



SKILLS. CONFIDENCE. RESILIENCE.

A year in review - 2024/25
thekeyuk.org



www.thekeyuk.org

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THE KEY - A YEAR IN REVIEW

Empowering young people in the North East

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO, REBECCA MAW

Welcome to The Key's annual impact report for the financial year 2024/25.

This year, the need for opportunities such as our KEY+ Challenge has been more evident than ever. With over a third of young people in the North East living in poverty, and the gap between those facing challenging circumstances continuing to widen, our work remains vital. KEY+ empowers young people to use their voices, gain new experiences, and take an active role in their communities, while practically building the skills, confidence and resilience they need to thrive.

In 2024/25, we worked with both long-standing and new facilitators and partners to reach the young people who needed KEY+ the most. More young people than ever stepped up to lead their own projects and activities, making a real impact in their communities.

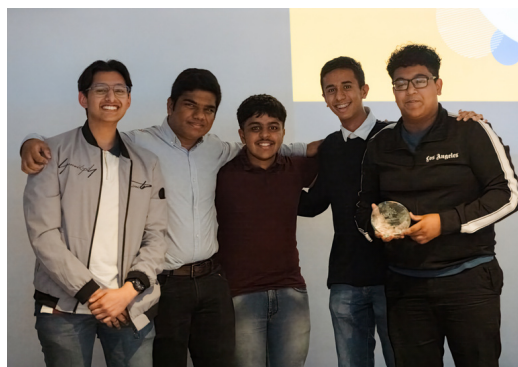
The KEY+ Challenge also played a key role in helping young people make successful, settled transitions in education and adult life, with its versatility supporting young people both at the beginning and end of their secondary school journey. The Key and Children North East even picked up an award for our KEY+ Transitions partnership. This approach spoke directly to the emerging local and national priorities for young people.

All of these achievements took place against the backdrop of common challenges facing the youth sector. It has been a rewarding year for The Key's team and Board of Trustees. We are proud to have worked with so many partners, volunteers and funders who have joined us in our mission. Thank you for your continued support.



REBECCA MAW, CEO

A YEAR IN PHOTOS



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WHO WE ARE

The Key empowers young people across the North East of England, particularly those growing up in poverty and those facing challenging personal circumstances. We want a future where all young people believe in themselves, unlock their potential, and lead connected and fulfilling lives.

We work in collaboration to provide young people with meaningful and impactful opportunities to develop skills, build confidence, and grow resilience. Through our proven approach, the KEY+ Challenge, young people shape their own futures. It empowers young people to:



THE KEY+ CHALLENGE

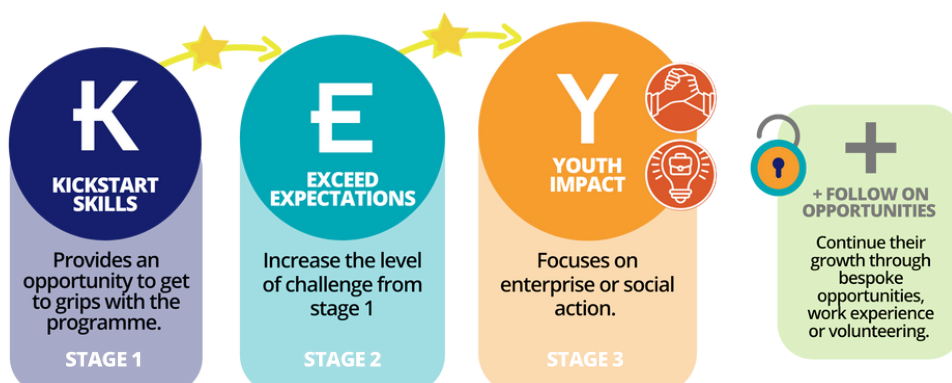
The KEY+ Challenge is rooted in self-determination theory, which highlights the importance of nurturing three core psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are met, young people develop a growth mindset, improve their wellbeing, and gain the confidence to pursue opportunities. It empowers them to unlock their potential and build connected and fulfilling futures.

Our approach starts with what young people want to do. It recognises their current capabilities and supports them to build upon these as they use their voices and ideas to deliver projects that interest them. This hands-on approach develops essential skills, confidence, purpose, and friendships while allowing young people to gain new experiences.

Together in small groups (and supported by a KEY+ Facilitator), young people:

1. **Think** of a project or activity
2. **Plan** what is needed for that project, including a budget
3. **Pitch** their project to a panel of volunteers
4. **Do** their project if given the go ahead by the panel
5. **Review** and reflect on their project, learning, and development.

Young people complete this process up to three times, each time planning more progressively challenging projects with greater personal development. At Stage 3, young people must explore enterprise or tackle a social issue with their KEY+ project.



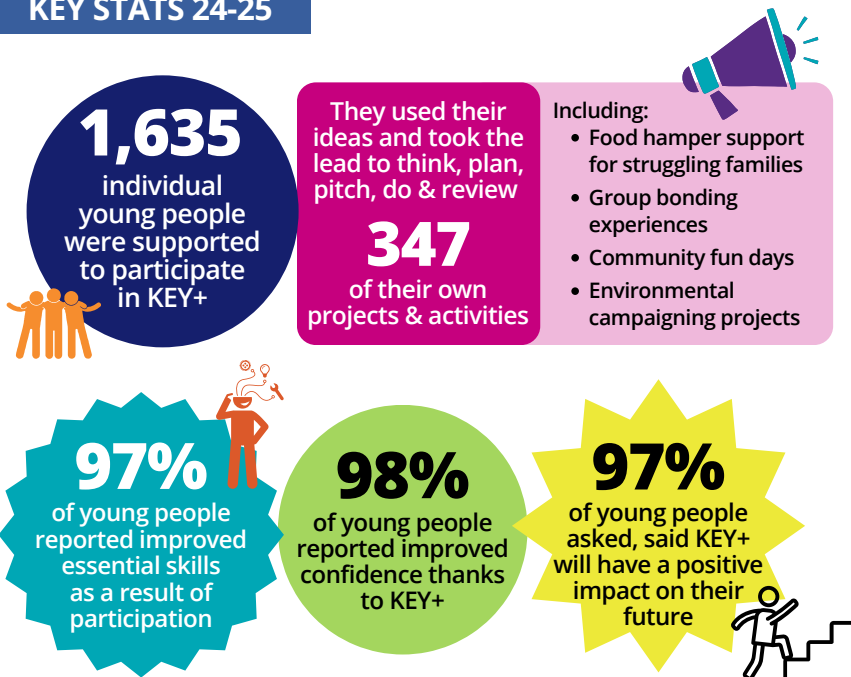
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A 2024-25 SNAPSHOT

We empowered more young people to take on the KEY+ Challenge and exceeded pre-pandemic levels of activity. We built on solid foundation from the year prior, undertook some great learning and were proud to have delivered real impact for young people with our partners.

KEY STATS 24-25



KEY YOUNG PEOPLE QUOTES

"KEY+ helped me have the confidence to believe in myself and not dim my personality to suit other people."
- Deborah, KEY+ Completer

"It has pushed me out my comfort zone and made me improve in lots of different ways and given me opportunities that I could never imagine."
- Nicola, KEY+ completer

"I am more confident and don't feel scared to stand up and talk anymore."
- Emily, KEY+ completer

"I've learnt I am more capable than I give myself credit for."
- Gary, KEY+ completer

"KEY+ has helped me with my responsibilities and me as a person. I can take more stress now and I have more energy and motivation to do work."
- Rhys, KEY+ completer

"Before doing this project, I wasn't a very positive person and didn't have anything to aim for. By doing this project, it has given me a focus and the feeling of achieving something."
- Teoni, KEY+ completer

KEY STORIES

1. 31 King NUF: A group of NEET young people took on KEY+ to build skills for their future and in doing so, delivered a transformative project to rejuvenate a local community garden. From painting sheds and repairing benches to tackling general maintenance, the group enhanced the space for others while developing essential skills. Through this hands-on experience, they strengthened their problem-solving, budgeting, and communication skills. [Read their journey.](#)

2. Care and Cup's Society took on the KEY+ Challenge to organise a pop-up café at the Little Sisters of the Poor residential home, fostering intergenerational connection and reducing loneliness among elderly residents. The project not only brought joy to the residents but also left a lasting impact on the young people. [See what they did here.](#)

3. The Cream Egg Key Voices organised an environmentally themed community event aimed at promoting recycling and sustainability. The event featured refreshments, goody bags, a clothes swap, and a pledge wall, all designed to encourage eco-friendly practices. Along the way, they built skills and confidence and experienced the full impact that KEY+ delivers. [Check it out here.](#)

4. Roots were moved by the issue of men's mental health and wanted to raise awareness of support and suicide prevention. Despite facing challenges like poor weather and lower-than-expected attendance, they successfully got their community together and organised a charity football match. Roots nurtured their problem solving, enterprising and communication skills throughout and were delighted to raise a whopping £600! [Read about it here.](#)

5. You Can't 6 With Us responded to the challenges of remote learning and RAAC-related disruptions by organising a whole-school celebration on the last day of term. Their event, featuring activities like a roller disco and a big draw, brought together 700 pupils to mark the return to normality. [See how they found the experience here.](#)

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KEY MILESTONES

1. The KEY+ Challenge: In 2024/25, we built on the strong foundations of KEY+ and returned to pre-pandemic levels of engagement. This year, over 1,635 young people took part in the KEY+ Challenge, a 64% increase on the previous year. This growth reflects the continued demand for meaningful opportunities and the strength of our delivery partnerships.

2. Expanding funded collaboration: We continued to deliver our three-part funding model which supports young people's project ideas, partner delivery costs, and support for The Key. In a difficult funding landscape, this approach diversifies The Key's income while providing much needed support to partners. It remains highly valued and ongoing feedback affirms its importance in enabling meaningful youth-led activity.

3. Strengthening our youth voice offer: We launched our Youth Advisory Board opportunity at the back end of the year which means we'll have an established our Youth Advisory Board to guide us through 25-26 and beyond. This is something we have battled with to ensure we harness the power of youth voice in a way that is both meaningful and impactful for young people.

4. Piloting Skills Builder: After identifying Skills Builder as an alternative for measuring impact in 2023/24, we were excited to pilot the framework with 249 young people and 6 delivery partners this year. We've since gathered feedback from the pilot, which will guide our next steps in shaping how we measure skills in 2025/26.

5. Launch of KEY+ Workbooks: In response to valuable feedback from facilitators and young people, we were proud to develop and launch the KEY+ Workbooks. These new resources are designed to support young people as they progress through their KEY+ journey, providing structure, guidance, and space for reflection along the way.



KEY LEARNING

1. Sustained demand for funded KEY+ delivery: There remains a strong appetite and clear need for funded KEY+ delivery, as shown through our successful NCS partnership. This initiative unlocked 3,700 additional hours of quality youth work, invested £32,280 directly into young people's hands to tackle the issues that matter to them, and secured £147,500 for partners to deliver face-to-face youth work. In a challenging funding climate, this model has proven both effective and valued by our partners and The Key. We must continue to harness and expand this approach to secure sustained investment in youth-led opportunities.

2. Opportunities to strengthen impact measurement and messaging: While The Key has long prioritised measuring and communicating our impact, this year highlighted further potential. We recognised the need to better demonstrate the longer-term value of KEY+, specifically focussed around helping young people understand and communicate how it supports their growth and future pathways.

3. Elevating the + in KEY+: Following the KEY+ Changemakers initiative, we reviewed and gathered feedback from young people about what they want next from KEY+. Their message was clear that they want follow-on opportunities and value the opportunity to connect with others from across the region. In response, we will pilot a new project in 2025/26 that offers a step-up challenge where young people collaborate to tackle social issues in their communities alongside new young people.

4. Shaping our future: In preparation for launching our new three-year strategy, we carried out in-depth consultation with KEY+ Partners, Facilitators, young people, influencers, youth networks, and funders. The insights gathered were invaluable, highlighting key learning that has directly informed the priorities and direction of our new strategy for 2025-2028.

WHAT NEXT?

2025/26 provides The Key with clear direction and some real opportunities with our new three year strategy in place. It focusses on three strategic priorities of Reach, Quality and Impact. [Read it here.](#)

By ensuring we **reach** those who need us most, we are breaking down barriers to social mobility, providing opportunities to young people growing up in poverty, and ensuring that no one is left behind. Through our commitment to **quality**, we are creating meaningful, engaging experiences that support young people's personal growth, enhance their mental wellbeing, and equip them with the skills needed for the future. And by driving **impact**, we are delivering real, measurable outcomes, ensuring young people are empowered to build their skills, confidence and resilience.

We're excited about what's ahead and we can't wait to work with our partners, funders, supporters, and, most importantly, young people to make it happen.

Stay up to date with our progress by visiting us at thekeyuk.org.