



Rise Up: End of programme evaluation summary

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Rise Up – a recipe for success



Rise Up participants displaying their certificates.

m2 has identified six key ingredients that contributed to Rise Up's success:

1. Relevance and expert delivery of the training.
2. Peer support.
3. The overall package of training, reflection, and networking.
4. Effective pastoral support.
5. Strong delivery partnership and consortium.
6. The Rise Up team's ability to reflect and adapt to emerging learning.

Background



Rise Up was a three-year leadership development programme for London-based youth practitioners. Starting in September 2020, Rise Up has been a partnership between London Youth, Leap Confronting Conflict, Clore Social Leadership and Power the Fight. It is funded by London's Violence Reduction Unit (London's VRU).

The programme was set up in recognition of the fact that, whilst many frontline youth practitioners bring significant lived experience (i.e., experience of the context in which young people affected by violence live) and commitment to their roles, the work they do is not always sufficiently recognised or valued.

Rise Up aimed to build upon youth practitioners' skills, confidence, and experience to better support vulnerable young people in London.

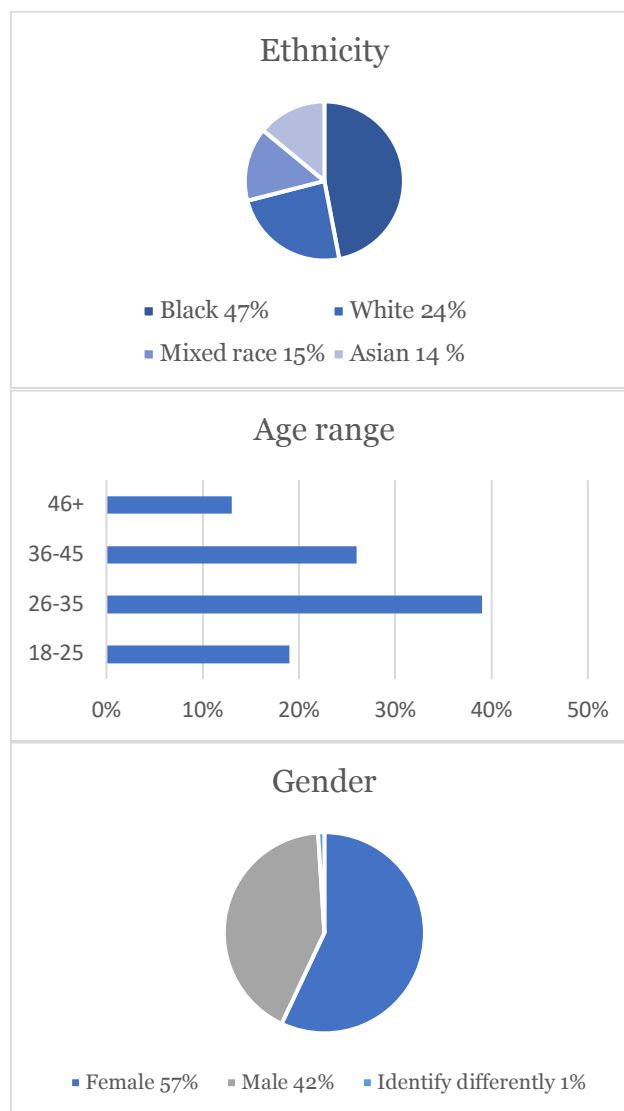
The programme was designed to develop strengthened youth work practice; more effective organisations; and a better-connected sector.

Rise Up objectives for youth practitioners

- > Deepening practice, especially in relation to addressing conflict and violence.
- > Developing a wider set of skills to use within their organisations.
- > Strengthening their understanding of the broader political and social context within the youth sector.
- > Increasing youth practitioners' networks, thereby encouraging participants to forge stronger connections with potential allies.

Demographics

268 participants have completed Rise Up since it started¹. Participants were recruited from across London, with participants' organisations located in 28 of the 32 London Boroughs.



In Years 2 and 3, 8% and 9% of participants respectively identified as having a disability.

27% of participants had 10-20 years' experience in the youth sector; whilst 25% had one to two years' experience, suggesting that Rise Up has a particular appeal to those new to youth work and to those wishing to re-refresh their skills. 15% had three to four years' experience and 17% had five to nine years.

¹ This figure includes the 22 Rise Up Lite participants in Year 3.

The majority (63%) of participants worked for voluntary organisations, followed by 21% for local authorities. Smaller numbers worked in education settings (9%) and Community Interest Companies (3%). 4% did not disclose their organisation type.

Context

Rise Up started during the Covid-19 pandemic. This necessitated a shift to online delivery for Year 1.

Covid also changed the context in which youth workers operate, with young people facing more challenging environments and organisations facing funding challenges.

Whilst this made the content more pertinent than ever, it also created time pressures for hard-pressed youth practitioners.

This was particularly the case for Year 2 participants who were undertaking the programme during post-Covid adjustments.

Rise Up content and delivery



Rise Up presented an opportunity for youth practitioners to be valued as leaders and trained by experts in their field. Each year group was divided into four cohorts of around 20 participants. Rise Up covered a wide range of practice-based issues, including working with challenging behaviours; cultural sensitivity; understanding and addressing conflict.

Sessions took place over five months and all Year 3 participants also attended a residential at the beginning of the programme.

Funding was available to smaller organisations throughout the programme in recognition that staff cover might be needed.

Participants were also able to claim financial support if needed, for example for childcare.

Rise Up also offered participants:

- Four 1-1 coaching sessions.
- Access to a mentor.
- Reflective sessions.
- Grants for developing projects².
- Access to an alumni network.

Adaptation and learning

Over the course of the programme, the Rise Up team listened to and reflected on participant feedback and emerging evaluation findings and made several adaptations in the light of youth practitioners' changing needs. These included:

- 1) An increased focus upon conflict resolution and supporting young people affected by violence (Years 2 & 3).
- 2) More time for reflection, particularly in relation to race and lived experience (Years 2 & 3).
- 3) Further engaging participants' managers in the programme (Years 2 & 3).
- 4) Assessment and taster days at which participants could learn more about the programme (Year 3).

Programme satisfaction & attendance



Participants were very satisfied with the programme. The adaptations led to increased satisfaction levels year-on-year: **96% of participants in Year 3** said that Rise Up either fully or partially met their expectations, compared to 91% in Year 1.

Breaking down the figures further, there is a marked increase in those saying that their expectations have been fully met:

² Feedback on grants was not due until after the publication of this report; we have therefore not been able to include data for the impact of the grants.

35% in Year 1, followed by 45% in Year 2; this had risen to **75% by Year 3**.

Increased satisfaction levels are likely to be linked to increased average attendance rates across the sessions which rose from 75% in Year 1 to **83% in Year 3**.

Rise Up's impact



Rise Up demonstrably succeeded in deepening youth practitioners' skills, networks, and practice. Alumni continue to put their knowledge into practice and support young people more effectively.

Participants' organisations also benefit from the knowledge they bring back to their place of work.

Participants

Across all cohorts and years, youth practitioners increased their skills, confidence, and networks due to the programme.

As with overall programme satisfaction, it is interesting to note that there are clear year-on-year increases in the percentage of participants describing a positive impact - again demonstrating the significant shift resulting from the adaptations.

Increased professional confidence

Participants from all year groups described gaining more confidence as a key outcome.

The average number agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were confident in their professional abilities was **88%** by the end of the programme. They described how this meant they were better equipped to undertake their roles, particularly the more strategic aspects:

'[It's] given me validation that it's okay for me to challenge professionals, no matter their position. I may now challenge an agency e.g., the police – I'm more confident to say it as it is.' (Year 2 participant)

'I am more confident to get on with things, rather than checking things first with others. I have gained a sense of more responsibility for the work I am doing.' (Year 2 participant)

Over three quarters of managers also noticed increased confidence in youth practitioners taking part in Rise Up.

A key element of this increase in confidence derives from feeling that their own lived experience is not only valid, but a critical part of what participants bring to their role as youth practitioners:

'I am from inner-city London; I learnt it is okay to be myself and speak as myself...and feel my own experience is relevant.' (Year 1 participant)

'I value myself a lot more; I didn't have a degree and didn't feel my experience was good enough. I have [now] realised my lived experience is even more important.' (Year 1 participant)

Participants, therefore, clearly experienced significant growth in their confidence and skills and these in turn have benefited their organisations.

Increased professional skills

Participants from all three-year groups noticed they had developed and deepened their skills and practice in relation to the young people they work with in several ways:

- Gaining practical tools.
- Listening and questioning skills.
- Greater empathy with young people.
- Becoming more self-aware and reflective.
- Building upon existing knowledge.

Feeling better equipped to reduce conflict amongst young people

At the end of Year 3, **91%** of participants felt they were well equipped to manage conflict. This is a rise of 31% from the start of the programme. All year groups commented on how understanding their own responses to conflict enabled them to work more effectively with young people:

'It's helped me handle conflict. We did role play - I realised my fight, flight, freeze response. As an adult I found myself freezing [when faced with] conflict. It shows you how you respond.' (Year 2 participant)

'I am better equipped to handle conflict - I have been able to remain calm when conflict occurs and focus on asking questions. I have been able to listen better.' (Year 1 participant)

Increased networks and relationships

By the end of Year 3, the number of participants saying they had networks they could approach for support and advice rose from 72% to **96%**. For all year groups, the peer support on offer - along with practical advice and opportunities - has been a vital aspect of the programme:

'Through Rise Up I have been able to be part of a new network of organisations in the cohort. We are sharing information on activities for young people in the local area.' (Year 1 participant)

'Rise Up has been an incredibly valuable experience for me and has allowed me to meet amazing, like-minded individuals. I have enjoyed training alongside people who work within this field and are able to share their knowledge to help me better myself.' (Year 2 participant)

For Year 3 participants, the residential enabled the networking to happen earlier on in the programme, which in turn increased trust and openness in the group:

'The residential allowed me to build a rapport with the other professionals I would be working alongside.' (Year 3 participant)

Increased sense of personal leadership

By the end of the programme, **81%** of participants across all years describe themselves as leaders, an average increase of 23% from how they perceived themselves at the start of the programme.

It was noticeable that Year 3 participants talked more openly about leadership - and felt more confident in relating Rise Up to their leadership development - than in previous years. This shows that the increased focus upon leadership, based on feedback from previous years, was effective:

'The Rise Up programme has definitely contributed to me having more confidence in taking on leadership roles.' (Year 3 participant)

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Organisations

In Years 2 and 3, there was a greater focus on linking individual participants back to their organisations and upon understanding how the learning is put into practice.

In Year 2, a Managers Network was set up and the Rise Up team held two network meetings for managers of programme participants. This was continued in Year 3 and the approach was welcomed by managers, who appreciated the chance to share experiences of how best to support the people they line-manage.

Managers can perceive a difference to their organisations as well as to the individual participants. Over **80%** of managers surveyed agreed with the statement: *'our organisation is benefiting.'*

A similar number agreed they would recommend Rise Up to other managers and said that participants had developed new skills:

'It has been positive to see her reflect on the training in supervision, and use the skills, strategies and resources in sessions with young people.' (Year 2 participant's line-manager)

Rise Up Lite

'This has been an incredible programme. I am really proud and privileged to have been a part of it. I know that it will be instrumental in shaping the work that we do with young people for many years to come.' (Rise Up Lite participant)



In Year 3, the Rise Up team trialled a different version of Rise Up. By offering a condensed version, the intention was to test the differences in benefits for participants unable to commit to the longer programme.

This approach was aimed at practitioners who work directly with young people at risk but who would not typically access this kind of training. This is because, as practitioners based in an educational institution, they would be unable to dedicate the time required for a longer-term programme.

Rise Up Lite was based at South Bank Colleges. 22 participants completed six core modules - run over six weeks - and were also offered access to alumni workshops and meetings.

17 of the 22 participants worked at the college, in a variety of roles including tutors, youth practitioners, and managers.

A key difference between Rise Up Lite and the full version of Rise Up is that participants were largely studying with colleagues. They also had opportunities to network with practitioners from external agencies.

Looking at the survey responses for Rise Up Lite, it is clear the participants valued the training. All 13 of the final survey respondents said that they had gained what they hoped from taking part. 12 out of 13 respondents found the training to be better than other programmes they had done previously:

'The trainers knew what they were talking about and were very good and diverse.' (Rise Up Lite participant)

Participants felt that they had gained knowledge. At the outset, none of the 18 survey respondents said they were 'extremely knowledgeable' about the six topics; in contrast, by the end the majority said they were, and an increased number said they were 'somewhat knowledgeable':

'It has reinforced and informed my practice further when working with young people.' (Rise Up Lite participant)

By its very nature, Rise Up Lite lacked the comprehensive depth and impact of the full programme and the abbreviated format did not allow for as much reflective practice or implementation of learning.

In addition, the wider benefits of the Rise Up programme (including increased networks and improved understanding of leadership) are less apparent in this version.

The Rise Up Lite model, however, proved an effective means of delivering core course content to participants wishing to improve their skills in working with young people.



Programme alumni

Rise Up alumni now number in the hundreds. It is clear Rise Up alumni are continuing to benefit from having participated in the programme. This can be seen both individually and within the organisations they work for:

'The programme has helped me find the skills to be able to deliver youth work to harder to reach young people. It's given me depth to my practice - thinking about contextual safeguarding has really improved my understanding of young people and how I/and my organisation plays a part of their life. It has also helped me with empowering the members of my team.' (Rise Up alumni)

Individually

Alumni credit Rise Up with their career development, with 24 out of 27 survey respondents agreeing that taking part 'positively impacted job prospects.'

They describe gaining skills and knowledge, which in turn boosted their confidence:

'It allowed me to gain a lot of knowledge through workshops with professionals and other experienced people - and gave me the opportunity to undertake different relevant training and [provided] tools which I could put into practice.' (Survey respondent)

The alumni survey responses also show increased confidence amongst them, with 20 out of 27 people agreeing or agreeing strongly with the statement: 'as a result of Rise Up, I am more confident in my leadership abilities.' Similarly, 23 people agreed or strongly agreed that: 'as a result of Rise Up, I am confident in fulfilling my professional role.'

For some, the networks developed as a result of taking part in Rise Up remain important, with 15 out of 27 agreeing or strongly agreeing that 'as a result of Rise Up, I have developed a strong peer support network.'

'The people in my cohort were a fantastic bunch; I felt so privileged to have been a part of this great team of people.' (Survey respondent)

However, 14 said they remained in contact with other alumni, with 13 saying they did not. This suggests that the breadth of the networks is likely to further diminish over time unless further concerted efforts are made to curate it.

Organisationally

Alumni also described how their deepened skills and confidence benefited their organisations. Many felt more confident raising issues about internal practice, as well as in developing implementable organisational strategies. 22 out of 27 agreed or strongly agreed that because of Rise Up they: 'contribute to internal and/or external discussions on strategic policy levels.'

They also feel that the Rise Up experience has contributed to an organisational focus upon developing strategic partnerships (18 agreeing or strongly agreeing). 24 out of 27 also believe that organisation has benefited from their participation in Rise Up.

Sectorally

Rise Up aspires to develop a more confident, diverse, and better networked London youth work sector, in which lived experience is valued, leadership is distributed, and youth practitioners can participate in strategic decisions.³

Strengthened networks and peer support amongst participants is increasingly leading to joint working, collaboration, and referrals between organisations. Participants described being better able to engage in strategic meetings.

The Youth Practitioners' Advisory Board (YPAB)⁴ is a key example of this. This was set up in 2022 to ensure frontline youth practitioner experience influences London VRU's work. 10 youth practitioners from Rise Up and other London Youth networks sit on the YPAB.

³ Without a baseline of the profile of London Youth practitioners it is difficult to know whether Rise Up increased sector diversity; it is likely, however, that by supporting people with lived experience of communities affected by violence to develop their skills, in the longer-term sector leadership will become more diverse.

⁴ <https://londonyouth.org/what-we-do/rise-up-youth-practitioners-leadership-programme/youth-practitioner-advisory-board>

Challenges



There were, of course, a number of challenges in setting up and delivering Rise Up. Many of these arose early in the programme and, as noted, have been addressed through the ongoing adaptations made to Rise Up.

One ongoing challenge has been around ensuring that people with different levels of skills, interests and organisational background all find the programme relevant.

Similarly, getting the balance between training, reflection and work-based practice that suits all participants has not always been easy.

These issues have largely been addressed by the introduction of the assessment and taster days, and by clarifying the programme content with participants.

Those participants that engaged with the coaching largely found it useful; 25% of participants, however, did not take up the offer. This was, in part, because they did not fully appreciate the added value it could bring. In addition, some participants said the communication from coaches needed to be improved.

Overall, team capacity was perhaps the biggest challenge. Both the pastoral and administrative elements were particularly time-consuming, made worse by Covid. The London Youth team was small, and this was a significant and ambitious programme for it to deliver.

Team capacity was increased in Year 2 with the addition of a Programme support officer. In Year 3, however, it was not possible to operate at full staff capacity due to a key member of staff leaving and the challenge of recruiting new staff with a limited contractual period.

Reflections



In thinking about any future iteration of Rise Up, [m2](#) makes the following recommendations:

- The alumni are numerous and impressive. A large proportion remain in touch with one another, and attend Rise Up events. Continuing to nurture this group (*and future potential alumni*) will also be an important aspect of the sector-strengthening aspirations of the programme.
- Programmes of this nature are admin hungry; ensuring there is enough team capacity from the outset is critical.
- Skills development, the opportunity to reflect, and networking with peers are all vital aspects of Rise Up. Making explicit how each programme element contributes to these would be a helpful means of signposting programme aspirations and content to participants.
- Similarly, emphasising how leadership is woven throughout the programme, and making sure that participants have different models and definitions of leadership to reflect upon at the start, would further enhance this aspect of the programme.
- Finding further opportunities for them to participate in strategic policy meetings would benefit the broader sector.
- Given the relatively low uptake of coaching, an option might be to offer a group coaching session on one or more cross-cutting issues.



Alumni case study

Spiral

Luis and Dimitri work for Spiral, a youth organisation based in Brixton, south London. They have both participated in the Rise Up programme (Luis in Year 1 and Dimitri in Year 3) and credit the programme with developing their skills and ability to work effectively with young people.

Luis credits Rise Up with his ability to take up more responsibility at Spiral: *‘[Rise Up] meant I was picking up new skills, getting more knowledge and experience, and developing new tools [...] Now, I’m in meetings with senior management, I project manage, I’m coordinating, and I’m managing some young people.’*

Dimitri described how he has improved his ability to empower young people to voice their thoughts during sessions: *‘From the first session that we did, they enjoyed the fact they were able to talk. Even little things like that are very good at keeping energy in the room and making sure everyone’s getting the most out of it.’*

This upskilling has also been noticed by young people - and their carers. A parent of a young person at Spiral shared: *‘Last year at college my daughter got a Double Distinction in Art and Design. This year she has started making patterns and upcycling her clothes. I really liked the way you worked with her.’*

This young person also provided feedback: *‘I just wanted to say that you helped me more than anyone and inspired me so much to do fashion properly as a career - thank you so much for everything.’*

Ben (a director and co-founder of Spiral) said that, alongside the benefits to young people, there have also been clear organisational benefits. For example, after completing the programme, Rise Up alumni at Spiral implemented learnings gained from the programme and changed organisation terminology from ‘special educational needs’ to ‘additional educational needs’, ensuring the language is empowering and communicates inclusivity clearly. He said: *‘The impact of Rise Up is clear - it definitely works.’*



Evaluation methodology

m2 consultants was appointed as the learning partner to Rise Up in 2020. This paper is a summary of the evaluation conducted by m2. It brings together data from:

- > Interviews with participants and alumni over the three years.
- > Focus groups with Years 2 & 3 managers.
- > Ongoing conversations with the Rise Up partners and team.
- > Baseline (150 responses) and final (180 responses) surveys completed by participants for all three years.
- > A survey with managers of Rise Up participants (24 responses).
- > A survey to Year 1 and 2 alumni at the end of Year 3 (27 responses).
- > Two case studies, including alumni interviews.
- > Monitoring data and surveys collected by the Rise Up team⁵.



Embracing the fun at the Rise Up celebration awards!



⁵ The full methodology is available on request from m2 (www.m2consultants.uk)