohn & Greenhow, 2014). However, there is general interest in how social capital theory can be used to inform community development particularly for those communities facing social disadvantage/deprivation and exclusion (Leonard, 2004; Farrell, 2007; Popple, 2006).

**Drawing Created During Conversation Process**



**Figure 4: Social Capital Theory - Bonding, Bridging and Linking**



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# Rationale and Research Questions

In order to address the recognised disadvantage and poorer outcomes experienced by the CYP of the Shankill Community, this work focusses on exploring and understanding the stories CYP in the Shankill want their life to be. And in doing so, this work also aims to empower and stimulate the agency of the CYP involved, as well as discovering and facilitating support pathways for each individual child to enable them to reach their desired future selves. In addition, the research operates at an individual and population level like the Conversations process. Therefore, the research questions for the work are this constructed at these two levels.

At the individual CYP level, it was simply:

1. What is the story you want your life to be?

At the population level, it is twofold:

2. What outcomes and aspirations do CYP in the Shankill want now and in the future for: themselves; their family and their community?
3. Are there patterns (pathways) in the outcomes and aspirations of CYP in the Shankill?



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# Methods

## Conversations Data Collection

### Research Design

The study was conducted using a mixed methods sequential design (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). That is, qualitative data was collected and analysed qualitatively (content analyses) before being analysed quantitatively (factor analyses) to explore the data from another perspective. Further qualitative analyses were conducted in the form of a grounded analysis and a narrative analysis. Please see analysis section below for more detail. It was envisaged that individual stories could be captured through initial qualitative content analysis that could be explored at a population level using quantitative factor analysis. On completion of these steps it was agreed that these analyses were missing the richness of the stories the CYP wanted their life to be. Hence, the further grounded and narrative analyses of the data. The analyses and corresponding findings are laid out in the sequence in which they were completed.

### Conversations, Pathfinders and Pathfinder Guide

Pathfinders conducted all Conversations with children and young people and collected the qualitative data from CYP for this report. The main aim for the Pathfinders is having the Conversations with the CYP about 'the story they want their life to be'. Specifically, this involved exploring with the CYP what they wanted for themselves their family and their community in the short, medium and long term.

To collect robust and consistent data (across Pathfinders), a Pathfinder Guide (O'Hare et al., 2022) was co-developed, between the Shankill Zone, QUB Innovation Zones and the Pathfinders. The guide includes a large amount of detail and summary information about having the Conversations with CYP about the story they want their life to be. It discusses a wide range of issues including but not limited to:

- Engaging the parents/guardians and explaining the process
- Establishing a relationship & trust with the child or young person
- Capacity building of children & young people
- Explaining the process to the child
- The child forming and expressing their own views
- A Pathfinder Conversations toolkit
- Working with CYP who are vulnerable, have disabilities or who are disengaged
- The Conversations process
- Selecting children for the Conversations: Criteria for readiness
- Obtaining informed consent
- Planning for and holding the Conversations
- Conversations record sheets
- Collecting data and information (including CYP drawings)

All Pathfinders participated in pre-Conversations professional development workshops using the Pathfinder guide which focused on the 'Art' and 'Science' of the Conversations process. Over the course of the research, 22 Pathfinders participated in the workshops and were given the opportunity to become community-based researchers. Several local community partner organisations had members of their staff team involved in the Pathfinder workshops, though the data collected and subsequently analysed came from 12 Pathfinders who were employed by Greater Shankill Partnership (GSP) in their Integrated Services for Children & Young People (ISCYP) Team.

The aim of the ISCYP Programme is to improve the life chances of children & young people in the Greater Shankill area. Through a range of services, they support families with a broad range of issues; the family support team work with the whole family as well as offering specialist supports on a one to one basis in a confidential, friendly, non-judgmental and supportive manner.

There were several benefits of having Pathfinders working within ISCYP as they already had some level of relationship with the CYP and understanding of how their families were being supported. As such this ensured that participants were: in a stable context, i.e., not in crisis; they had an established relationship with the Pathfinder, which saved time in helping CYP to understand the process; they were able to work with and engage CYP that were genuinely 'hard to reach' and traditionally lack a voice in community development work; were receiving a standardised approach to any emerging ethical, child protection, safeguarding or risk issues; and experienced in working in a safe way and ensuring that the data collection 'did no harm'.

Pathfinders feedback has been instrumental in shaping the Conversations process (and Pathfinder Guide). It was obtained through several in-process Conversation workshops where Pathfinders were asked to comment on the design, relevance and ease of administration of the Conversations process. Whilst all process-related feedback has not been recorded, it continually and iteratively informed the development of the Conversations process and adaptations of the Pathfinder Guide.

### **Data Collected**

A range of different data has been collected throughout the Conversations process. This includes:

- Demographic detail pertaining to the child (age, gender, home address, receipt of free school meals (FSM), special educational needs (SEN))
- Pathfinder recorded detail on what they CYP want their lives to be in the near and distant future, for themselves, their families and their communities. There is extensive detail on how to collect data in the Pathfinder Guide (O'Hare et al 2022). This includes using the template record sheets and using art based responses (some of which are featured throughout this report.)
- Process feedback from the Pathfinders
- Child and Adolescent Participation in Decision Making Questionnaire (CAP-DMQ – O'Hare et al., 2015) for CYP over 10 years old.

## Ethics

The ethical and safeguarding conduct of the Pathfinders was supported and monitored by the ISCYP team (all data were initially 'triaged' for key data, including safeguarding information). In addition, there was substantial consideration given to the ethical conduct of the Pathfinders and this information is included in the Pathfinders Guide.

The Innovation Zones team at Queen's did not directly collect identifying data from the CYP. Furthermore, all data was anonymised by ISCYP before being passed to the research team. Therefore, the analysis conducted by Innovation Zones staff was in effect secondary data analysis of anonymised data and thus technically an ethics application was not required. However, to ensure the highest possible ethical standards the Innovation Zones team submitted and got subsequent approval for a research ethics application to the research ethics committee of the School of Social sciences, Education and Social Work at Queen's University Belfast in June 2016. There was also agreement and support sought from research governance department at Queen's University to assess our data handling procedures.

## CYP Sample of Participants

Between 2018 and 2021 a total of 98 Conversations have been recorded for children and young people between the ages of 5-19 across several geographical places within the Greater Shankill area. Of the 98 Conversations, 87 CYP had a minimum of one conversation, with 11 having a second follow up Conversation. It should be noted that the CYP who participated in the Conversations were all linked to families currently engaged with ISCYP in the Shankill. So, this is a specific population of children and generalisations are limited to that sample. However, it also represents a sample of participants who are some of the hardest to reach, that is, CYP within families who are in sustained support, living in one of the most disadvantaged communities in NI/UK. Consequently, some of the least heard voices in the UK.

The gender profile of the population was 60% females and 40% male (see Table 3). The age of the CYP at the date of the first their Conversations ranged from 5-19 years with the average age being 11 and the most common age group were primary school aged children (see Table 4).

**Table 3: Gender of CYP**

	Frequency	Percent
Female	52	59.8
Male	35	40.2
Total	87	100.0

**Table 4: Age of CYP at first Conversations**

	Frequency	Percent
5-11 (Primary)	56	64.3
12-16 (Post Primary)	22	25.3
17-19	9	10.3
Total	87	100.0

Almost half of the sample from the Greater Shankill area is made up of CYP from Shankill (37%) and Woodvale (16%), the remaining is spread across output areas such as Ballysillan, Crumlin, Highfield and Glencairn (see Table 5).

**Table 5: The geographical location of the CYP in the Greater Shankill area.**

	Frequency	Percent
Missing	2	2.3
Ballysillan	6	6.9
Glencairn	9	10.3
Highfield	13	14.9
Oldpark	6	6.9
Shankill	32	36.8
Woodvale	14	16.1
Other	5	5.8
Total	87	100.0

The majority (80%) of the CYP involved are entitled to a free school meal (FSM) (see Table 6). Out of the 89 CYP, 15 have an assessed/diagnosed with a special educational need (SEN statement), this equates to 16.8% of the cohort. This does not include those queried or on a waiting list for SEN assessment.

**Table 6: If the CYP were in receipt of free school meals.**

	Frequency	Percent
No	18	20.7
YES	69	79.3
Total	87	100.0

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## Conversations Data Analysis

The analysis methods took four forms: a content analysis; a factor analysis; a grounded analysis; and a narrative analysis. The aim of the data analysis, as incorporated in the research questions, was to explore the individual stories CYP wanted their life to be as well as investigate if there are collective themes and possibly an outcomes framework for this population of participants (i.e., CYP between the ages of 5-19 that are currently engaged with the Integrated Services team).

### Content Analysis

In order to address Research question 2 (what outcomes and aspirations do CYP in the Shankill want now and in the future for: themselves; their family and their community?) the first analysis conducted was a content analysis to gauge the most common outcomes and aspirations discussed by the CYP during their Conversations. Note, this process also provided the coded data for a factor analysis.

### Data Coding

All Conversations data were initially input and coded into an excel data file. This file was subsequently transferred to an SPSS data file. Coding was conducted by four coders from the Innovation Zones team. The coding methods have involved the below processes.

#### Level 1: Data Familiarisation and Triage

All Conversations were read in the first instance, to familiarise the coder with the data. Subsequently, the data were checked for any issues or concerns (child protection, duplication, missing data etc.).

#### Level 2: Demographic Data/DMQs

Demographic data collected was input into a separate excel file. This includes all information collected via the cover sheet. Additionally, Child and Adolescent Participation in Decision Making Questionnaire (CAP-DMQ - O'Hare et al., 2015) for CYP over 10 years old was also entered into a separate spreadsheet (this data is not

analysed in this report as the number of responses is too low for quantitative analysis at this point).

### Level 3: Outcomes Data

It was a key goal to extract what the children and young people expressed in terms of their desired outcomes/aspirations in the short, medium and long term, for themselves their family and their community. All outcome related data from each the Conversations was coded and input. Note that only those outcomes with references to the future (either short, medium or long term) were included in the data. A very granular approach was taken to coding the outcomes to ensure that the coding aligned very closely with what the CYP have said. With each of the Conversations coded, different and similar codes have emerged. Where necessary, additional codes were added to best reflect the raw data. Codes were recorded as a 1 if mentioned once by a CYP or more if the same outcome was mentioned multiple times by the CYP, i.e., 2 if mentioned twice, 3 if mentioned 3 times etc. or a 0 if not mentioned.

The outcomes data file was a continuous working data file, whereby issues were addressed on a case-by-case basis. Different strategies were employed and developed/changed as necessary. For example, initially, some codes were coded as a minus, e.g., if someone said they did not want kids, this was marked as a minus under the 'have kids' code. However, due to analysis difficulties, these were all recoded, i.e., a new code was added 'don't want to have kids', and then marked as a 1.

### Level 4: Pathfinder Workshop Calibration

A pathfinder analysis workshop was conducted with the research team and five Pathfinders. The aim of this workshop was to involve the community Pathfinders in the analysis process and to ensure that the approach adopted by the research team (level 1-3 above) aligned with the views of the Pathfinders. In essence, this was a method for ensuring interrater reliability in terms of coding (see appendix B) for a full report on the Pathfinder analysis workshop.



## Factor Analysis

It was the intention to use factor analysis to group the granular level codes from the content analysis to explore emerging pathways answer research question 3. (are there patterns (pathways) in the outcomes and aspirations of CYP in the Greater Shankill?). However, factor analysis was found to not to be appropriate due to the unsuitability of the data. That is, the case to variable ratio was too great, i.e., the number of participants was much lower than the number of outcomes trying to be grouped into factors. As a result, the factor analysis did not produce any clear results and is therefore not reported in the main body of the report. This analysis would need to be conducted again with a much larger sample of the Conversations having taken place and data entered. However, the preliminary analysis has been included in appendix C and the pathway factor matrix is useful for illustrating the wide range of the outcomes/aspirations mentioned by the CYP.

## Grounded Analysis

To answer the research question 1 (what is the story you want your life to be?) a grounded analysis was conducted by three analysts (two Innovation Zone researchers and an ISCYP team manager). The grounded analysis included a review of all the Conversations with extraction of the following items into a database: demographics (age/gender/SEN); key points from each the Conversations; key quotes from each CYP in each of the Conversations; key quotes from the Pathfinder about the CYP; and any key quotes from the Pathfinder about process. This database provides the data for the narrative analysis. Though it is also a valuable database for individual child support and will continue to be used for individual support purposes.

## Narrative Analysis

The main aim of the narrative analysis is to investigate research question 2. (what outcomes and aspirations do CYP in the Greater Shankill want now and in the future for: themselves; their family and their community?)

The data in this analysis were extracted through a grounded analysis and presented within a narrative framework utilising Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (EST). That is, a framework that has different layers, which initially looks at the CYP themselves, but moves outwards to the child's immediate environment and then wider influences on the CYP. Within these layers the data were analysed by extracting recurring themes and sub-themes which are written into a narrative relying heavily on the CYP quotes with some Pathfinder quotes added for context and supporting evidence.

# Findings

## Content Analysis

The content analysis was used to extract the most common outcomes and aspirations discussed by the CYP during their Conversations. This analysis provides preliminary evidence for this research question:

2. What outcomes and aspirations do CYP in the Greater Shankill want now and in the future for: themselves; their family and their community?

In total, 701 different aspirations and outcomes were extracted from the 98 Conversations. It should be noted that even with 701 identified aspirations the data had not reached saturation point, i.e., the analysts were still adding aspirations with every new Conversation. Therefore, this is a need for additional Conversations to collect a full set of aspirations for CYP in the Greater Shankill area.

The most frequently cited outcomes varied between career-related goals, family life, hobbies and interests (see Table 7 for the most frequently cited outcomes and Table 8 in Appendix C for a longer list of outcomes).

**Table 7: Outcome Frequencies (for those where n=>10)**

Outcome	Frequency	Outcome	Frequency
To drive	37	Family support me	15
Have children	37	Visit parent's family	15
Have own place	35	Leave NI	14
Have pets	35	Dancing dance class	14
Go to secondary/big school	32	Gymnastics	13
Be happy	32	Be independent	13
Play football	24	Be kind	13
Get married	23	Live with family as adult	12

Go to university	21	Move out	12
Have/get a job	19	Do cooking/good cook	12
Parents support me	19	Be nice	12
Mum support me	19	Will not have boyfriend/ girlfriend	12
Go travelling	18	Have a teaching job	11
Will not have children	18	Live with mum	11
Live with family teens	17	Friends support me	10
Go out with friends	16	Own house	10
Have an intimate partner	16	Play video games	10
Bigger/nice/specific car	16	Will not get married	10
New friends	15		

Thematic analysis can, to a certain degree, highlight some common themes emerging from the data, which align with the three main headings of myself, my family and my community.

### Myself

Those outcomes related to 'myself' spanned a range of different areas of the CYP's lives. For example, themes emerged relating to education, employment, autonomy, physical appearance, and emotional outcomes. Some examples of these themes are presented below:

- Career - some just highlighted they wanted to get a job, others specified which type of profession they aspired to, e.g., firefighter.
- Education - these themes focussed on education plans, e.g., go to university, study A-Levels, get good grades, change school, do homework etc.
- Living arrangements - this theme focused on the CYP's future living arrangements, e.g., own a home, live with their partner, live next to family, stay in Shankill, leave NI etc.
- Sports - CYP mentioned a range of sports they were interested in and would plan to engage in e.g., football, parkour, dodgeball, trampolining.

- Independence – CYP mentioned a range of issues that demonstrated their aspirations towards independence, e.g., have their own phone, be responsible, go to shops by themselves etc.
- Emotions– this theme focused on issues around stress, anxiety etc. whereby the CYP was talking about being calmer, have less anxiety and managing their emotions.
- Positive self-attributes – the CYP highlighted a range of attributes they wanted for themselves, e.g., be nice, be kind, caring, a good person etc.
- Appearance– Physical attributes were also mentioned, e.g., be taller, have a bigger smile and wear makeup.
- Things they will do no longer - this theme focused on the things the CYP suspect they will no longer do, e.g., won't like football anymore and take the unicorn stuff down.
- Materialistic aspirations – these outcomes focused on earning money, being rich, and having good phones/cars etc.

### My Friends and Family

With regards to friends and family, these themes centred around the CYPs' relationships and familial/social support systems. Some example themes emerging included:

- Friends – this theme centred on having friends same friends/new friends, going out with friends, playing with friends etc.
- Support system – this theme focused on those people in the child's life who supports them, e.g., family and friends etc.
- Family relationships – this theme focused on the child's relationships, e.g., visiting family etc.
- Social life – CYP talked about their future social lives, e.g., going to the cinema, going out for dinner, going to concerts etc.

- Family life and relationships – this theme focused on their future family lives, e.g., get married (or not), have children (or not), supporting their family, and having pets etc.

### Community

Whilst the above noted social support systems in the CYP's immediate environment, there were also some indicators towards the other networks, resources and activities that represent the CYPs' wider community:

- Activities – these themes focused on included extra-curricular/spare time activities and the places they happened in, e.g., go to the park, go to church, play for local football team etc.

### Conclusion on Content Analysis

On the whole, whilst granular in nature, the content analysis has provided rich insight into the vast and varied outcomes expressed by the CYP when discussing the story they want their life to be. Despite the wide variety of outcomes uncovered, thematic analysis has demonstrated key outcome areas that are important to CYP in the domains of themselves as an individual, their family and friends and their wider community.

## Grounded Narrative Analysis

The data extracted through the grounded analysis was presented within a narrative framework utilising Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (EST). That is, a framework that has different layers and initially looks at the CYP themselves, but moves outwards to the child's immediate environment and then wider influences on the CYP. The narrative is built using CYP quotes (in blue) with some Pathfinder quotes added for context and supporting evidence (in purple).

### The Child

The data emerging from the Conversations presents a richness to our understanding of the child's sense of self (the first layer in Bronfenbrenner's EST model). How the child

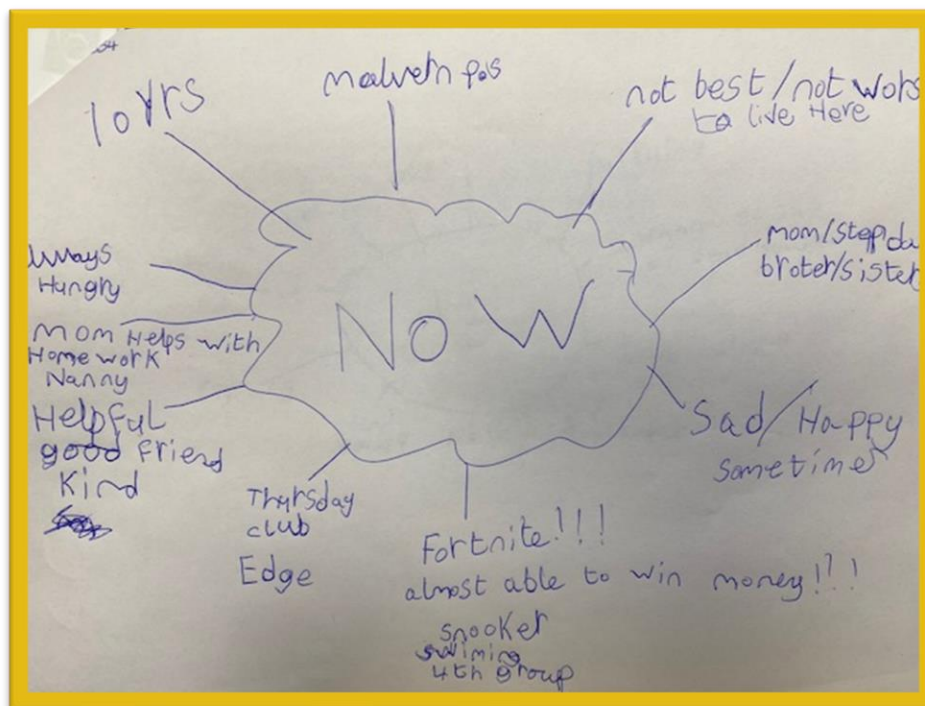
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perceives themselves as individuals pointed to a range of factors, including, their overall wellbeing, hopefulness, interests and challenges.

The data highlighted, for many, a hopefulness for themselves when they think of their future self, where they expressed thoughts such as *'(I)hope to be happy* (girl aged 8)*'*. In some instances, this was expressed with stronger determination, *'I hope to be happy; I will be happy, I am getting somewhere in life'* (girl aged 18). This hopefulness was also evident in a sense of global positivity, whereby the child hoped for a good life, e.g., *'Everything will be good'* (girl aged 5) and *'Life will be good for me'* (boy aged 11). However, despite evident positivity for many, there were also those who were less hopeful for the future, e.g., *'I won't be happy, it's boring, everything is boring'* (girl aged 10), *'Life will be really hard'* (boy aged 9). There were also those who weren't currently in good circumstances but retained some hope for the future, *'My life is boring because don't really go out except for youth groups, don't go into town with friends. I would like to be less anxious. Like the thought of helping people'* (Girl 16).

The child's sense of personality, social and emotional wellbeing was also strongly evident, both in terms of the CYPs' current perception of self, as well as their aspirations for the type of person they will be in the future. For example, one child commented that *'I will be a generous person'* (boy aged 11), whilst others commented on their goals to be responsible *'I will be very responsible person'* (boy aged 11) and confident *'I want to be more stable and confident'* (girl aged 13). The most notable character trait that children wanted to improve upon was their anger tendencies, *'I will not be angry anymore, I want to be nice. I will be respectful'* (boy aged 12) and *'I want to be more in control of my emotions'* (girl aged 13).

## Drawing Created During the Conversation Process



### The Child's Immediate Environment

The next layer in the EST model is the microsystem, which refers to the CYPs' immediate environment. That is, people and organisations that are in direct and ongoing contact with the child such as family, parents, friends, teachers and school. These networks play a crucial role in supporting the development and wellbeing of children. Key aspects of the children's microsystem were evident in the data, mainly their connection to their family, their educational aspirations and experiences, their career aspirations, and potentially because of each of these points, their future life aspirations.

#### Friends and Family

As would be expected, there was a lot of discussion regarding the child's closest relationships, i.e., parents, siblings and wider family circle. In many circumstances, the CYP recognised the family connectedness they experience in their home life. Often, this was articulated by the support provided to them by their parents. For many CYP, there was an assumption that this support will continue through life, for example, one child stated that *'My mum will still support me'* (girl aged 7). A sentiment echoed by an older

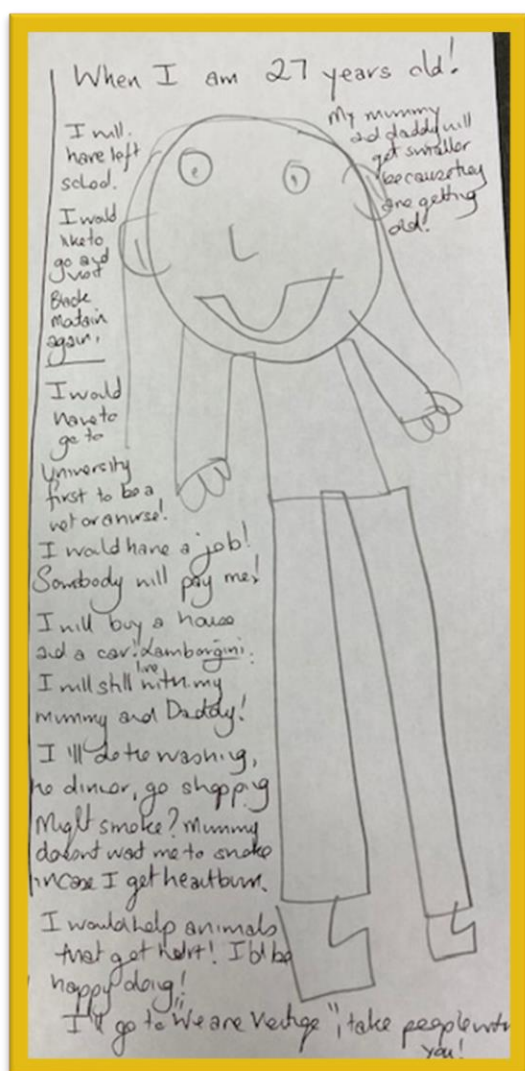


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boy who commented that *'My mummy and daddy will support me in 5 [years] and in 20 [years]* (boy aged 9). At times, this family connectedness was discussed as a family who *'will stick together'* (girl aged 16) and who *'will still be helping'* (girl aged 7).

In addition to receiving support from their family, there were several CYP who discussed the ways in which they support their own family in the present and will continue to do so in the future. For example, one child commented that *'I have a lot of responsibilities and have to look after my younger brother and sister a lot. I will be good at looking after children'* (girl aged 13). Though some children expressed apprehension about the challenges that lie ahead, *'Life will be really hard'* *'My brother will be bigger and in a wheelchair'* (boy aged 9). In fact, some CYP just wanted to stay at home, *'I will still be at home with my mum'* (girl aged 9). Additionally, several CYP expressed some future thinking around family support. Some reflected on how they will provide for their own potential future families. For example, one child commented that *'I will be at a point where I am comfortable. I will be supporting my kids'* (boy aged 17). Others imagined how family networks will change over time, *'My brother will probably be living with his girlfriend; so I will only see them at Christmas'* (Girl aged 7).

## Drawing Created During the Conversation Process



However, some children expressed concern with their current family circumstances. One Pathfinder indicated a 10 year old boy had a *'Poor relationship with family as they fight a lot'* (Pathfinder of boy aged 10). With the boy suggesting his father caused a lot of the issues and had knock on effects on his own behaviour. *'I'm angry coz of my dad, he starts lots of fights'* (boy aged 10). Another Pathfinder had a Conversation with a 10 year old girl who expressed issues with family, which seemed to inhibit her aspirations as recounted by the Pathfinder *'gets angry at brother. No idea what makes her happy. No boyfriend. No kids. Won't drive.'* (Pathfinder of girl aged 10). Backed up in the Girl's own words. *'I won't be happy - it's boring, everything is boring'* (girl aged 10).

For some children there was a stark recognition of the hardship that might come with supporting a family in the future. For example, one child acknowledged the financial responsibilities associated with raising a family, *'I don't want to have a kid if I cannot support myself'* (girl aged 16). Another recognised that *'life will be tough if I have kids'* (boy aged 12). Whilst another hoped that their future family circumstances will be improved, *'My family will be better'* (boy aged 17). Such recognition of the challenges involved in raising a family are likely a direct result of the current circumstances the CYP are currently facing in their own families, for example *'Waited a month to play a board game... Anytime mum has free time she plays on her phone scrolling through Facebook or Snapchat'* (boy aged 11.) It was clear that some CYP were shaping their future family decisions based on current family difficulties. For example, one child

mentioned that they were *'not going to be like mum and have loads of kids'* (boy aged 10), whilst another highlighted that she wanted to *'own (her own) house, I want this for myself because my mummy couldn't'* (girl aged 18).

For some CYP, there was evidence of early decisions not to have children in the future. For example, one child mentioned that *'I won't have kids, some people don't have to have kids or get married'* (boy aged 7). This was echoed by other CYP who also stated that *'there will be no children'* (girl aged 12). Another stating *'I won't have my own children.... no never'* (girl aged 7). Or some CYP wanted to delay having a family like a girl aged 16 describing how she would *'have a partner in 20 years and children, as feels life is hard for her mother who is single parent'* (Pathfinder of girl aged 16).

### Drawing Created During the Conversation Process



Several CYP referred to their peer groups. The most common references were to the fact that the CYP needed to remove themselves from peer relationships that they felt were having a negative influence on their lives, *'I have started to take myself away from toxic people'*

(girl aged 15). Furthermore, they desired new friendships with whom they could have more positive relationships, *'My friends don't treat me nice, and I think I will have nicer friends in the future'* (girl aged 11). Though several aspired to peer relationships that were possibly counterproductive *'I will be going out with my mates, drinking blue WKD'* (girl aged 10).

### Education

Beyond the home environment, education and school was another key topic under discussion. For many CYP, there was positivity expressed in terms of school and learning. For example, one child commented that *'I will still love to learn in school'* (girl aged 5). Educational aspiration was evident for many CYP, with some recognising the need to *'work hard at school and get good marks'* (boy aged 9). The relationship between hard work and attainment for the CYP was also noted by some Pathfinders, one of which commented *'has educational aspirations and would like to continue studying as she gets older to improve her life chances'* (Pathfinder of girl aged 11). There was also references to an interest in music education, *'When I am in P6 I learn Piano. This makes me happy. I think I might do that in big school too'* (girl aged 7).

Frequently, the CYP expressed interest in higher education as a route to their aspirations, *'I need to go to University. I want to be a midwife'* (girl aged 7). Some saw university as part of wider strategy or as a reliable back-up plan to less academic aspirations, for example, *'Will be a PT/ Professional footballer/Professional boxer. Need to keep my options open in case of injury. Need to go to University to have a backup plan'* (boy aged 11). The same boy expressed pride in his own academic attainment to date with the Pathfinder highlighting that the boy aged 11 *'was proud of himself for achieving the highest score in Northern Ireland in the Transfer Test'*. Though on the contrary, there were also those who were less positive about their schooling experiences. Whilst some mentioned a dislike of school *'I don't like school'* (girl aged 11). For others there were even stronger viewpoints *'I hate school, I am miserable at school'* (girl aged 16). Others also had reservations about educational institutions where

they thought they may not be included *'I want to go to a local uni but not Queen's because they are all snobs'* (girl aged 15).

For others, there was less interest in academic pathways. Rather they expressed an eagerness to leave school, and a desire to enter the workforce. For example, one child highlighted that *'I don't think I would like to go to college, just practise at home and ask hairdressers to let me work there'* (girl aged 9). Another mentioned their preference to start their *'career earlier so I can enjoy it'* (girl aged 9). Whilst another commented that *'I want to leave school straight after my GCSEs. I want to go straight to work. I would like to work in day-care'* (girl aged 15).

### **Children, Parents, Carers and Families from the Greater Shankill and Colin Areas Attending End of Year Performance of Crescendo with Ulster Orchestra in Ulster Hall**



## Careers

Running parallel to education and schooling was much discussion on career choices and aspirations. For some CYP, career choices were extremely ambitious, for example, one child commented that he *'will be getting 27 million each [football] game I play'* (boy aged 7). Whilst another commented that *'I will be a famous youtuber'* (boy aged 10). For some older children, there was evidence of some 'reality checking' regarding careers. For example, one young person commented that *'It [being a footballer] would be very difficult even if I work hard'* (boy aged 10). Another boy acknowledged that *'I would like to be an astronaut, it will take a lot of work. I would like to go to the moon'* (boy aged 8).

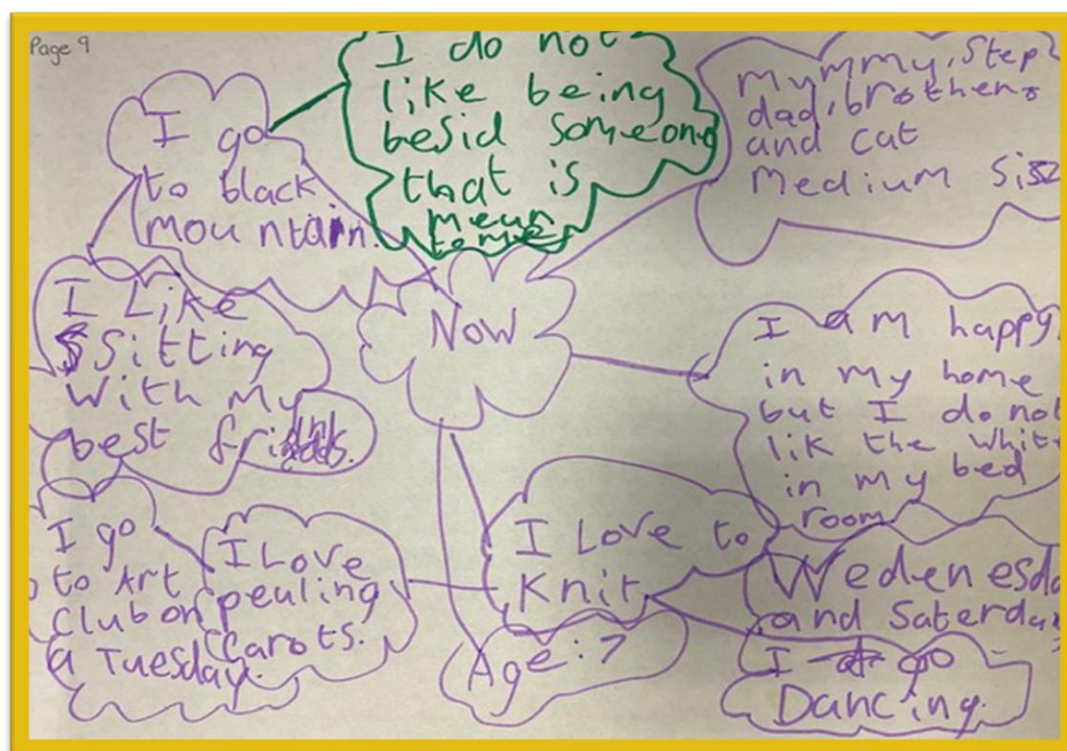
The data suggests that, in some circumstances, career aspirations reflect role models in many of the CYP's present life. For example, many of the younger children interviewed expressed aspirations to become teachers possibly reflecting their limited exposure to life outside of where they live and their present day activities. For example, one boy stated that he *'will be an ICT or building teacher'* (boy aged 9), whilst another child commented that *'when I am 28, I want to be an art teacher'* (girl aged 8). Other CYP recognised that it requires hard work to be a teacher, *'I'll be in Girls Model, doing lots of work. I want to do well in school to be a teacher'* (girl aged 11). However, this contrasted with other interpretations on the role of teachers. *'I want to do well in school, to be a teacher. I can sit at my desk and do nothing and go into the staff room'* (girl aged 11).

Additionally, community-based youth work was another frequently cited career aspiration, perhaps, at times, because of their own participation in community activity. For example, one Pathfinder commented about a boy (aged 13) *'[he] participates in the local community. Hammer youth club, New Life Church, Football. Would like to help out in the community in the future'* (boy aged 13). Another girl (aged 18) also commented that she is involved in the R-CITY Shankill youth project *'the R-CITY. I want to do youth work in 5 years' time and would like to stay in the Shankill area'* (girl aged 18). Similarly, a Girl aged 15, shares how she goes *'to a local youth club'* and in the future she *'will still be living here. I will still be involved in the youth club'* (Girl aged 15).

Other young people discussed their aspirations to run their own business, for example, one boy (aged 18 years) stated *'I would like to have my own studio, a place for people to come and express themselves'* (boy aged 18). This was supported by the Pathfinder's further explanation that the young man *'would like to become a tattooist and own his own studio. Has created a portfolio of artwork to show people and help explain his passion for drawing and tattooing'* (Pathfinder boy aged 18).

For some CYP, there was recognition of the pathways and work involved in achieving their aspirations. For example, there was evidence of acknowledging the importance of work, *'I would have a job! Someone will pay me!'* (girl aged 7). Others saw the link between education and employment, *'I will continue to study. It will give me the best advantage to get a job to make this happen'* (girl aged 14). Also, that it is a fairly long process requiring further study, *I could be in Uni In 20 years, I will have been through Uni and achieved my dream job of being a nurse or a midwife. I will have my head screwed on'* (girl aged 16).

### Drawing Created During the Conversation Process



## Lifestyle Aspirations

For some children, their microsystems appear to have a direct influence on their future plans for where they want to live and how they want to live. For many CYP, their ambition was to remain living in the Shankill area in their adulthood. Some mentioned that they wanted to live *'across the street'* or *'live next door'*. For many, the key motivation to remaining local was to be close to their family and friends, with some CYP commenting they *'want to stay here in the Shankill with my mates'* (boy aged 11), or that they want to *'live local – close to family'* (Pathfinder of boy aged 11) like *'I will have my own house next door to my mummy'* (girl aged 5). One girl was specific that she liked living in the Shankill *'love living on the Shankill – good craic'* (girl aged 17).

Travel was another frequently mentioned lifestyle aspiration. Quite a few of the CYP mentioned holidays, visiting places etc. For example, one girl highlighted that she wants *'to travel, maybe USA, to see more of the place'* and go to *'places that speak English'* (girl aged 16). Another girl expressed that she *'would like to do that whole travel thing around Asia, all different places'* (Girl aged 18). Another girl expressed her aspiration to travel in order to broaden her horizons stating that she *'would like to travel and get to know different cultures and religion'* (Girl aged 18).

Some CYP also discussed financial aspects of their lifestyle aspirations. For example, one boy stated that he *'will be filthy rich but living in a cheap apartment'* (boy aged 12). Another girl stated that *'I will have lots of money, I will be going on holidays'* (girl aged 11). As well as travel, cars and houses were other popular lifestyle aspirations, *'I will buy a house and a car, Lamborghini.'* (Girl aged 8). Some lifestyle aspirations also likely represented their current interests and hopes *'I will live in a mansion. I want to be rich; I'll go to Florida on a plane, shopping with my mummy and have McDonald's every night for supper'* (girl aged 9) and *'I will go to the cinema every week and get popcorn'* (girl aged 11).

With regards to socio-economic status, and more specifically poverty, the CYP commented on how this negatively impacted on their lives. One boy aged 10 mentioned



that he *'wants a bigger house'* as the one he *'lives in now is too small'* (Pathfinder boy aged 10). One girl talked of buying her own house stating that *'I want this for myself, cause my mummy couldn't'* (girl aged 18). Some CYP also referred to their economic behaviour in the future *'I will enjoy making money but will dislike wasting it'* (boy aged 14).

## Wider Influences on the Child

### Community

Outer layers of Bronfenbrenner's EST model, including the community and wider society, were less frequently discussed. However, it is known that these systems can both nurture and present CYP with challenges. Exploring the 'community' within which the CYP live was a core aspect of the Conversations process. However, it was also one of the more difficult concepts for the CYP to grasp and respond to. As one Pathfinder highlighted, during one of the Conversations with a girl she *'struggled slightly with community'* and needed supported with *'little prompts'* (Pathfinder of Girl aged 11). Nonetheless, there was clear evidence that some CYP experienced community connectedness, *'I am starting to train in supporting people with their mental health'* (Girl aged 15). Another shared that *'On a Tuesday, Wednesday, Thurs and Friday I go to a club'* and how in the future she *'would like to be a leader'* (girl aged 12). Often there was reference to engagement with community-level activities. For example, church-based activities were often cited. One boy (aged 9) mentioned that he goes *'to Wednesday night club in the Mission Hall'* (boy aged 9), whilst another highlighted that he goes *'to boys brigade at Church'* (boy aged 8). Sports was a key area of community engagement with Pathfinders providing information like the following *'likes gymnastics because it's fun and I get to exercise'* (Girl aged 8). The arts were another area of community participation for the CYP. For example, one Pathfinder outlined that one child *'attends 'Art club' on Tuesdays and 'Dance club' on Wednesday and Saturday'* (Pathfinder of girl aged 7).

Also discussed was the 'virtual community', i.e., that which was experienced via social media. The CYP referred to the influence of social media, for example in terms of their

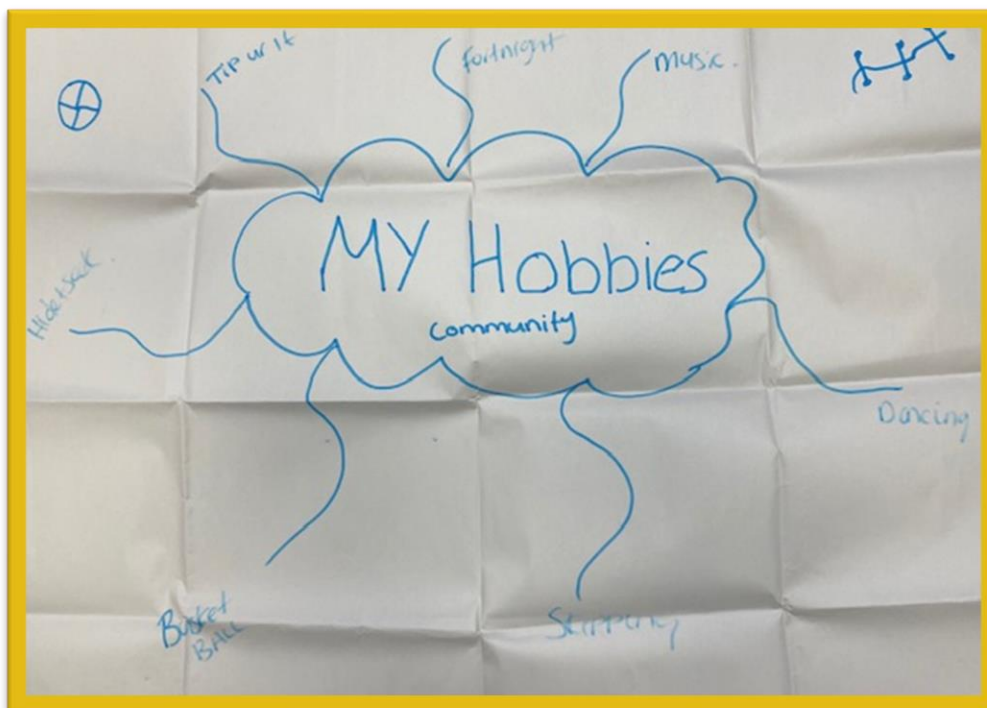
career aspirations *'I will be a vet and a youtuber blogger'* (girl aged 8). Others indicated it was where they made friends. For example the Pathfinder of one young person recorded her as saying *'she will have online friends' as she will 'probably still not be good at making friends'* (Pathfinder of girl 15). The CYP also mentioned online celebrities as influences in their life, for example, a girl aged 7, described *'Celebrities like Georgia' as part of her life'* (Pathfinder of girl aged 7).

For other CYP, it appeared that their motivation to stay in the Shankill was potentially a result of the connectedness they felt with their local community, enhanced by their attendance at youth groups. In the following example (noted from a Pathfinder), it is evident that this young person has had a positive experience of youth work, which has influenced their view on living on the Shankill, as well as their future education and employment aspirations.

*Wants to be involved in youth work (5 years) (20years). Go to University. Very positive about living in Shankill. Has had work experience with GSP [Greater Shankill Partnership] and is involved in local youth group. Have a partner in 20 years and children as feels life is hard for her mother who is single parent.*

(Pathfinder of girl aged 16)

## Drawing Created During the Conversation Process



### Wider Society

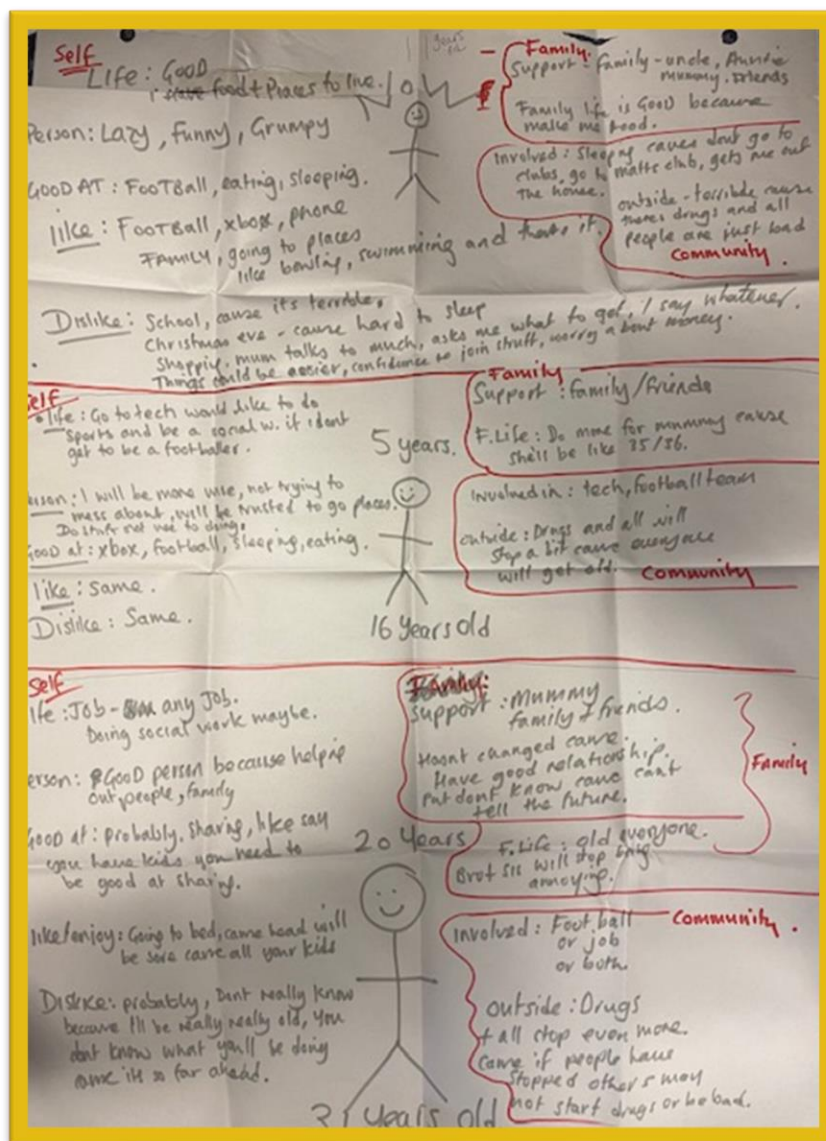
Wider layers in Bronfenbrenner's EST model is concerned with how social and cultural factors, such as geography, cultural ideology, poverty, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, impact on the child's development. The data suggests that there are several elements of wider society which are pertinent to the children of Shankill, namely, the unique aspects of life in a post-conflict society as well as the cyclical poverty experienced by the Shankill community.

For example, the child's environment appears to have an influence on their planned future social mobility and future environment. Moving away from the Shankill was often mentioned '*I will live outside the Shankill; I will move away*' (Girl aged 18). Another girl aged 17 mentioned that she will '*not be living in Shankill*', as she doesn't '*want to raise a family there*' (Pathfinder of girl aged 17). For some young people, in the future they want to live somewhere that represents the antithesis to aspects of the Shankill that they dislike. For example, one CYP commented that '*I'm not sure where I would like to live but somewhere with more opportunities*' (girl aged 13). Entrenched sectarian attitudes were also mentioned as

a reason to leave the Shankill area. For example, one CYP mentioned that they would like to *'live somewhere away from bitterness'* (girl aged 18). Additionally, several CYP expressed an aspiration towards living in a more integrated and diverse community. For example, one young person mentioned their intention to live in a more *'neutral'* (girl aged 18) community without the murals and reminder of Belfast's conflicted past. Another young person was thinking ahead to family life, mentioning that they *'want to be in a mixed area and send my kids to an integrated school'* (girl aged 19). Others aspired to move beyond Belfast. For example, one young person mentioned that in 20 years they *'would like to be married and have a family and maybe live outside Belfast'* (girl aged 19). Echoed by another stating that they would like to *'live outside Belfast, (in a) mixed quiet area'* (girl aged 19).

Others commented on antisocial behaviour-related issues such as drugs and crime, with one CYP stating that *'I will be looking for a job somewhere else. I will be living away, no drugs where I will live and no mad kids running about'* (girl aged 18). Whilst another mentioned that in their area there are *'lots of break ins. Makes me scared'* (girl aged 11). Then the same girl aged 11 mentioned *'I could move to a big house in my area. I want to live in a nice community. My community will hopefully be better'* (girl aged 11). Other CYP also expressed a desire for their community to become a better place *'drugs and all will stop even more, cause if more people have stopped others may not start or be bad'* (boy aged 11). Several girls expressed issues with boys in the local area being a problem *'outside playing isn't fun as the boys are rude. The f-bomb is dropped a lot'* (Girl aged 10) and *'boys around here are scumbags; each generation just gets worse'* (girl aged 15).

Drawing Created During the Conversation Process



Life Events

This section examines transient life events that can be stressful or traumatic for CYP. For example, the children were acutely aware of the stressors in their environment. For example, one child commented that *'life is stressful at times'* (girl aged 15), whilst another highlighted that *'I have a good family life, but it is stressful at times due to dad being unwell'* (girl aged 16). Additionally, one child commented on a key critical incident in her life (the loss of her father) which is having an impact on her life *'oh my Daddy, look he needs*

*wings as he is an angel now'* (girl aged 9). The Pathfinder explained that the *'child (is) attending grief counselling'* (Pathfinder girl aged 9).

With regard to evidence of life events it is important to note that across the data, it was clear that children of all ages were capable of reflecting on their past/current circumstances and environment and using this information to inform their future aspirations. Often, this was a result of the CYP reflecting negatively on their current circumstances with an aspiration for something different for example *'Not going to be like mum and have loads of kids'* (Boy aged 10). One Pathfinder describes that for girl aged 16 and her family *'there can be a lot of arguments and falling out'* and she states that in the future she would like *'to have a strong bond' with her family and how she is working to 'strengthen relationships within the family'* (Pathfinder girl aged 16).

### Independence

Achieving a secure independent life was a key aspiration for many of the children. *'I will be looking after myself, I will protect myself. Life will be good for me'* (boy aged 11). Often this was associated with happiness. *'I will be independent and happy'* (girl aged 13), *'I will enjoy being able to make my own decisions'* (girl aged 15). However, independence was often viewed with trepidation, *'Hopefully have independence, but it's scary to have it, might not like it'* (Girl aged 16). Related to independence there was a desire to help support themselves in the future, *'I would like to have my house and be looking after myself'* (girl aged 11). There were also frequent positive aspirations to strive towards a new and self-determined life for themselves, *'I can build a new life'* (girl aged 15), *'I will start my own recycling club. I will try to stop animals dying from plastic'* (girl aged 9).

### Feedback on the Conversations Process

Feedback regarding the Conversations process was obtained throughout the course of the process. This feedback has provided several key insights. For example, younger children (primary school age) found it hard to visualise 5 or 20 years' time. Some older children (teenagers) enjoyed visualising the future as opposed to thinking about where they are at now. One Pathfinder commented that *'the young person enjoyed thinking ahead and not just*

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*a focus on jobs'* (Pathfinder of girl 18). Many of the children with special educational needs (SEN) required extra help and support with the questions. Also, the Conversations data highlighted that many children were waiting on assessment or diagnosis for ADHD or autism. So, whilst the confirmed number of SEN was 17%, the overall percentage would have increased if these children on waiting lists were included. Further insights indicate that the participatory methods worked well with younger children and CYP with SEN's. The art-based techniques proving to be highly beneficial at eliciting conversation and helping CYP to meaningful engage with the topic at hand (as can be seen in the example drawings throughout this report). One Pathfinder highlighted that *'as the child became bored, I brought out paper and markers to allow the child to draw the answers which are attached.'* (Pathfinder of boy 6). *The child enjoyed drawing pictures of what her life would be like.* (Pathfinder of girl 5)

## Summary of Findings

Overall, Bronfenbrenner's EST worked well for structuring the data and providing a narrative framework for what the CYP wanted for themselves and their family. There was a wide range of outcomes and aspirations desired by the CYP for themselves. Generally, the CYP had a positive outlook and aspired to lead happy, independent lives. Careers were important but only as part of a much bigger picture around the story they wanted their lives to be. It was very evident that the central most important thing in the CYPs' current and future lives was family and also how influential family environment was above all other influences. The wider layers of EST in terms of community, society and policy were less well developed in the CYP's thoughts about the future. Though the CYP did draw significant inspiration from role models in their community. However, these were often limited to the exposure they had to role models in schools and local community organisations. The findings are explored and synthesised in more detail in the following discussion, including a set of implications based on the findings.

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# Discussion

## Synthesis of Findings

To integrate the findings across the different forms of analysis it is useful to review our research questions again.

Looking back at our first research question:

1. What is the story you want your life to be?

The first thing to say is that there was almost complete engagement in the process by CYP. It emerged that it was the first time they had been asked this question in such a wide sense and not just what they wanted to be when they grew up. There was a range of stories that the CYP wanted their lives to be, but there were quite a few common threads. Generally, there was a sense of positivity about the future for themselves, their families and their community. There were also significant references to personal autonomy, agency and independence. Any negative issues raised were generally due to current family issues (death, conflict etc.) and environmental circumstances (e.g., crime and sectarianism).

It was clear that what was happening to CYP now was having a powerful influence on their future (for good or bad). The CYP were logically thinking through their current circumstances and actively making decisions based on whether they wanted change or consistency in their future. The family shone out as the major current influence shaping future plans. A supportive family appears to be a strong predictive factor in planning a positive future. Role models (teachers, youth workers etc.) were also providing the vision and identity for the CYP for their future selves. However, there was less discussion of current or future links (and role models) in power structures like higher education institutions, the professions, government and the corporate world.



There is also a lot of reference to friends and friendships. Generally, that that they want to have good friends, more friends, supportive friends in the future. The CYP were also seeing negative things in their current circumstances but instead of using that to define their future they were constructing pathways to a different place for themselves in the future.

Focusing on the second research question:

2. What outcomes and aspirations do CYP in the Shankill want now and in the future for: themselves; their family and their community?

Firstly, it is worth returning to the outcome areas within the NI CYP Strategy (2021) to compare with our sample of data from CYP in the Shankill. The NI CYP strategy outcome areas are:

- Physical and mental health
- Enjoyment of play and leisure
- Learning and achievement
- Living in safety and with stability
- Economic and environmental well-being
- Making a positive contribution to society
- Living in a society which respects their rights
- Living in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted

It can be said that within the Conversations, the CYP covered all these areas with a high degree of nuance. It could be argued that learning, achievement, play, mental health, economic wellbeing, and safety being some of the most discussed outcome areas. With physical health, stability, rights and good relations less often discussed. However, it could also be said that these outcome areas miss quite a few issues particularly around family outcomes.

One of the key areas not reflected as starkly in this list as it was for the CYP in the Greater Shankill were outcomes for their current family and their own future families. That is, the CYP's enjoyment of a nurturing family life, which acts as a strong foundation for future strong, stable and nurturing families in future generations. The notion of outcomes being a present set of conditions for CYP is overemphasised in the research, policy and practice literature and not enough consideration is given to future outcomes as well as setting the conditions now for delivering on outcomes in the future. Furthermore, there is a lack of investment, funding and capacity building for local communities to measure and analyse baseline and follow-up outcomes; so communities can monitor and track changes in their CYP's outcomes.

### Drawing Created During the Conversation Process



The notion of family outcomes and future outcomes are covered to some extent in the CYP strategy under the 'equality of opportunity and good relations' outcome, but proportionally families are underrepresented in this list compared to the discussed outcomes with this sample of CYP in the Greater Shankill. Therefore, if the Conversations with CYP of the Greater Shankill are showing gaps in the CYP strategy (which, in fairness, has been given great consideration to CYP's rights and CYP's development) then you can imagine the much greater number of gaps, in terms of outcomes for CYP, that exist within the wider Programme for Government strategy and other policies within NI. The

authors suggest that this potential incongruence is an area worthy of further investigation.

Regarding the 3<sup>rd</sup> research question:

3. Are there patterns (pathways) in the outcomes and aspirations of CYP in the Shankill?

Despite the depth and variety of analyses it was not possible to discern an outcome framework for the Shankill with any great clarity. The stories are largely at an individual stage with some degree of overlap but probably not comprehensive enough in terms of numbers and re-occurrence to identify a concrete set of community level pathways.

One way to look at early indications of these pathways is to triangulate across the different forms of analyses, i.e., to see if there are similar patterns emerging in the content, grounded, narrative and factor analyses. There are some early signs of the importance of aspiration to live a better life across all the analyses and the importance of being supported in pathways by family. Additionally, the influence of role models in constructing pathways is evident in all the forms of analyses. However, beyond these general observations it is not possible to identify a clear set pathways or an outcomes framework.

## **Review of the Conversations Process**

Reflecting on the Conversations process (using traffic light colour coding in Figure 5) it can be said that significant progress has been made on the first step of the aims and objectives of the process (see 1a. in Figure 5). In total, 98 Conversations have taken place amplifying the voices of seldom heard CYP. Though there is a need to expand the number and variety of the Conversations especially with CYP from families not currently engaged in sustained support like ISCYP and also children in the early years (0-4) engaged with and not engaged with sustained support. There was a significant investment of time and expertise in holding and analysing the Conversations. This has provided much time for reflection on the process as well as building significant research and delivery capacity that should not be lost. Furthermore, if this capacity can be drawn on and combined with technology it could make the process even more efficient particularly in terms of data recording and analysis

Regarding Pathfinders role (1b. in Figure 5) significant progress has been made in defining the role and building capacity in Pathfinders but there is a way to go in terms of engaging Pathfinders from other sectors and bodies outside Shankill Integrated Services team. Review and support (1c. in Figure 5) have only seen minimal progress with only 11 occasions when children have had a second Conversation with a Pathfinder. This needs much more design, implementation, research and investment.

**Figure 5: Progress Made on the Levels and Stages of the Conversations Process**



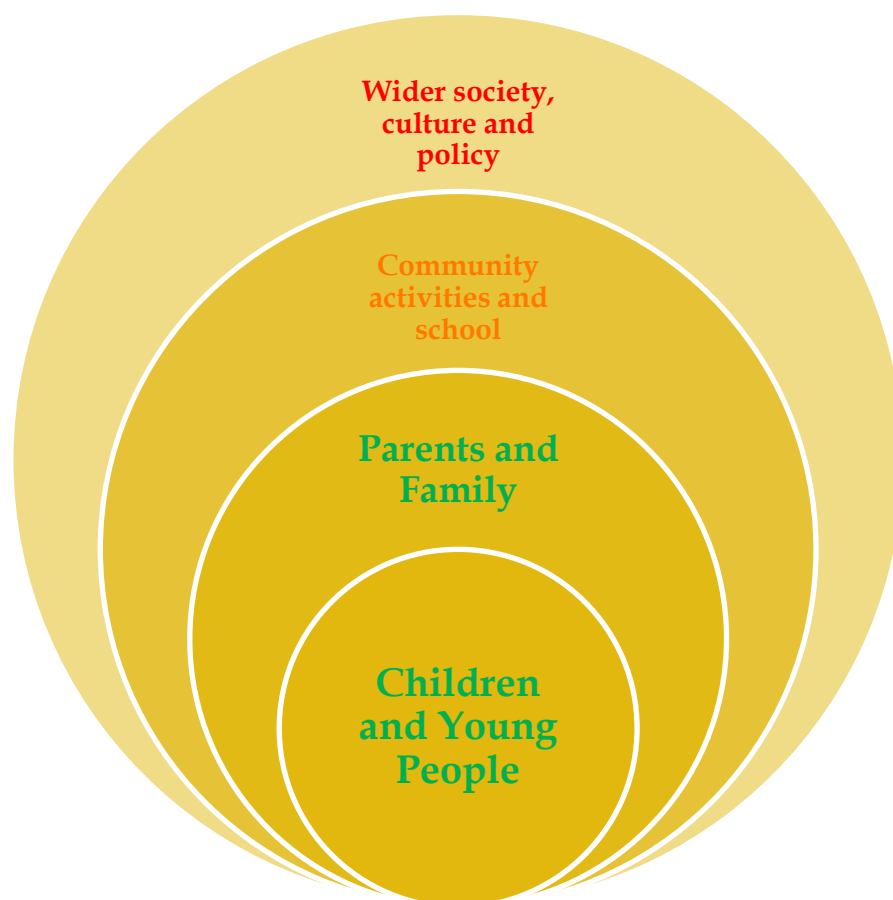
In terms of collective (community wide) aims (2a., 2b., 2c.) of the project there has been some useful developments. The utility of both Bronfenbrenner’s EST and social capital theories has been promising and the emergence of several outcome areas has also been apparent (as discussed under the research questions above). However, there appears to be a need for the wider and greater number of the Conversations to move forward with bringing the theory and the practice of the Conversations together to produce a community wide outcomes framework. Also, there is a need for power structures within

government (national and local) to integrate with the Conversations process to transform service provision in the Shankill area (and potentially across NI). Also, when reflecting on progress with Lundy's model of CYP's participation it can be said voice, space and audience have been provided for the CYP to some degree, but influence is the next major step, which requires the support of those with the power to make systemic change. In other words, the Conversations have provided a start in terms of a bottom up vision for the Greater Shankill, but there is a need for power and influence from people in decision making positions to deliver on this emerging vision.

## **Review of Conversations Theory**

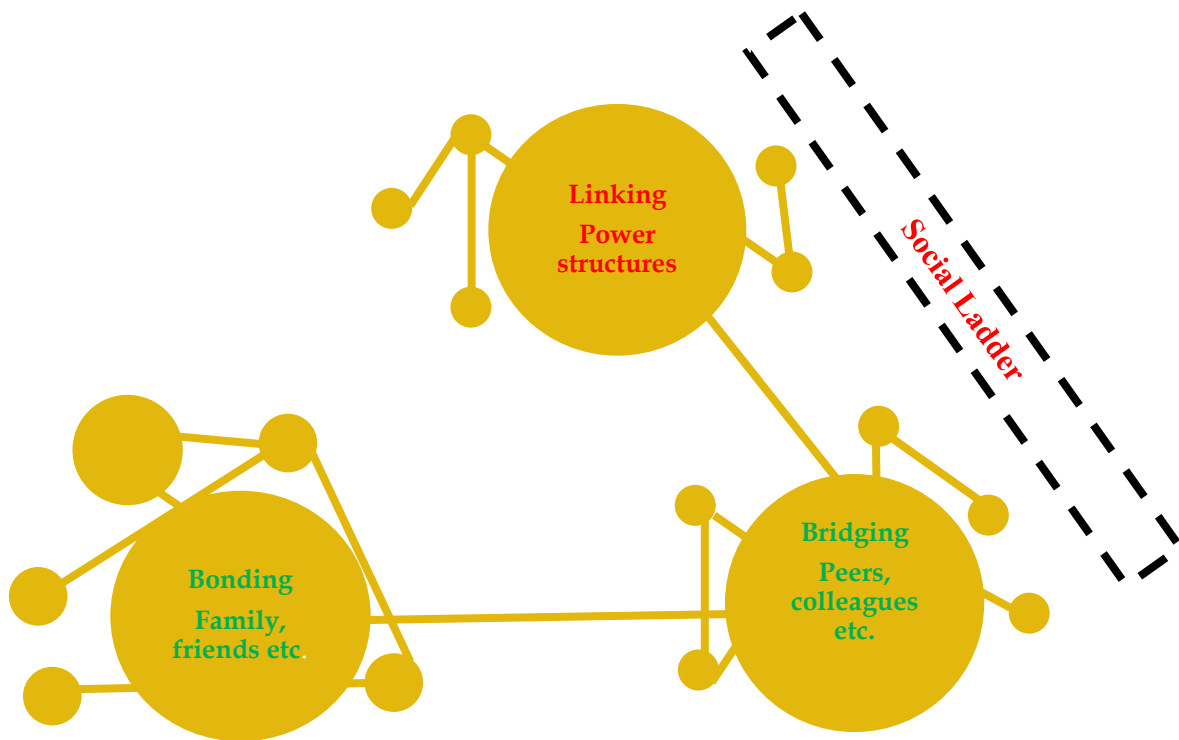
Reflecting on the use of Bronfenbrenner's EST and social capital theory we can see that they provide a useful framework for the shaping the Conversations process and its impact. Some areas in the models have had quite a bit of development while other areas still remain to be developed. The status of development and use in the Conversations process of each area in the theories is represented using a traffic light colour coding in Figure 6 and Figure 7. Where green is well developed, amber begun but needs further work and red has yet to be integrated into the process.

**Figure 6: A Review of Bronfenbrenner's EST Underpinning the Conversations.**



Regarding Bronfenbrenner, particularly apparent is the centrality of family to the CYP, but also apparent is the decreasing discussion on the layers beyond their immediate connections into the outer EST areas such as culture, policy and government (highlighted in red in Figure 6). Therefore, there is work still to be done capacity building with CYP to understand and incorporate these wider layers of influence and support into their future thinking and aspirations. There are a few ways to do this. One is further refine the Conversations process to encourage wider thinking with the CYP. Another way is to develop policy, culture etc. that integrates findings from the Conversations. This would be an iterative step as it makes these outer layers more relevant and engaging for CYP and thus increasing their engagement with these wider issues and supports.

Figure 7: A Review of Social Capital Theory Underpinning the Conversations.



Regarding social capital, it is clear the importance of 'bonding' and 'bridging' social structures and networks in the formation of CYP aspirations. CYP's support and role models are predominantly drawn from these areas of their social capital. However, there was a lack of 'linking' social capital discussed by these seldom heard CYP currently within sustained support. Again, as with EST, incorporating the findings from the Conversations process into power structures and the policy/strategy development of public, private and third sector organisations will provide CYP from the Greater Shankill more engagement with, and pathways to, linking capital.

Overall, it could be concluded that the Conversations process is using appropriate theory, providing emerging evidence, amplifying CYP's voices, and building local relationships. However, there is not yet sufficient integration of the benefits of the Conversations process with macro level activities such as policy development and cultural change. Or sufficient access for CYP of the Greater Shankill to linking capital, and consequently the 'power' to live the story they want their life to be.

## Research Strengths

The first thing to note is that it is possible to have the Conversations with CYP about the future they want their life to be. Also, it was possible for trusted community professionals to be invited in and have the Conversations in the CYPs' own homes. If this research is viewed in simple terms as a pilot study, it has overcome a lot of issues with feasibility. It can't be underestimated the benefits of Pathfinders having pre-existing relationships with the participant families and CYP with complex needs. This allowed for the elicitation of genuine opinions thus giving the data ecological validity. These seldom heard CYP are usually behind many gatekeepers and often don't or can't share willingly with strangers or researchers. Pathfinders have taken the stigma out of the process and allowed the free flow of genuine information from the CYP.

The ethos of a learning approach in the Shankill Zone and Innovation Zones has led to some significant research capacity building. This capacity building has been bi-directional. For example, the Shankill CYP Zone staff have built capacity in the design, delivery and reporting of research. The Pathfinders have gained experience as field researchers and co-designed how to conduct the Conversations in a consistent and valid way. The Innovation Zones team have had privileged learning. For example, the work has provided an opportunity to make real world research impact. It has given access to high level expertise in community support and the voices of seldom heard children and young people. All partners have also shared in capacity building in partnership working in conducting community-based participatory research.

Reflecting on the three key elements of approach of the Innovation Zones, i.e., interdependence, critical thinking and creativity. It can be said that the interdependence of developing shared outcomes in this project helped cement relationships that have been able to set up the conditions for critical and creative thinking. This thinking was often drawn upon to solve problems and improve the way the Conversations process was being designed, implemented and analysed. Basically, the community and research partnership worked well and would work well in future development of the Conversations process and other similar projects.



All these benefits, i.e., collecting data from the seldom heard, research capacity building and building partnerships would suggest scaling and translation are appropriate next steps. Scaling within the Shankill will help improve the Conversations process and its impact. Translation of the Conversation process in other communities could also provide the voice, capacity building and collaboration benefits to other communities. There should be a priority to do this in disadvantaged communities that are hoping to develop place-based transformation with CYP through community/university partnerships. As highlighted in the literature these place-based approaches are widespread, but not all of them have put as much thought into collecting the future desires of CYP as this project. Therefore, other zones can learn from what is happening in the Shankill through the Conversations process, some of which is all captured in this report, the Pathfinder Guide and Pathfinder training materials.

## Limitations

The first major limitation is also one of the key strengths of the project. Having focused on the Conversations with the least heard CYP it has resulted in a sample of Conversations that are not representative of the wider Shankill population of CYP. Another limitation is, that despite significant capacity building in engaging the CYP in the process, there was relatively little comment on their community and wider society. This is an area of development required in future and particularly in follow-up Conversations. More diverse Conversations would also provide data that could aid in some of the analyses that didn't produce clear information (e.g., the content analysis and factor analysis). Increasing the amount of the Conversations and consequently data could help with this analysis and begin to produce a clear outcomes framework for the community.

A second limitation is an extension to the points made in the review of Conversations theory above, about limited integration of the work with macro level issues (e.g. policy and culture) and linking capital. The process was set within an aspiration gathering phase. However, it is essential that this work continues in order to begin to map pathways and tailored support mechanisms to help the CYP (individually and collectively) to reach

their recognised aspirations. Urgent engagement with policy makers and decision makers is required to provide a stronger element of influence in this process.

The Conversations were also set in a place in time just before Covid and the cost of living crises. Even though it is not possible to make comment on these external factors now, it is something that longitudinal research could address. Also, we don't know what happens next in the CYP's stories. Again, longitudinal research could follow these stories to see if they become what they want their lives to be.

## Implications of this Work

This work has resulted in a clear set of implications for what we can do now (practice), what we should do next (decision making), and how we can continue to build the evidence base (research).

### Implications for Practice in the Greater Shankill

1. The Conversations process has now been piloted and shown to be an engaging process for CYP in the Greater Shankill area.

**Next step: Continue to embed the 'Conversations' process in the Greater Shankill, so that each child or young person can co-design their own pathway and be supported on the journey towards their desired outcome.**

2. The Conversations data collection and analysis has produced useful and important information for understanding the stories that CYP in the Greater Shankill want their lives to be, but more Conversations, and corresponding data, is required to produce community wide transformation.

**Next step: Extend the 'Conversations' to gather more voices of CYP, resulting in the creation of an outcomes framework to inform policy development and programmes to impact positively on the lives of CYP in the Greater Shankill area.**

### Implications for Practice in Other Communities

3. Engaging with children and young people of all ages and backgrounds *works*, and is an effective way to understand young people's individual and varied aspirations for their life and future.

**Next step: Plan to incorporate the views of children and young people in co-designed processes when designing initiatives to improve opportunities and outcomes for young people. Future initiatives, like Conversations, should be informed and underpinned by the UNCRC (1989).**

### Implications for Building the Evidence Base

4. This research highlighted the need for voices to be heard in disadvantaged communities. There is a need for investment in ongoing research like this to ensure that policy priorities are accurate and timely. This includes a need to develop a sustainable way for educators and community workers to build conversations into day-to-day practice, from the early years and primary school, ensuring that CYP learn to express hopes and aspirations from an early stage. These findings, and those from other research, indicate that training could benefit teachers and practitioners to intervene at an early stage to build capacity among CYP in this area.

**Next step: Invest in ongoing research and practice in the area of talking to CYP about their aspirations for the future and develop evidence informed training for practitioners within the community and education sectors.**

5. Community and university partnerships are an important and effective way to generate relevant, meaningful, and rigorous data that that can be applied to local issues as well as generate social innovation that can have global impact.

**Next step: Strengthen and invest in community-university partnerships. Ensuring that community knowledge and research expertise are shared and embedded in the development of future initiatives locally and globally.**

6. Investment in the longitudinal follow up of this cohort will shed further light on developing aspirations and next steps for these CYP, what is realised and what is not. This will help identify what facilitates and hinders the journeys of CYP to where they want to be. Agile policy and practice response should align with the needs of the community.

**Next step: Government Departments and agencies commit to listening and responding to the needs of this and other similar communities, as articulated through the voices of children and young people themselves (as required by the UNCRC), in an ongoing way. This requires a long-term, sustainable financial and policy commitment, based on a continued relationship with research institutions and communities.**

### Implications for Decision Makers

7. As evidenced by the range of important outcomes identified by young people, aspirations are much *broader* than simply education and employment (where government and NGO agencies tend to focus their priorities), thereby underlining the importance of a wider understanding of what a young person wants for their life, families and communities.

**Next step: Consider the *full range* of young people's aspirations across all aspects of their life, in future approaches to improving outcomes for young people (A Fair Start, 2021).**

8. CYP involved in sporting, cultural and social activities outside home appear to have broader horizons and are better able to plan, and articulate future aspirations than those who do not engage in such opportunities.

**Next step: Plan local sporting, cultural and social activities to build community capital for future generations based on the needs identified by CYP in the community, and supported by appropriate social infrastructure.**

9. CYP in this study expressed a strong interest in accessing a range of educational pathways, but also identified potential barriers. Community partnerships with

universities and colleges are crucial to enabling the fulfilment of these aspirations.

**Next step: Consolidate links with higher education institutions to ensure that widening participation strategies are co-designed, maintained and extended to meet the needs identified by CYP in this study.**

10. Many of the CYP expressed an interest in contributing to their own community in the future. Several young people felt connected to - and expressed a desire to stay and work in - their community by becoming, for example, teachers, tattooists, nurses. Findings from this research suggest that the investment in the development of community-based initiatives to encourage the 'next generation' to stay, could pay rich dividends for this community.

**Next step: Invest in local opportunities and incentives for young people to stay in (or return to) their community.**

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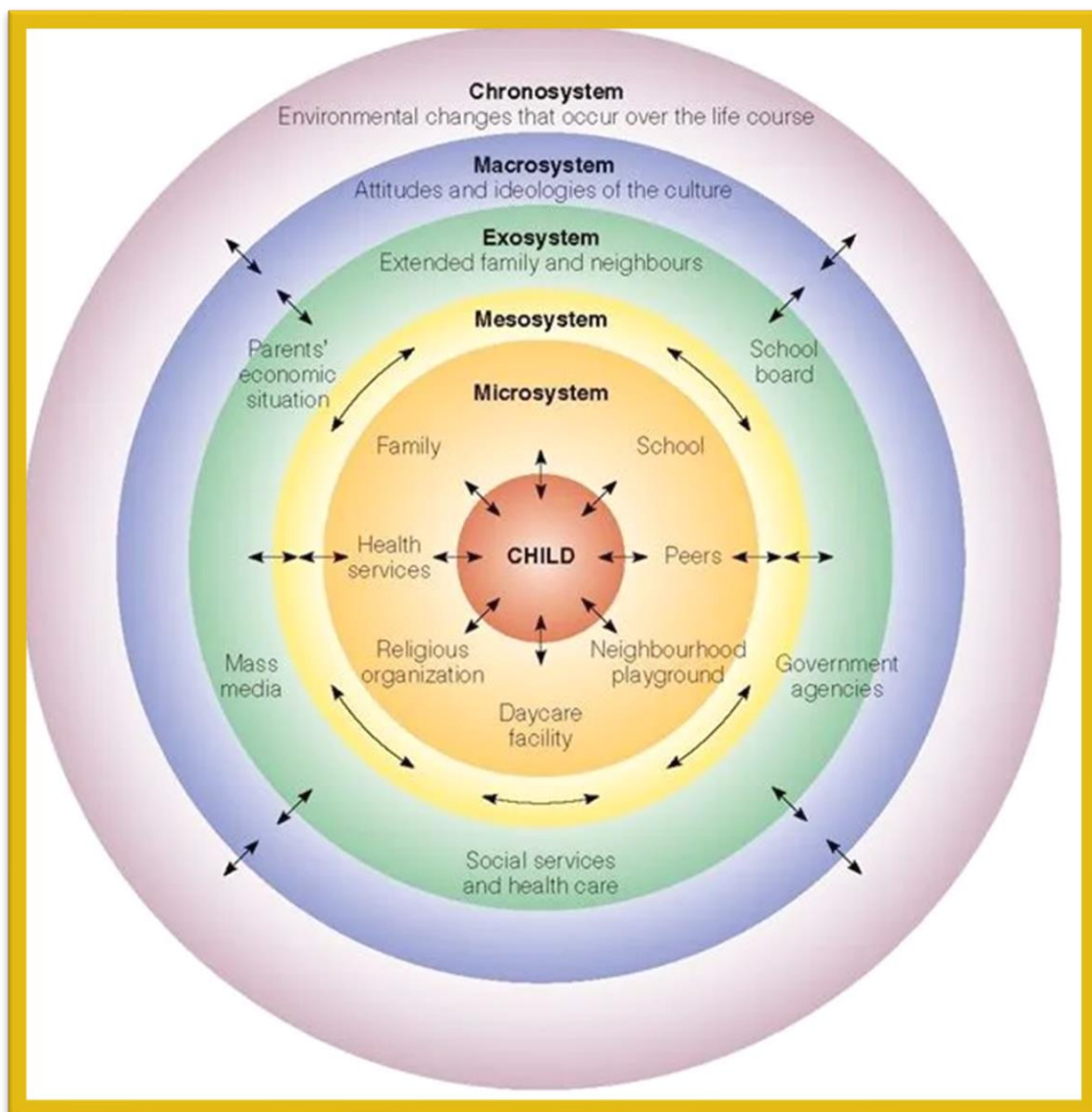
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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

Figure 8: Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) adapted by NCCA (2017)\*

\*N.B. The importance of family in the Conversations research compared to other aspects of microsystem in this diagram.



## Appendix B: Pathfinder Analysis Workshops

A workshop was conducted with the Innovation Zone's research team and 5 Pathfinders (all Pathfinders were from Integrated Services and with varying degrees of experience with the Conversations). The aim of this workshop was to involve the community Pathfinders in the analysis process and to ensure that the approach adopted by the research team aligned with the views of the Pathfinders.

Two key exercises were completed during this workshop, some detail on each is provided below:

### Exercise 1: Mock Record Sheet Activity

A mock Conversations record sheet and feedback form was created which was designed to closely mirror the data received. The Pathfinders broke into two groups to read and discuss: 1) What themes and trends stood out; 2) What were the most interesting things about the data; 3) What was missing that prevented drawing conclusions and would have been useful to have proved further? Researchers sat with each group to record their discussions and to provide discussion probes and prompts. A range of key themes were identified by the Pathfinders, for example, the Pathfinders identified: the social networks of the CYP, e.g., friends, girls brigade, family etc.; the potential influencers in a CYP's life and the tendency for these to be family-centred, which then often was reflected in outcomes; a tendency for 'aspiration shrinking', whereby the CYP would say they won't have time for certain interests once they're older; social mobility aspirations; and the differences between career aspirations versus job aspirations. Additionally, the Pathfinders also identified key process points. For example: the value of fully completed recorded sheets; the need for more probing; how to avoid leading questions; and the challenges around discussing the CYP's 'community'.

### Exercise 2: Thematic Analysis

A selection of outcomes mentioned by the CYP were used for this exercise. The Pathfinders were split into two groups and were asked to categorise and theme them accordingly. Innovation Zones researchers observed and the differences between each

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group and this was discussed. Several key points emerged from the exercise. Firstly, there was a strong overlap with Innovation Zones staff's analysis. Many of the categories created by Pathfinders overlapped with what Innovation Zones staff had separately created (and which were not shown to Pathfinders until the end of the exercise). There was a tendency for one group to focus more on higher level categories, whilst the other worked on a more granular level (see images below for an example of groupings). Additionally, the need to describe context was identified.

### Exercise 3: Closing Discussion

Finally, additional questions of interest to Innovation Zones team were discussed. These were discussed with the Pathfinders to assess resonance and identify gaps. This discussion focussed on the usefulness of certain theories/ approaches, such as social capital, future thinking and critical incidents. Additionally, the Pathfinders highlighted the need to capture the role of disability on aspirations, the important role of risk and protective factors was highlighted, as was the identification of barriers to identify and implement supports.

### Workshop Outcomes

Overall, the workshop was very successful in its aim of involving the Pathfinders in the analysis process and as a solid reliability check to ensure the analysis approach and direction adopted by the researchers aligned well with the views of the Pathfinders. The workshop highlighted the value of involving the Pathfinders in the analysis workshop, and as such a further protocol of involvement/ inter-rater reliability was established.

Figure 9: Table 1 Groupings

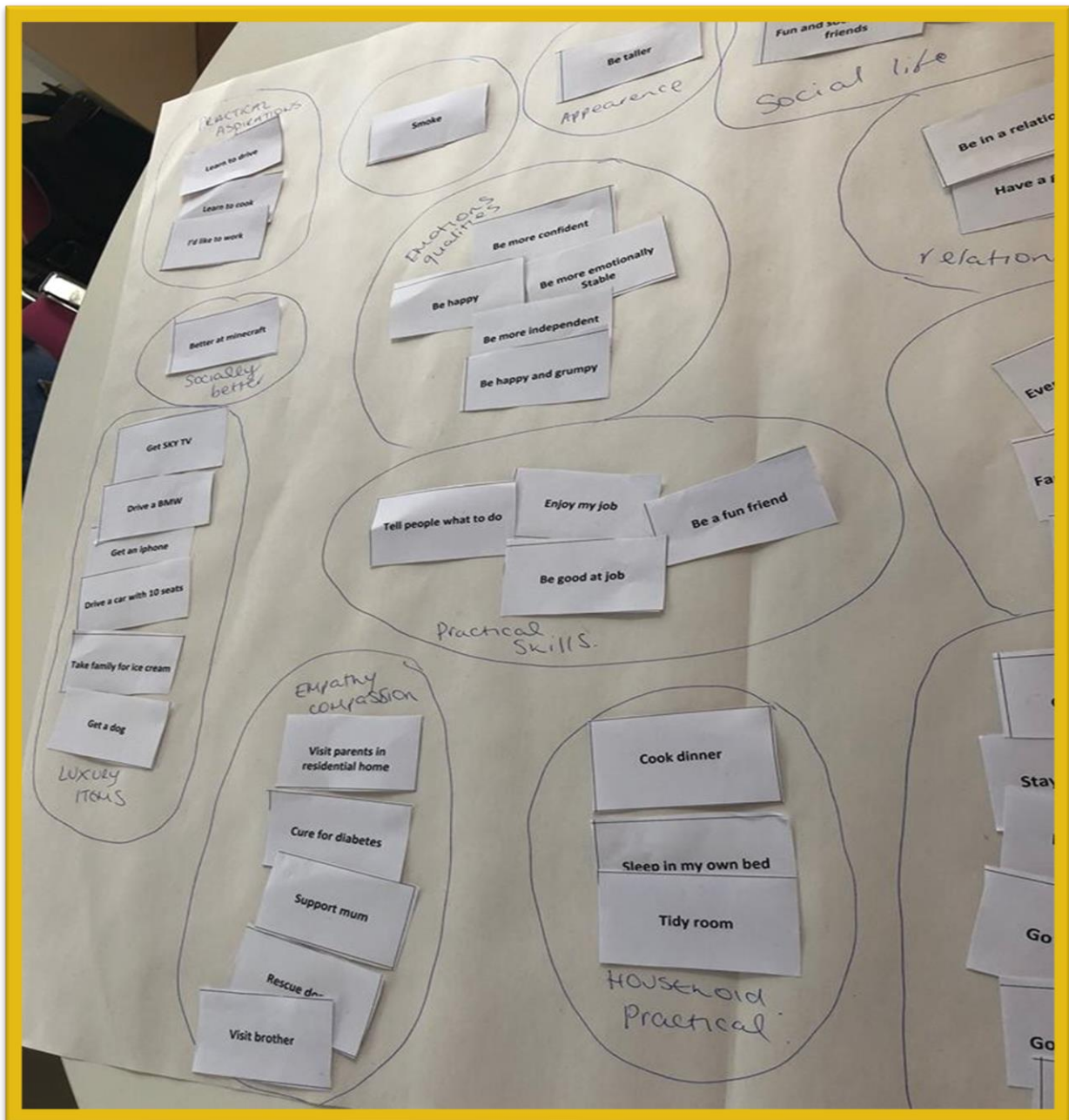
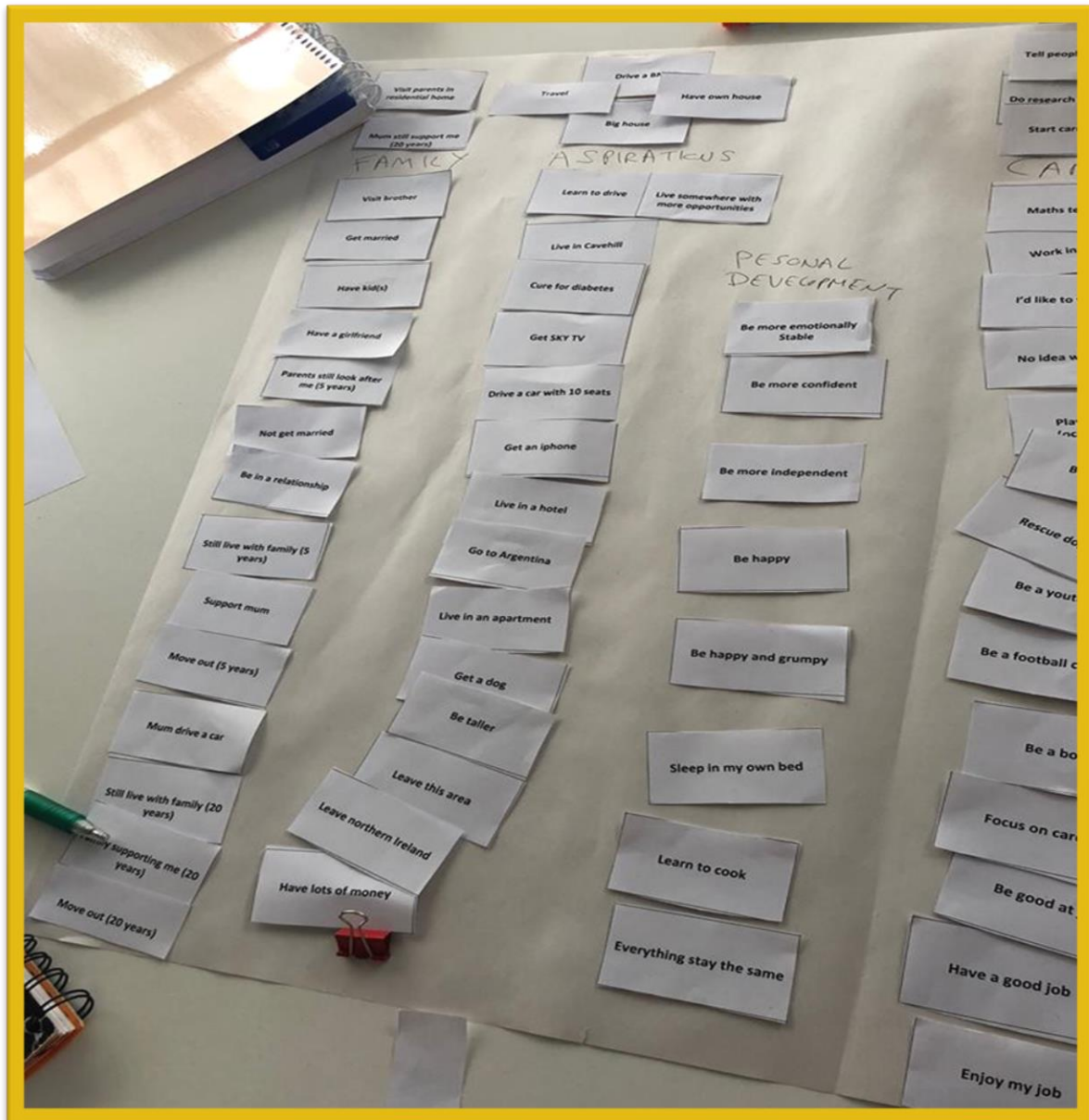


Figure 10: Table 2 Groupings



### Inter-rater Reliability Draft Protocol

The protocol for this level of inter-rater reliability analysis was drafted based on the feedback from the above detailed analysis workshop. This protocol would trigger an inter-rater reliability check after every 30<sup>th</sup> transcript was coded, whereby a second researcher would blindly assign outcomes to two randomly chosen transcripts and these

would be compared with those created by the first researcher. Any differences would be discussed, and the protocol amended as appropriate. It is intended that every 6 months an analysis workshop will be held to ensure that Pathfinders agree with Innovation Zones researchers on the outcomes and themes that are emerging from the data.

### Trialling Vignettes

A team of coders, i.e., 3 researchers and 2 GSP staff, worked together on an inter-rater reliability exercise. Each coder was assigned the same 5 Conversations to analyse (in the form of a vignette) to assess similarities and differences. This analysis was followed-up by a meeting between coders to discuss the benefits of such a process. It was decided that the vignettes: were not the best approach for capturing context; resulted in variance in interpretation; and did not add further insight into bigger questions. As such, the more granular approach of data coding was retained.

### Inter-rater Reliability of 'Granular' Coding

As is common with coding, some inter and intra variation may occur (i.e., differences between different coders, and individual coders across different time points). For example, some outcome labels aren't clear, e.g., 'boxing', is this as a career, hobby? As such, a range of inter-and intra-rater reliability checks have been established. For example, coders re-checked their own work at different time points, as well as checked other coders coding to assess for any variation. There remains further work to be completed to assess inter-rater reliability more robustly. Specifically, the data file needs amended to highlight the responsible coder across each of the cases. Thereafter, coders need to blindly code their colleague's work. Thereafter statistical analyses can be conducted to ascertain the level of inter-rater reliability.

## Appendix C: Factor Analysis

A Principal Components Analysis was employed to reduce the data. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is the most widely used extraction method of component analysis and is most appropriate when the purpose is to reduce the number of items to a smaller number of representative components (Costello & Osborne, 2005; DeCoster, 1998)<sup>10</sup>. PCA resulted in the suggested extraction of 86 factors (50% of the variance is explained in the first 25 factors). See Figure 11 for the Scree plot, which demonstrates the break just before 101 (note, this analysis has been conducted on a small sample size). Additionally, see Table 1 for the Component Matrix which depicts the first 10 factors only. However, there are varying degrees of discernible patterns identifiable. This may be a result of the factorability of the data set. There are several key assumptions/ criteria for PCA that the data do not meet:

- Strength of linear relationships – very weak (very few correlation coefficients above .3/ the majority = <.1)
- Correlation matrix ‘not positive definite’ (NPD)
- Bartlett’s test of sphericity (should be  $p < .01$ ) – not calculated
- KMO test of sampling adequacy (measure of shared variance), should ideally be above .8 – not calculated
- SPSS did not calculate the KMO or Bartlett’s test of sphericity – correlation matrix is ‘non-positive definite’. This can happen for a variety of reasons, most likely in the case of this data set it is because there are more variables than cases.
- Sample size – this data set has 89 cases and over 600 outcomes/variables, which is likely too few cases/too many variables to successfully and reliably run a factor analysis. The literature offers many guidelines for suitable sample size for PCA. Some refer to a general number of cases required, e.g., At least 200 cases (Gorsuch, 1990)/ 300 cases (Norusis, 2005). Whilst others argue it is the subjects-to-variables ratio (STV) that is important, e.g., at least 10 cases for each item, or no lower than 5 (Bryant &

<sup>10</sup> Whereas common factor analysis only includes the common (shared) variance in the extraction. The two most commonly used extraction methods of common factor analysis are Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) and Maximum Likelihood Estimation (ML)2 (Beavers et al., 2013), see <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1303&context=pare>



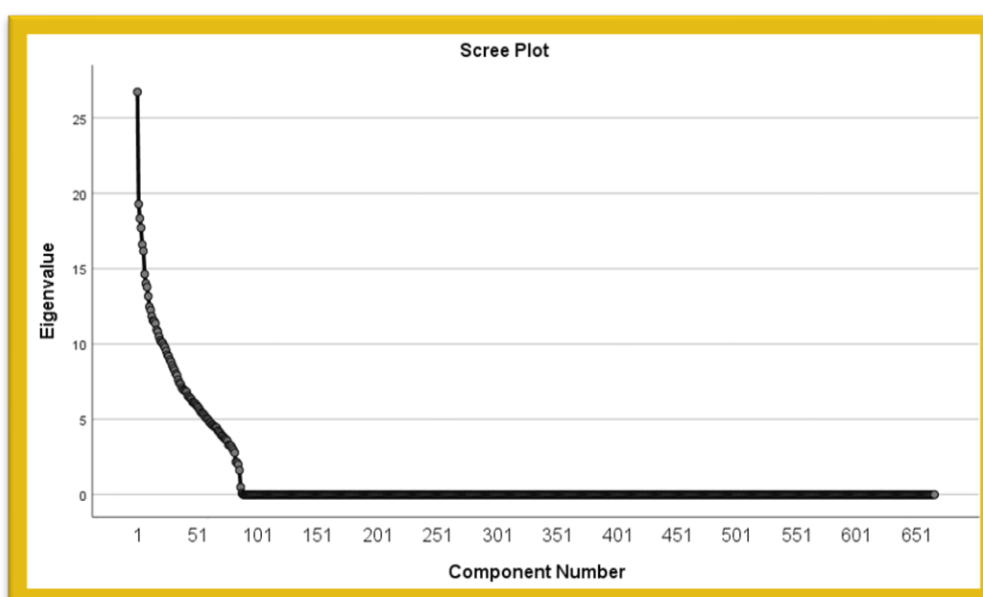
Yarnold, 1995). It is also suggested that a strong solution consisting of stable factors reduces the sample size influence (Hogarty et al., 2005).

### Additional Extraction Methods

A range of different extraction methods available in SPSS were also explored, namely: Principal axis factoring and Maximum likelihood<sup>11</sup>; unweighted least squares; generalized least squares; alpha factoring; and image factoring. For each the following issues were raised:

- Low correlation coefficients
- Correlation matrix NPD
- Total variance explained: 'Extraction cannot be done. This extraction is skipped.'
- And for Unweighted least squares in particular: 'This matrix is ill conditioned and may produce invalid results' / Communalities - 'An initial communality is less than 0 or greater than 1. This extraction cannot be performed'

**Figure 11: Scree Plot**



**Table 8: Pathway Matrix (factors: n=10, outcomes: 233)**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sports	0.986									
Parent(s) better jobs	0.969									
Cures for illnesses	0.952									
Discover more animals	0.952									
Learn about health	0.952									
Flying cars	0.952									
Parent(s) new hobbies	0.952									
Second home in different country	0.952									
Better economy	0.952									
Advances in science	0.952									
Study fashion	0.952									
Parent(s) new car	0.952									
Greener planet	0.952									
Learn languages	0.952									
Study sports	0.952									
Family travel	0.952									
Flying skateboards	0.952									
Fashion designer	0.952									
Hockey	0.952									
Parent(s) new house	0.952									
Study music	0.952									
Professional singer	0.952									
Learn about other cultures	0.857		0.389							
Earn money	0.752									
Professional dancer	0.705									
Running	0.700									
Run own business	0.572									
Go travelling	0.557									
Stay in NI	0.496									
Home ownership	0.491					0.369				
Have/Get a job	0.477									
Basketball	0.429									
Good job	0.428								0.337	
Swimming	0.389									
Decent/nice/big house	0.375								0.358	
Drive	0.344									
Do cooking/good cook	0.312									
Ranger's academy		0.788	0.446							
Mum will watch CYP's professional football matches		0.788	0.446							
Learn butterfly stroke		0.788	0.446							
Granny will visit grown CYP when they move away		0.788	0.446							
Mum will visit grown CYP when they move away		0.788	0.446							

Live in Scotland		0.788	0.446							
Spend money on children		0.788	0.446							
Be on TV		0.788	0.446							
Earn 27 million per match		0.788	0.446							
Gaming star		0.788	0.446							
Parkour		0.788	0.446							
Mum will move away with CYP		0.788	0.446							
Biking stunts		0.788	0.446							
Won't go to university		0.788	0.446							
Go swimming by self		0.709	0.459		0.448					
Have boyfriend/girlfriend		0.696	0.391							
Play in the Scottish/Premiere league (football)		0.678	0.376							
Still playing video games		0.624	0.317						0.538	
Continue to play football		0.615	0.319							
Split time abroad/elsewhere in UK		0.572	0.329							
Mastery/ best in the world/ star player (football)		0.503								
Get better at football		0.503								
Play football (job)		0.444								
Support/provide for children		0.395								
Be happy		0.337								
Enjoy friends		-0.442	0.762							
Designer (job)		-0.442	0.762							
Enjoy music		-0.442	0.762							
Learn how to handle problems		-0.442	0.762							
Successful in job		-0.442	0.762							
Have fun		-0.442	0.762							
Work in bank		-0.442	0.762							
Have different jobs		-0.442	0.762							
Keep school friends		-0.442	0.762							
Photographer (job)		-0.442	0.762							
Advances in technology		-0.442	0.762							
Enjoy family		-0.442	0.762							
Parent(s) better off		-0.442	0.762							
Achieve all my goals		-0.442	0.762							
Parent(s) more relaxed		-0.404	0.685							
Be independent	0.358	-0.316	0.484							
Enjoy job		-0.320	0.478							
More mature	0.400		0.417							
Maybe have intimate partner			0.342							
Own a caravan					0.885					
Work in day-care					0.885					

Take children on many holidays				0.885						
Have space				0.885						
Days out in summer				0.885						
Do art GCSE				0.885						
Take sibling out				0.885						
Dinner parties				0.885						
Study part time				0.885						
Have privacy				0.885						
Leave school post GCSEs				0.885						
Do day-care GCSE				0.885						
Good at job				0.832						
Go to parties				0.784						0.411
Go out for dinner				0.770	0.494					
Good parent				0.730						
Out at weekends				0.676						
Work full time				0.656						
Work with children				0.582						
Visit parents/ family			0.336	0.462						
Get married				0.450						
Family support me				0.434						
Unsure what job				0.421						
Tic Tok					0.887					
Live in Woodvale					0.887					
Own house with boyfriend					0.887					
Become a doctor, like the one who helped 'mummy'					0.887					
Become a doctor					0.887					
Mummy will do cleaning/washing					0.887					
Learning about space					0.887					
Go to ice cream shop by self					0.887					
Tell boyfriend to 'give my head peace'					0.887					
Bus home					0.887					
Become a kidney doctor					0.887					
Go on dates with boyfriend/ girlfriend					0.887					
Go to the pub/bar					0.887					
Work in City hospital					0.887					
Live with partner					0.565	0.506				
Do homework					0.560			0.353		
Go to cinema					0.480			0.333		
Have friends					0.403					
Drinking					0.383					
Will not have children					0.336	0.336				
Youth work (job)						0.881				

Sibling health/well-being better					0.866				
Community less bitter					0.843				
Close to Grandparent(s)					0.843				
Support/help my parent(s)					0.843				
See parent(s) often					0.843				
counselling (job)					0.843				
Active in community					0.843				
Have nieces/ nephews					0.843				
Community more neutral					0.843				
Murals removed					0.843				
Won't go travelling					0.843				
Financially independent					0.811				
Parents well-being/health improved		-0.320	0.443		0.705				
Make area better					0.613				
Leave Shankill					0.572				
Holiday(s)			0.300		0.522				
Stay in house/not go out					0.484				
Will not get married					0.478		0.401		
Piercings						0.833		0.300	
Good at makeup						0.833		0.300	
Learn P.E.						0.833		0.300	
Phone home						0.833		0.300	
Help out at girls' brigade						0.833		0.300	
Change eye colour						0.833		0.300	
Live with roommates						0.833		0.300	
Skype parents daily						0.833		0.300	
Stop gymnastics						0.833		0.300	
Go places alone						0.814			
Exercise						0.766			-0.313
Wear make up						0.760			
Colour hair						0.717			
Lovely nails/ nails done						0.662			
Vet (job)						0.643			
Good at art						0.524			
Youtuber (job)						0.524			
Walk dog						0.368			
Won't drink beer							0.844		
Go into town shopping							0.844		
Worried about what will be doing in future							0.844		
Won't go to bars							0.844		
Friends will visit CYP at their home							0.844		
No longer dancing							0.844		
Dancing outside of school							0.844		
Own a beauty salon							0.844		
Friends will have children							0.844		
Trampoline							0.844		

Trampoline outside of school								0.844		
Live in own house on the same street as family								0.703		
Still doing art								0.630		
Go out with friends								0.487		
Do art								0.407		0.306
Maybe/unsure have children								0.399		
Will not have boyfriend/girlfriend								0.323		
Go to make up shops									0.798	
Walk to friend's house									0.798	
Walk to KFC									0.798	
Model									0.798	
Live near granny and granda									0.798	
Go places with best friend									0.798	
Still go to toyshops									0.798	
Buy what I want									0.798	
No longer receiving educational support									0.798	
Be rich									0.764	
Have lots of/more money									0.749	
Still have best friend									0.654	
Live with cousin									0.597	
Live local									0.497	
Move to different area									0.490	
Be pretty										0.607
Won't go to tech/college										0.607
Won't move house										0.607
Take unicorn stuff down										0.607
Buy myself things										0.607
Buy family things										0.607
Stop worrying about homework										0.607
Making things										0.552
Shopping with friends										0.501
Community stays the same										0.465
Better/ specific phone										0.454
Clothes shopping										0.441
Be tall(er)										0.430
Shopping										0.415
Go to town										0.409
Clean house										0.340
Secondary (big) school										0.339
Support/look after myself										-0.334
Excited to work										
Study for GCSEs										
Be in the Olympics										

Girls/boys brigade officer										
Won't like football anymore										
Will not wear make up										
Gymnastics coach										
Not like cooking										
Like cleaning										
More siblings/cousins										
Midwife										
Girls/boys brigade										
Move to nicer area										
Do GCSEs										
Get closer to family										-0.387
Repair relationship with parent(s)										-0.387
Accountant										-0.387
Postgrad degree										-0.387
Unsure leave Ni										-0.387
Life be easier										-0.387
Get out of comfort zone										-0.387
Won't rely on family										-0.387
More confident										-0.402
<b>Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.</b>										
<b>86 components extracted.</b>										





**A special thanks to the Children and Young People who took part in the conversations.**

**Our mission is to support ALL of you on your journey towards realising your potential and shaping your future.**

**Malvern Primary school 'Crescendo' pupils after performing with Ulster Orchestra players at the Zone's TedX talk at Queen's University Belfast, May 2019**



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