



ASCEND.co.uk
Start an evolution



The Right Track Project: An Evaluation

Introduction





Oasis
FIRE
ASSEMBLY
POINT



Oasis

Oasis Children's Venture is a charity that runs three different and unique facilities for children and young people in Stockwell, London. Oasis is about play, freely chosen activities that are challenging and fun.

Oasis runs a Children's Nature Garden, a Karting Project and an Adventure Playground. All projects are open access and available for local children to attend after school, on Saturdays and during the school holidays. Specialist activity sessions are also provided for schools, youth groups, private groups and other agencies.

Each of the three projects has a team of experienced play and youth workers who ensure that all children and young people are able to make the most of the amazing opportunities and experiences available on each site.

Oasis is managed by a voluntary management committee and funded by the London Borough of Lambeth, The Big Lottery, BBC Children in Need, The Walcot Foundation and Comic Relief.

A5cend

A5cend supports charities, small businesses and the public sector to raise their professionalism through creative tailored solutions. As an ethical company combining public and voluntary sector knowledge with design and marketing skills, we offer a unique service that is flexible to differing organisational needs. We support agencies in a variety of ways: fundraising, crisis solution and support, business planning, evaluation and monitoring, branding and design.





Contents

Executive Summary	5
Recommendations	5
Acknowledgements	5
Introduction and Methodology	6
Outcome 1: Safer Life Choices	7
Outcome 2: Improved Relationships and Self-esteem	15
Outcome 3: increased Knowledge and Skills	23
Key Achievements and Learning	31
Areas for Development	35

Executive summary

Safer life paths. Better relationships. New skills. These were the outcomes agreed with BBC Children in Need at the outset of the Right Track Project, and they have been comprehensively met.

Young people from Stockwell, South London live in an area of high deprivation. The mean streets call: for example, of the Right Track users polled in December 2014, nearly half had been in contact with gangs and around one in nine felt unsafe travelling around their neighbourhood as a result of territorialism. However, the project has lived up to its billing by encouraging hundreds of users to get on the right track to training, education and employment: more than four-fifths of respondents agreed that project activities had kept them safe from the false friendship of gang life.

As this evaluation shows, Right Track has given young users the tools to make better life choices, forge healthier relationships and acquire new skills thanks to greater self-esteem, heightened emotional intelligence and improved mental and physical wellbeing. It has boosted participants' communication, conflict resolution and leadership skills. It has promoted teamwork and created a feeling of family and safety for users and their parents. Its mentoring provision has proved incredibly popular, inspiring users themselves to take up the mantle. At-risk children have become role models for their peers, thriving on the responsibility they have been given. Right Track has offered participants practical skills, evidence of their attainment and pathways to work. It has evolved organically in relation to need. And it has inspired hundreds of young volunteers to "take ownership of what they have learned".

Of course, no project is perfect: parts of Right Track went off-plan in response to staff observation, user preference and the limitations of what had been marked out: it is to the credit of Oasis staff and the users themselves that their flexible responses cleared all such hurdles. Evaluation has identified a 10-point checklist for Oasis' consideration that would fill gaps in current provision, answer user feedback, build on existing strengths and respond to weaknesses.

Recommendations

1. Increase mentor capacity at Right Track to meet higher-than-expected demand
2. Provide more time and resources to enable staff and users to reflect on mentoring gains
3. Provide mentors of both genders to meet need
4. Increase peer mentor numbers
5. Establish a Life Skills Lead to build on Right Track's strong record in this area
6. Develop more training workshops, become an AQA hub, work experience opportunities in partnership with local businesses and other organisations
7. Establish a Youth Forum to facilitate users' desire to speak for themselves, their peers and their community
8. Raise additional funding to provide more trips and residential
9. Hire a specific support worker for users with disabilities
10. Additional Inclusive Karting session to increase capacity for all users.

Acknowledgements

The trustees and staff at Oasis Children's Venture would like to thank our dedicated staff team for their efforts in compiling so much of the information that made this research possible.

Special thanks to our committed and talented project practitioners for all their efforts in answering questions and reporting on their involvement in the Right Track Project, in particular:

Jean Pierre Moore, Project Manager
Mark Fearon, Right Track Mentor

Additional thanks to all those track volunteers who took the time to answer questions, reflect on their experiences and make suggestions about the improvements we could make.

We would also like to thank the following for their valuable contributions:
Our special thanks also to BBC Children in Need, which financed the project, and Comic Relief.

Introduction and methodology

Oasis received funding from BBC Children in Need in early 2012 for the Right Track Project, an intervention aimed at disadvantaged young people and those involved in or at risk of becoming involved in gang activity.

Gang affiliation, violence and crime are common in Stockwell and Lambeth, and directly affect young people, who often face the challenge of passing through territories claimed by different gangs when they travel across the borough. This can inhibit access to a range of opportunities including services, education and employment, affecting long-term aspirations, educational attainment and general wellbeing. A full independent evaluation of the service carried out in 2012 found that go karting does attract young people at risk of offending and that Oasis staff and volunteers are in a unique position to work with local young people, as they understand the problems they face and are able to mobilise community support (parents and local professionals) to help tackle them. The evaluation pointed to the potential for a sensitive and coordinated intervention offered in combination with go karting activities.

The Right Track Project was formulated in response to the evaluation's recommendation. Its objective was to provide 120 vulnerable young people with volunteering opportunities three times a week over three years, including: driving, training and experience as track marshals; mechanics training; plus signposting and information around health, crime, substance misuse, careers and life skills. The training would be delivered by key professionals with the involvement of the young people themselves. Fifteen service users a year were to be provided with up to 24 hours of one-to-one guidance from a Right Track Mentor, with 10 young people experiencing difficulties offered two family mediation sessions a year. Volunteers would be provided monthly off-site visits to larger racing tracks and additional sporting activities on Oasis sites. The project commenced in August 2012.

Oasis Children's Venture regards evaluation as a cornerstone of sustainability: programmes are evaluated to help develop services and learning in response to local needs. A5cend Ltd was engaged in 2014 to gather and analyse data, then provide an independent evaluation report including key findings and recommendations for future work along similar lines. The following outcomes plus associated outputs were agreed with BBC Children in Need:

1. Young people will make safer life choices
2. Improved social relationships and increased self-esteem
3. Increased knowledge and skills of young people

This report evaluates how effectively the Right Track Project met these outcomes and its initial aims and objectives, in line with BBC Children in Need requirements. It draws on the following data collected by Oasis personnel and A5cend between 2013 and 2015:

- o Interview with Project Manager and Right Track Mentor, December 2014
- o Interview with parent, November 2014
- o Interview with volunteer marshal, November 2014
- o Interviews with Early Intervention Youth Adviser and Family Support Worker, Children and Young People's Services, London Borough of Lambeth, January 2015
- o Short interviews with young people (eight volunteers), November 2014
- o Questionnaire with regular volunteers (22 respondents), December 2014
- o Gang affiliation questionnaires (22 respondents aged 12-17), December 2014
- o Staff observation sheet samples (three observations), January 2015
- o Samples of family incident log sheets, 2013-14
- o Outcome stars filled in by young users (12 showing progression), 2013-14
- o Feedback from young people about residential trips, January 2015
- o Case studies written by Oasis exploring outcomes for young people, 2013-15
- o Mentoring attendance log sheet, 2014
- o Sample of initial volunteer interview sheets (15)
- o Year 1 and Year 2 monitoring forms for BBC Children in Need
- o Project briefing on changes to family mediation, July 2014
- o Progress report on mentoring, July 2014

Outcome 1:

Safer Life Choices





Exploring Right Track's impact

"It's a very good project: it's flexible, open regularly, it's really cheap and the volunteering opportunities and mentoring are great. It's well run from what I've seen, the young people like it - it gives them a place to go and something to do" Early Intervention Youth Adviser, Early Intervention and Targeted Services Communities, Housing and Environment Delivery Cluster, London Borough of Lambeth, 2015

Outcome 1: safer life choices

The go karting track provides a positive atmosphere and a safe space

- o In a December 2014 questionnaire, 100% of 22 regular young volunteers agreed that the karting track is a positive place to be.

"A good environment – it's fun, safe and enjoyable" Volunteer, 16, 2014

Right Track is inundated with service users, with hundreds of local young people passing through its gates every year. Free three-hour karting sessions have been run on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays for 50 weeks a year throughout Right Track's three-year life: in addition, Wednesday sessions were run for 20 weeks in Year 1 and Tuesday sessions were offered for 35 weeks in Year 2. Insert Y3 data here.

"Oasis is a safe place to learn new things. A lot of people can come and join – it's free for everyone" Volunteer, 12, 2014

Table 1: Right Track go karting attendance, Y1-Y3:

	Y1	Y2	Y3 (Estimated)
Total attendance	393	443	480 (Est)
Regular attendees (more than three times/month)	53	63	73 (Est)
Attendees aged 5-9	229	247	260 (Est)
Attendees aged 10-15	147	169	180 (Est)
Attendees aged 16-18	20	20	29 (Est)
Attendees aged 19+	2	7	11 (Est)

The project was described by participants and staff alike as providing a positive atmosphere and an engaging, enjoyable and safe context for young people in Stockwell, an area characterised as having a particularly high crime rate, with a third of its children living in poverty (State of the Borough Report, 2014).

"There's nothing like that around here. You have to grab a chance when you can around here!" Parent, 2014 interview

Reduced risk of involvement in gangs and negative behaviour

The Oasis Right Track gang affiliation questionnaire, filled in by 22 regular volunteers aged 12-17 in December 2014, indicated that:

- o Some 45% had had contact with local gangs in the previous 12 months; 55% knew someone in a gang; 45% knew someone who had been victim of the gangs in their area; and 14% felt unsafe travelling through different postcodes in their area.
- o Some 82% agreed that Oasis' activities had helped keep them away from the dangers of local gangs (and none of the remaining 18% were in a gang or at risk of joining one).

In one example, a young male user's gang affiliation ended with his involvement with the karting project, which he acknowledged had kept him out of trouble. Another volunteer who had quit the gang life as a result of Right Track echoed these points:

"I feel it gives me something to do and when you have something to do, you're less likely to hang around on the streets and find certain bad influences; the karting project has good influences"

Research with young users and staff consistently has shown that wherever risk was perceived in terms of gang involvement, volunteering at Right Track reduced it. Staying out of trouble/gangs was highlighted by some users in December 2014 as what they enjoyed most about the sessions, and staff observed a consistent decrease in the level of young people's gang-related activity during their involvement as volunteers. In some cases, the Project Manager and/or Mentor have intervened directly when young volunteers have come under pressure to join local gangs. This intervention can involve personal mentoring and support, as well as working with parents and other family members to devise practical solutions.

While at the karting track, users are clearly neither bored nor hanging about on the street, factors that many young people have identified as potentially leading to gang involvement and other negative/risky behaviour.

"It's different to your life and it keeps you off the streets...[helping avoid] a gang near here, definitely, or boredom. It has helped me with mechanics and now I'm doing it at college"

Volunteer, 17, 2014

"I come here and drive – it keeps me off the streets" Volunteer, 16, 2014

"It helps you keep out of trouble" Volunteer, 16, 2014

"Instead of being on the estate I am at go karting" Volunteer, 15, 2014

"It keeps me off the street, being involved in something positive" Volunteer, 14, 2014

Case study 1

Right Track occupies a lot of S's time. Aged 16, her life outside the track includes gang affiliation: but volunteering has provided her the opportunity to develop people and youth work skills, with the support and help of staff. S has made solid steps towards her personal goals of improving her diet and eating habits, learning more about her local community and gaining experience of working with young people. From not knowing what she wanted to do for a career, she now knows she would like to go into youth work or teaching, and has acknowledged that having the opportunity to organise sessions has helped develop her skills and confidence. S feels ownership over Right Track thanks to her input into project decisions. She also recalled helping defuse possible conflict between two overlapping groups as a result of her volunteering.



Case study 2

A, aged 13, was brought to the project by his mother, who was concerned about his challenging behaviour and the growing risk of him joining a gang. A's passion for driving meant he attended every session, which improved his behaviour and (more slowly) his driving. Following an increase in intimidation levels by the local gang, a one-to-one chat confirmed that A felt happier spending his time volunteering at the track rather than joining the gang. The Right Track Manager subsequently intervened with one of the gang members, leading to an agreement to leave A alone. Through conversations with A's family, his behaviour at school was linked to his access to the track, a tactic that has yielded great results

"A requires firmness and sensitivity, and he responds to both when applied correctly. He has gone on to become a Chief Marshal and now considers himself knowledgeable about the kart track and kart mechanics. He has not been approached by any more gang members on his estate and now his little brother and cousin are attending the project as well. He may be extremely challenging to most people, but our place would be a lot less colourful without him" Project Manager, 2014

Some young people with histories of violence and anti-social actions clearly "brought into the culture of expectations of a Right Track marshal/volunteer" (staff observation, 2015) and changed their habits. Right Track's volunteering, sense of community, safe space, fun times and new friendships have helped users to shift negative behaviour patterns.

***"When I invited two friends to the track, their attitude and behaviour changed. They loved the streets too much before, but to be honest I've not heard bad words on their name since then because they got involved here. They're volunteers now"* Young volunteer, 17, 2014 interview**

Case study 3

L was referred to Right Track by Wandsworth Social Services in February 2013 thanks to his interest in go karting: he was 15 at the time. He was experiencing problems with his foster family and was embarrassed about his poor literacy. There was plenty of gang activity in his local area and persistent requests for him to join. L's personal goals included making "five friends who are positive and not in any gangs" and learning about mechanics. Having attended Right Track three times a week for four months, rarely missing a session, L quickly became a well-liked and popular member of the team of 20-odd regular volunteers. He achieved an AQA in Youth Leadership for his participation in a six-week course facilitated on-site, with additional support for his literacy requirements. He has now begun an AQA in motor mechanics. L is rightly proud of himself and his confidence is growing thanks to his experiences at Right Track.

"From the onset, Oasis have been nothing short of amazing in their interaction with me and outcomes for my young person. He started as a self-conscious young person lacking self-confidence, a positive social circle or positive activity in his life, and has gained all of these at the Oasis project. The outcome at his foster home has been so positive that my input has now finished. His carer has stated that he is calmer, more relaxed and talkative; with him 'working' they have more commonality. His perspective on life has changed and his aspirations have risen, always an issue for looked-after children. I will definitely be sending more young people to the Right Track project" Charles Sackey, Senior Placement Support Worker, Wandsworth Social Services, 2013

Mentoring helps foster positive life paths

To date, more than 60 young volunteers have been provided with one-to-one mentoring sessions, exceeding the project output set with BBC Children in Need (45 young people):

"Before I came, young people simply came to hang out rather than self-development. Now they all have some kind of path to the future. My role enables the necessary one-to-one time"

Mentor, 2014

In the mentoring sessions, young people set positive personal goals and then receive the support they need from Right Track mentors to work towards their aspirations. Some come for one-off sessions (eg, help with their CV), whereas others come every few weeks, depending on their action plans. Currently there are around 22 regulars. Action plans are based firmly on the experience participants want.

Rapport between mentor and mentee is developed informally: there is an expectation that mentors will get to know young people by engaging with them during karting sessions and gaining their trust by building a positive two-way relationship over time. This approach is clearly effective, as evidenced by the way users trust mentors enough to be comfortable talking to them about a myriad of personal issues and working with them to generate positive solutions.

Table 2: Right Track users mentored during the project

	Y1	Y2	Y3
Individuals mentored	21	60	80 (Est)
Mentoring sessions delivered	21	83	150 (Est)
Numbers receiving regular mentoring	0	22	30 (est)



Case study 4

RG, aged 15, came to Right Track with a history of offending and no idea of what he wanted to do or how to better his circumstances. He did, however, acknowledge a serious anger management problem that affected his family and those he cared about as much as himself. He agreed to attend karting sessions, then began one-to-one mentoring sessions in which he was supported to identify and explore the source of his anger and the patterns of his previous offending. After a number of sessions, he was able to identify the need for progression in his personal life, plus areas of interest he could pursue as a potential career. Right Track became an ideal place for him to practise self-control in a non-judgmental and safe environment, free from previous negative influences. RG developed a fundamentally positive outlook on life. He was also referred to construction skills training and further workplace experience, which hopefully will map a path to employment in a field he enjoys.

Managing conflict without violence

Research with young people in December 2014 found that many had made positive choices during their time at Right Track to solve problems without recourse to violence. They described controlling their anger better and calming down where needed. Such personal development is encouraged during volunteer team meetings, one-to-one mentoring and occasional training sessions for volunteers in conflict management.

"With help from the mentors I have learned to control my anger" Volunteer, 17, 2014

"When I saw my friend fighting I pulled him away and told him to stop" Volunteer, 16, 2014

Stopping or walking away from fights was highlighted most frequently as a positive choice that helped improve negative situations.

"I was having an argument. I decided to walk away" Volunteer, 13, 2014 survey

"Walking away from a fight and when people get rude" Volunteer, 13, 2014 survey

"When I was walking home once late with my friends past some boys, they wanted to start beef so we just left it" Volunteer, 13, 2014 survey



Improved personal health and wellbeing

- o Some 86% of the young people surveyed in December 2014 feel happier as a result of coming to Right Track.

Some project participants set personal goals concerning fitness, health, strength and healthy eating during their time as volunteers. Others focused on improving their mood or gaining greater control over their emotions. For some, improving their attitude, communication skills and relationships was defined as the key to their general wellbeing, too. Analysis of outcome star charts shows that attending Right Track leads to young people moving towards their goals.

Case study 5

In 2013, staff requested a meeting with the mother of K, a project user, to discuss K's severe epilepsy, which can pose significant health risks: her mother identified the risk of K being taken advantage of financially (she receives DLA) by certain friends outside the kart track and requested that staff discuss K's choice of friends with her. They then discussed the potential risks relating to K's health and devised a plan to facilitate her volunteering while minimising them. Staff encouraged K to spend time socialising at the kart track: she agreed that her current associates were taking her money and on that basis could not be considered good friends. She has since become a popular lead volunteer at Right Track and has also begun providing play support to younger children at another Oasis site. K and her mother regularly discuss and review her health and level of vulnerability.

Referrals to other support services

Right Track acts as a bridge to support for vulnerable young people: for example, project staff have made referrals to Lambeth and Wandsworth Social Services when safeguarding concerns have been raised (two cases each in Y1 and Y2) and played a key role in supporting young people through times of crisis.



Outcome 2:

Improved Relationships & Self-Este





Outcome 2: improved relationships and self-esteem

A family atmosphere: everyone is included

"When it comes to our project, we are all family" Volunteer, 17

"A sense of ownership and strong feeling of family preside over our project, projected outwardly by our young people" Project Manager, 2013

Research with participants in December 2014 repeatedly underlined the importance of Right Track's family atmosphere (making new friends was the second most popular aspect). Some 91% of young people surveyed described feeling part of a community at Right Track; 95% described having made new friends. Asked about Right Track's positive influence, volunteers aged 12-17 said:

"It's a place where you can come to relax. It's like a second family"

"You gain many kind friends. It's a great way to get out of the house and participate"

"It is so sick – you make loads of friends and you can have your own kart"

"It's a nice place that can help you out with your problems and also teaches you new skills"

The project's mentoring clearly builds genuine rapport and trust between adults and young people. This is established informally: mentors initially get to know users by socialising with them during sessions, gaining their trust by building up positive relationships over time.

Asked whether Oasis Right Track staff meet their needs, user responses were very positive and included:

"Yes I do – whenever you need help they are always there for you"

"The staff are very helpful – you can ask them anything"

As a result of highly inclusive teamwork, coupled with mentoring support, many users' emotional intelligence has grown through volunteering at Right Track. Young people with challenging behaviour are as accepted as those without in the project "family". In this way, participants become familiar with one another's vulnerabilities and take pride in acting constructively to solve interpersonal problems. They learn not to take other people's behaviour personally and react defensively, creating the conditions for healthier relationships and relationship patterns over time.

For example, one volunteer, M, aged 16, aimed to develop the confidence to speak in front of groups and worked on not holding grudges but rather communicating with others to resolve problems. Over 18 months, M identified the great steps he had taken towards both goals before achieving the latter target. In December 2014, he discussed his developing maturity as a volunteer:

"An argument was going on between two users. And one of them tried to involve me to embarrass the other. I chose not to and discouraged the person from going on"

Young people also highlighted the benefits of the project's trips and residential for bringing volunteers together as a team. These have included trips to Mile End Races, the Islington Boat Club, the Tower Bridge Indoor Track, Nando's, plus a local ice rink and festival.

"We went as a family, it brought us closer"

"I had the time of my life at Tower Bridge Indoor Track and that's thanks to the project"

Increased self-esteem through volunteering

Volunteering at Right Track is crucial to its success in raising users' social confidence and personal self-esteem.

"I feel great in myself because I've helped the project and the project has helped me more than I've helped it" Volunteer, 17, 2014 interview

In the December 2014 survey, 91% agreed they had gained confidence in themselves through volunteering.

Table 3: Right Track volunteers

	Y1	Y2	Y3
Volunteers	29	60 (31 new)	100
Track marshals	29	60	100
Chief marshals	16	26	50

The range of project activities means there is something to suit many interests and personalities, from public speaking to youth work, from mechanics to advertising. On top of being given responsibility for others and positions of authority, plus life skills and other training, participants find their self-confidence is raised even further by positive affirmation from peers. The trips give them the chance to try new things.

Staff have observed that users' lack of confidence, introversion and inability to form meaningful relationships fall away as they gain self-esteem and higher aspirations through volunteering. All respondents agreed that Right Track staff tried to help them: a couple highlighted collaboration with Oasis workers as their project highlight.

"My colleagues at Oasis boost my confidence"

"I have been able to receive good guidance from the staff that has helped me build confidence"

Having a say in project decision-making

In December 2014, 95% of the young people surveyed agreed they have a say in decisions.

Volunteer marshals meet by-monthly at team meetings, everyone gets to express whether they are happy in their role and ask for anything they need. Suggestions and ideas are put forward by volunteers as to things they would like to make happen

Asked whether they have input into Right Track decisions, volunteers said:

"Kind of – we ask what we want to be done and the staff try their best"

"Yes, I do think I do. We all have discussions to see what others think and then come up with the best solution"

"There's no every man for themselves here, it's a team thing"

"Most enjoyable was when I said we should go on a trip and then we went and had fun"

Asked how their influence could be increased, one or two volunteers suggested holding meetings with more frequency.

Developing their personal authority has helped some Right Track volunteers to set personal goals including greater involvement in positively influencing peers and the wider community, raising money for local groups and charities, and helping with community events and projects.

Developing maturity through taking responsibility for the experience of younger participants

In the December 2014 survey, 64% of respondents said they had taken responsibility for others.

Volunteer marshalling entails knowing about the potential risks and hazards at the track, making sure that younger drivers know about and observe health and safety regulations. Volunteers also learn how to check the karts: a form is completed and signed by users, ensuring that all aspects of kart maintenance has been checked and verified. The Chief Marshal role is a senior volunteer position carrying even greater responsibility: it requires the ability to make decisions such as allocating roles to team members while ensuring that marshals operate efficiently and safely as a group.

The Right Track Mentor observed how responsibility for others bred participants' maturity and self-esteem. Checking karts fosters a degree of skill, focus as well as responsibility. Karting participants tended to look up to marshals with respect (possibly a rare experience for them previously). Several volunteer respondents highlighted leadership/responsibility as the most enjoyable aspect of their time at Right Track. Staff observation sheets describe changes in users' attitude towards adults, and in the manner with which young marshals interacted with their peers and other service users as they settled into their roles: this was particularly striking among those who started with an antipathy to rules and listening to others, particularly adults.

Volunteers were also given the remit to highlight dangerous behaviour with flags and warning systems, requiring they pay acute attention.

Young people aged 13-16 described times they made positive choices to solve problems at the track:

"Someone didn't understand the rules so I explained them"

"Someone crashed and I made the marshals put the flag up"

"I help someone out when they crash and I help them quickly"

Developing community involvement

Volunteering at Right Track leads to young people taking on positive roles and gaining community awareness that benefits their family and/or neighbourhood, as evidenced by some of their personal goal-setting:

- Help my Aunty with arthritis with her chores once a week
- Help to arrange a footy tournament
- Take part in big community event such as Stockwell Festival
- Take part in events to raise money for charities
- Work with the support worker to introduce American footy to Oasis
- Take part in community events to help other young people

"I will be more active in positively influencing my peers and the wider community"
Volunteer, 14

Improved family/home relationships

Research data show that some young people who became Right Track volunteers had more to talk to their parents/carers about at home – "work" to describe, which has helped foster positive communication.

"We talk more at home because he tells me about what he's been doing. He calls it 'work' and it's something he's pleased about, and proud of"
Parent interview, 2014

Being more occupied has also reduced users' sense of boredom or frustration, with wider knock-on benefits:

"You get less bored at home when you come here because you feel better in yourself. It's actually fun here. Then you get on better at home. My mum asks: 'How was work today?'"
Volunteer, 17

Sometimes family members request the help of Right Track staff with problematic aspects of their relationship with users at home. For example, Oasis workers dealt with one volunteer's displays of aggression towards his mother through one-to-one discussion exploring the reasons for his behaviour. S identified that he sometimes gets angry before he has an opportunity to control it. After talking things through, he agreed to try and be more supportive and less aggressive at home, which his mother later confirmed he had managed.

The formal family mediation/intervention element built into the project proved challenging from the start. Similarly, offering family driving sessions was ineffective due to people's busy lives and session timing. As a result, the projected target of 30 young people being diverted from negative behaviour through family support meetings was not achieved in the manner stated. As case studies illustrate Right Track staff worked in close partnership with users and their parents to generate effective solutions to problems at home, school and on the streets. Working informally with family members across a range of scenarios, from crises to everyday issues, often subtly and discreetly, has become a regular aspect of Right Track mentoring.

"I used to use Oasis myself with my children and found that it was one of the best playgrounds and the safest one, and the staff were hands-on. Since I started working in intervention I have used them: they have great communication between staff and parents, and parents' feedback has been very positive" Early Intervention Family Support Worker, Multi-Agency Team (MAT 2), London Borough of Lambeth



The many points of crisis experienced by young people growing up in complex local contexts, combined with the trust and familiarity engendered by project staff, has led to Right Track becoming a sought-after source of safety and support. In effect, Right Track has become an informal but responsive frontline organisation dealing with a range of sometimes serious issues, including safeguarding and cases of young people missing from home who subsequently appeared at the track. One of the project's strengths, according to participants, is its ability to put people at ease so they feel safe – in stark contrast to some statutory settings. As a result the track has served as a mediatory space for young people, families, social services or police.

By the end of Y2, 10 significant incidents of this kind had occurred, with many more subtle interventions where Right Track staff provided an important service (eg, questioning noticeable changes in young people's behaviour, or facilitating dialogue with parents over sensitive issues). Coming to the track provides users and their families with much-needed cooling-off time so that mutual resolutions can be found (sometimes with a little support from staff) between relevant safeguarding services or simply between upset parties involved in domestic disputes



Case study 6

Lambeth's Multi-Agency Team referred C (aged 16) in August 2013, partly in response to his mother's difficulties coping with his autism. C described his difficulty making friends and was spending a lot of time alone in his room playing computer games. He also felt intimidated by local gangs as his lack of friends made him more vulnerable. C identified his need to socialise more with people of his own age and get out of the house regularly. He and his mother agreed he would attend the project three times a week and volunteer as a kart track marshal.

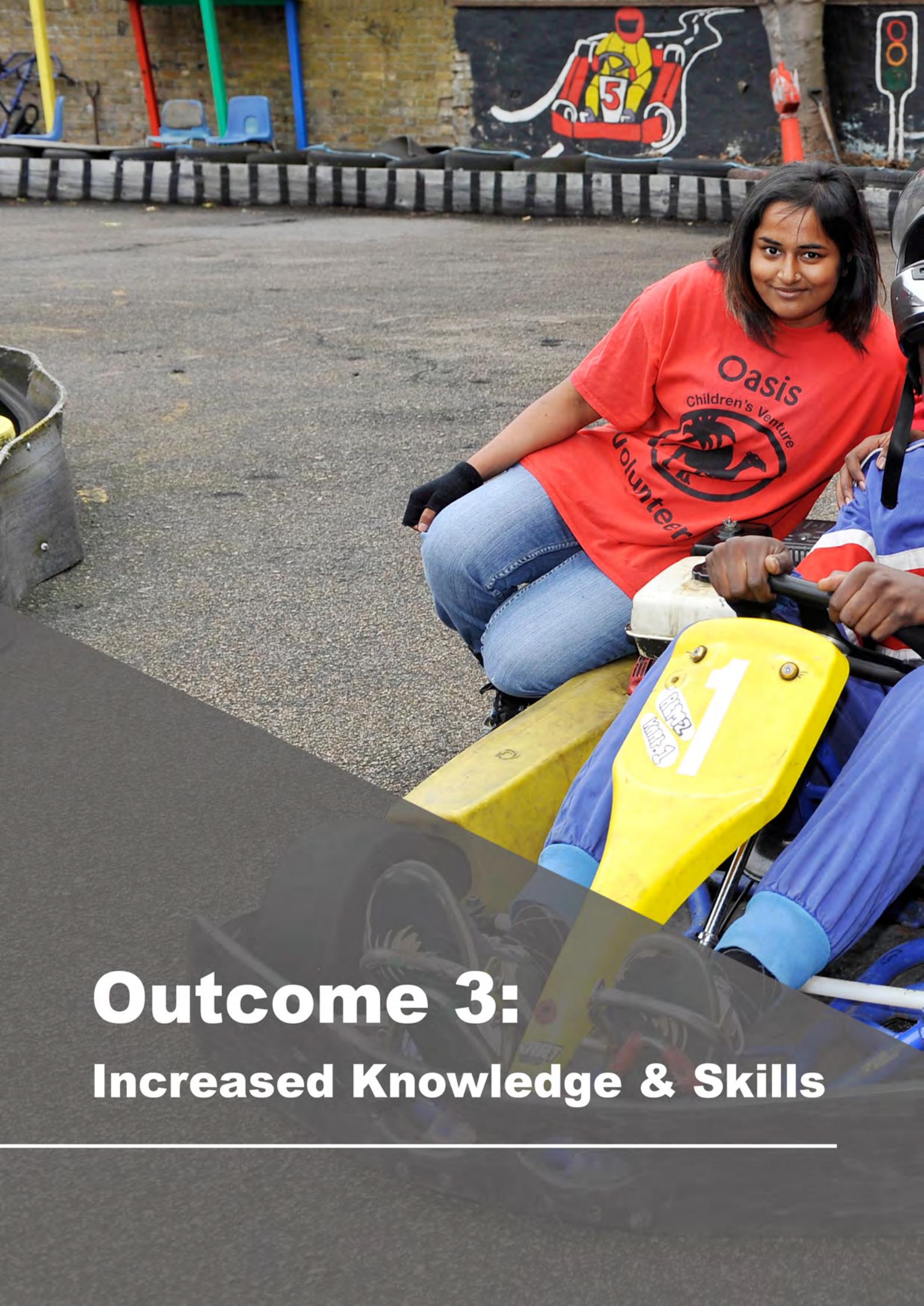
C has attended the project regularly since then and has developed healthy relationships with his peers, appearing more confident and content. He does not and has never demonstrated any challenging behaviour, and has adapted well to the responsibility of being a marshal, providing support to peers and younger children on a regular basis. He can get excited and distracted easily, but with a little guidance he consciously makes an effort to control himself and refocus on the task at hand. Engaging with Right Track over the past year has helped C develop within a supportive, nurturing environment at a vulnerable stage in his personal growth. C's mother is fully engaged in supporting him and ensuring he keeps coming. She has also been receiving advocacy and emotional support from Right Track staff to help her meet C's additional needs.

"You all have helped him so much and things have got better at home between us. It's good he's got some friends now I and really don't have to worry about him as much anymore. His autism has always made socialising a problem, but what you guys do at the kart track is special to me. Thanks for all you help"

C's mother

"I am really grateful for the work that Right Track staff put into helping someone as challenging as C and then making such a big difference. They do a fantastic job and long may it continue!" Early Intervention Family Support Worker, Lambeth Multi-Agency Team





Outcome 3: Increased Knowledge & Skills



Outcome 3: increased knowledge and skills

"You learn new things in a positive environment. Everyone is nice and you will be helped with things you can't do" T, 13, 2014 survey

"The karting project teaches you responsibility, and also a sense of how the karts work, and keeping physical" J, 13, 2014 survey

"It's been great. It's helped a lot with his awareness of his surroundings and he's getting on really well with the staff. He's good with his peers and the other kids. The mechanics – he fixes things and has used his hands – he shows me a bit about what he's been doing. It's a good experience for him" Parent, 2014 interview

All young people surveyed in 2014 agreed they had learned new skills at the karting project; 82% of young people surveyed in December 2014 now have career plans/ideas as a result of coming to Right Track.

"It is youth-led personal development, they have ownership of what they learn"
Mentor, Right Track, 2014

The ethos at Right Track is one of taking responsibility for developing yourself that goes well beyond simply having fun in the moment. Young people set their own personal targets and those receiving regular mentoring have the opportunity to measure their progress using outcome stars. Personal goals centre on wellbeing, skills, community involvement plus a fourth area defined by the service user: these other goals range widely, including researching careers, being kinder to family members, learning new creative skills, being a more proactive learner and testing go karts on bigger tracks. A sample of outcome stars has demonstrated that every volunteer made progress towards most of their goals during their time at Right Track.

Working on pathways into employment has become a core aspect of the project's mentoring and self-development in light of the age of participants: the skills learned at the karting track are ones they will take with them into the world of work. Developing young people's resilience is vital in an area with low levels of employment and few positive pathways into it.

"It's something to put on your CV" Volunteer, 2014

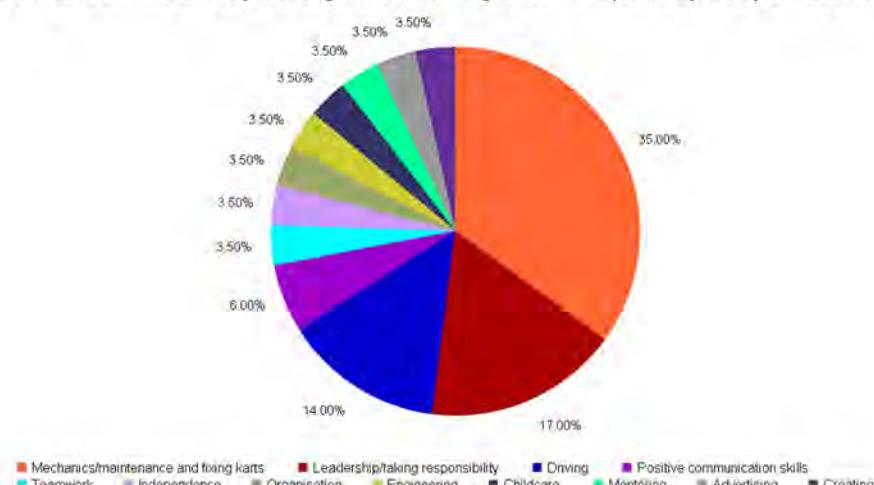
Asked which Right Track activities had helped them gain confidence in the working environment, young people highlighted the following:

"Being able to help people"

"Track marshalling developed my teamwork skills"

"Being able to help organise the session develops my youth work skills and confidence"

Skills young people identified they had gained at Right Track (survey responses, December 2014)



Driving skills

By the end of Y2, all 443 of the young people who have attended the kart track had learned to drive a go-kart safely; with a total of 480 envisaged by the end of Y3. Each young person is individually shown how to operate their go kart by a young marshal before they are allowed to drive.

In a 2014 survey, kart-driving was the third most popular response in relation to the skills acquired at Right Track, but by far the most popular regarding user enjoyment.

Going on trips also helped young people develop their driving skills:

"It gave me the motivation to continue karting and pursue it professionally"

"Going to Mile End was a good opportunity to develop my driving skills"

"[Tower Bridge Karting] gave us the ability to adapt our driving skills to an indoor track and electric karts"

Mechanical skills

By the end of Y3 we estimate that a further 73 young people will have gained new skills in motor mechanics and kart maintenance. By the end of Y2, 63 young people had learned skills in motor mechanics and kart maintenance at Right Track. Some 120 young people in total have learned how to carry out a kart maintenance check. Each marshal is required to maintain an individual kart with all repairs and checks logged.

"Go karts give you experience of work as a mechanic. But it's not all work – it's so much fun because of the people there" Volunteer, 15

"I have gained driving skills and basic mechanics – I have improved confidence, teamwork and communication" Volunteer, 2014

Fixing karts was the third most popular activity in terms of users' enjoyment of Right Track (survey, December 2014), but was most popular when it came to skills. Some respondents identified motor mechanics as an area where they felt confident they could solve others' problems:

"I've changed a kart engine, like, three times" R, 15

"Let's say someone needs to take out their engine: I can show them how" J, 13

"Some people struggle with the mechanics but not me – my eyes and ears are open, so I learn quickly and can help other people" R, 17

"I have observed a growing maturity from C. He has developed his mechanical skill set and is now very competent in maintaining and repairing engines. He started off as a novice and dedicated himself during session time. Over the months he has learned a tremendous amount and is now capable of getting on without a great amount of supervision, showing that he takes the responsibility of being a kart track volunteer seriously"

Staff observation, January 2015

Leadership skills

"I have a young person at the moment (a case through work) and he's very proud to go there: it gives him somewhere to go, to do something constructive, off the streets, he gets a lot out of it. I've seen his leadership skills really come through. We took a school group down there and he took them around, gave them a briefing and all the kids thought he worked there. It gave him some status: he might be quiet in school but there he is somebody" Early Intervention Youth Adviser, Early Intervention and Targeted Services Communities, Housing and Environment Delivery Cluster, London Borough of Lambeth, 26

Volunteer marshalling is particularly useful for developing leadership skills among young people, as each marshal is responsible for the safety of kart-track users. They interact assertively to minimise risk or solve problems with service users, something that takes focus as it can involve split-second decisions. This puts young people in a position of responsibility promoting leadership, judgement and sensitivity in relation to others. Younger users often look up to the marshals.

By the end of Y2, 60 young people had learned how to support their peers to drive and had safely marshalled a go kart track. In addition, 26 young people had further developed solid leadership skills and learned about authority by taking on the Chief Marshal role for a week – a position requiring solid decision-making (eg, allocating roles to team members; ensuring that marshals operate efficiently and safely as a group). We estimate this to rise to 100 young marshals with approximately 50 going on to become chief marshals.

It is clear from many responses that marshalling develops users' leadership, self-development and empathy, helping them understand their own emotional needs and response patterns, as well as those of others. This boost to emotional intelligence is incredibly valuable, building young people's resilience in an area where they are particularly at risk of succumbing to more negative influences.

Being trusted to make decisions builds individuals' self-worth independent of validation from others. In Right Track's case, some participants became more confident, leaving behind disempowering, even dangerous relationships with peers, a process aided by the support and space for reflection provided by mentoring sessions. This, plus the project's family/teamwork ethos, means that participants feel listened to and able to share their problems. This helps them understand where others are coming from, allowing them not to take challenging behaviour and emotional flare-ups at the track personally. Learning how to manage others' behaviour and see them and their needs more clearly without defensiveness is a truly valuable emotional education: Right Track excels in producing the conditions for such epiphanies.

For example, one older volunteer, an ex-gang affiliate, described wanting to develop youth work skills when he joined the project, as he likes working with children. He is now sure this is the career for him. Describing the skills he has developed at Right Track, he said:

"Responsibility. Understanding, as not every child is exactly the same; being able to understand each child differently. Also being able to talk to different children, understanding their different slang words, etc. Young people don't always get along, I've had to stop a couple of confrontations – I have got them to sit down and talk about their differences. I have never been able to leave here and wasn't sure whether it was the job, the people or just what Oasis stands for, but now I realise it's all of them and that is a key point of being a youth worker."



Communication skills

"I have learned how to talk to people in a nice way" Volunteer, 13, 2014 survey

"I have also been able to work on my patience by helping the younger ones" Volunteer, 2014

"I gained a lot of confidence speaking in front of the local partnership forum about what we want in our community. In school I'm not the most confident person, but my fellow citizens and colleagues at Oasis boost my confidence" Volunteer, 17, 2014 interview

Staff have described how volunteers improve the quality of their social interactions by becoming Right Track marshals. Karting users' broad range of cultural backgrounds, levels of understanding and personal needs necessitate that young marshals develop an expanded and nuanced repertoire of communication skills (eg, directing others, understanding them and interpreting their behaviour). Working as part of a large team to facilitate the track's smooth running and becoming Chief Marshal for a week demands effective communication in a fast-moving environment.

Marshals must also deliver health and safety briefings to new groups at the beginning of sessions: each marshal therefore gains experience of public speaking. Staff have described the visible pride of marshals who successfully deliver the briefings: doing so requires good understanding of the subject matter and the confidence to express it to a group of strangers who may ask questions.

"The staff have got me to speak in front of people I may not know...that's given me confidence" Volunteer, 2014

Two young people have achieved the Oasis Inclusion Certificate, awarded to volunteers and staff members who complete the Oasis Inclusion training programme. This pathway allows volunteers to work in a more direct supporting role with young children with disabilities, thus demonstrating a high level of responsibility and maturity.

A few project participants identified Right Track residential trips as useful in team-building terms:

"It was great to develop my teamwork and communication skills"

"It was good to see the team effort and have fun as well"

7 young people have also represented Right Track and their neighbourhood peers at local partnership meetings. In Y1, 7 users met with Jack Hopkins, a Labour councillor in Lambeth, at that time in charge of community safety. In Y2, 5 project participants attended regular Stockwell Partnership Forum meetings to discuss local community issues.



Mentoring skills

There are 3 peer mentors at Right Track. Three young people felt especially drawn to the role and requested training. This suited the project's needs as demand for mentoring was far outstripping supply.

The trio subsequently attended the Peer Mentoring Level 1 course during Y2 and are now mentoring others. The specialised two-level mentoring training package was devised by the Right Track Mentor and the Project Manager, and encompasses the skills required to provide emotional and practical support to vulnerable young people. Once Level 2 has been completed, too, participants attend Lambeth safeguarding training, apply for enhanced DBS clearance and shadow three mentoring sessions with the Right Track Mentor.

Peer mentors take on areas of responsibility in partnership with the full-time Right Track Mentor. They meet on the first Tuesday of every month to plan as a team: they also engage young people in life skill workshops and upcoming projects, and help organise away days.

Business planning

Eight young people attended a six-session business start-up course, provided by 'Umbrella' as part of an exchange between Oasis and the organisation. After the six-week course they had put together a business plan, which has helped them to break down the road to future prosperity into manageable steps.



Formal accreditation

AQA accreditation provides evidence that young people have gained skills and as such is an incredibly valuable part of the project, something that has developed rapidly and effectively over its course. By the end of Y2, 60 AQA accreditations had been provided to regular

Table 4: Right Track volunteers achieving formal AQA accreditation

AQA subject	Number accredited		
	Y1	Y2	Y3
Youth leadership and decision-making	9	-	-
Kart maintenance	-	30	60
Volunteering	-	30	60

Pathways into further training and employment

In Y1, three young people progressed into further education and employment with the help of the skills and knowledge in mechanics and engineering gained at Right Track. By the end of Y2, 13 users were attending full-time higher education, with four studying motor mechanics. Seven users have entered employment, three in industries related directly to mechanical skills. We estimate this figure to rise to 20 by the end of the Y3.

The Right Track Mentor sets up placements for young users with aspirations to join particular vocational professions and also supports them with access needs: for example, he ensured one-to-one literacy support for a young man trying to study to be an electrician, then linked him up with a building apprentice scheme tailored to electricians. The hands-on experience he gained paid dividends: the volunteer began working directly for the track from summer 2014.





Key Achievements & Learning



Key achievements and learning

"What I love best is making an actual difference. This isn't ticking boxes, but day-to-day tangible benefits for young people. It's what makes me want to get up in the morning"
Right Track Mentor, 2014 interview

"You can go to a go kart track, drive and leave; but it's not like that at Oasis. Young people can be a part of it and see a future in there. It doesn't matter if you are disabled or anything, you can go and be a part of it, volunteer, have fun, ride the karts...For young people and adults, it's very empowering" Early Intervention Youth Adviser, Housing and Environment Delivery Cluster, London Borough of Lambeth, January 2015

1. Right Track is immensely popular: go karting is clearly a highly enjoyable experience for many local young people. Every year, thousands of users pass through Oasis' gates: its existence is particularly important given the number of local authority leisure facilities that have closed down thanks to austerity. Right Track was formulated to harness local engagement in order to support vulnerable young people at risk of gang involvement and other negative outcomes. In terms of vulnerable users becoming regular volunteers, we have had 80 Volunteers over 2 years. The case studies included in the evaluation are particularly useful for illustrating the interwoven nature of the three project outcomes (safer life paths, better relationships and gaining new skills) agreed with BBC Children in Need and essential to users' experience of the project.

"It gives me somewhere safe and welcoming to come to" Volunteer, 2014

2. Volunteer service users unanimously consider Right Track to be a safe and positive place. The project's informal, inclusive and accepting family ethos creates a sense of security and builds the confidence, stability and resilience of young people making their way in a highly challenging urban environment. For those who choose to spend a fair proportion of their spare time at Right Track, the project has a clear, positive impact on the way they view themselves and their place within the community. Freed from the pressure of gangs and/or difficult home lives, many at-risk young people flourish, rejecting disempowering relationships, low self-esteem and negative response patterns such as anger and violence. They learn more positive ways to resolve conflict, take responsibility for their own reactions and begin to make the most of the opportunities on offer to develop positive life paths (with essential support and acknowledgement from Right Track staff and their peers). The importance of the physical space itself is also worth highlighting, as is the safer space-within-the-space provided during one-to-one mentoring, where young people have the opportunity to tackle personal problems and crises with the support of the Right Track Mentor and/or peer mentors.

"It is a difference I was not aware of until recently, but having a tangible piece of land to escape to for our young people is almost fundamental to being able to create an opportunity for a genuine difference in their lives" Project Manager, 2013

3. Mentoring has snowballed over the course of the project, thanks to the employment of a full-time mentor and the number of young people willing to get involved. Right Track has smashed its target for 15 service users to enter one-to-one mentoring each year, with a rotating list of 85 mentees receiving 128 sessions in total by December 2014. Clearly many of these have not received the projected 24 hours of mentoring a year, partly resulting from time pressures on the full-time Right Track Mentor and 3 peer mentors, but also because many users required only low-level or one-off inputs. However, having learned that pre-planning mentoring sessions reduced engagement (due to users' unavailability, school responsibilities, the drop-in nature of the project, etc), staff adapted the service so that young people could access it as and when they were on site. Due to the high volume of regular attendees (around 22 a week), this method worked best for achieving project outcomes. In addition, female peer mentors provided effective support to young women at Right Track.

4. Case studies and research with users indicate that the goal-focused, user-led, non-judgmental mentoring process is pivotal in influencing a significant core of vulnerable participants to make positive life choices.

5. The original project's formal family mediation element has not worked as planned. However, it has evolved organically into an informal and responsive process of engagement with families as problems and crises arise. This model has delivered significant benefits for at least 10 families a year, plus subtler outcomes at a less acute level. The project now acts as a signposting service to other sources of local support and takes referrals from statutory services. The role Right Track has taken on in frontline provision is a result of the accessibility and trust cultivated by Oasis staff.

6. There is strong evidence that Right Track boosts young people's self-esteem and confidence, helping them make new friends and develop healthy relationship models. A strong sense of family and ownership is palpable in user feedback, with more than 90% agreeing that they felt part of a community. Through participation in karting, which entails sharing, taking turns and negotiating with others, more than 400 service users a year have been encouraged to use effective communication skills. Becoming a volunteer marshal is clearly instrumental to users developing stronger teamwork skills, confidence in public speaking and a sense of responsibility for the safety of others, which in turn builds their leadership skills, self-confidence and maturity. Young people share ownership of elements of the project and are regularly provided with choices. Volunteers deemed most at risk, some referred by other agencies, have become positive role models for their peers.

7. The project's mentoring element and general ethos have helped users to build more positive relationships with authority. The evidence points to Right Track improving family relationships, particularly when users become happier and less frustrated, when parents take an interest in what their children are achieving at the project, and when family members liaise with staff to generate solutions to particular problems. Users' growing confidence and civic responsibility are demonstrated by the significant proportion of volunteers developing community-focused goals during their time at the project.

"You are able to learn new things and make different choices" Volunteer, 16, 2014

8. Right Track increasingly demonstrates excellence in helping young people develop the knowledge and skills necessary for a positive future. It focuses on user-led personal development and generating action plans with young people to achieve personal goals based on their personal interests and career plans. The most prevalent and significant skills gained by Right Track volunteers include driving, mechanics/kart maintenance, leadership, emotional intelligence, and communication and social skills. Other include creative and advertising skills, youth leadership and public speaking.

9. Staff have developed two areas of AQA accreditation (kart maintenance and volunteering) and had delivered more than 50 such accreditations by the end of Y2, vital evidence of users' suitability for the workplace. Young people have developed skills in mentoring and business planning, plus work experience in the trades, with the help of training and access support and signposting from Oasis staff and, to date, 8 young people have accessed further training involving mechanics or engineering as a result of attending Right Track.

10. Right Track practitioners have developed a reflexive approach to practice, which means that the project is responsive to service users and families experiencing multi-faceted issues. There is a clear trajectory of effective project development, for example peer mentoring and AQA accreditation, firmly based on reviewing evidence about processes and outcomes generated by self and external review, including feedback from the participants themselves.



Areas for Development



REPAIRER

REPAIRS

REPAIRER
Ricardo
CIA
motorably TC

Areas for development

1. Right Track's success as a mentoring project points to a higher level of need than previously envisaged. The volume of young people seeking mentoring, particularly those in crisis, and the positive outcomes that follow intervention strongly indicate that an increase in trained mentor resources at the track would be highly beneficial. A more even distribution of workload between mentors would also help: at the moment, the higher caseload perhaps correlates to lower-quality input to users, affecting its potential effectiveness. Meanwhile, other young people in crisis are coming to trusted staff at Right Track looking for immediate support, sometimes including liaison with families, which under current conditions demands a high proportion of mentor time. Some 41% of users surveyed in December 2014 stated they would like more one-to-one time with project mentors.

"At the moment we are more of a safety net for those in crisis, rather than providers of more one-to-one quality long-term work" Mentor, 2014

2. Mentoring works when there is ample time to establish trust with users, work with them on solid action planning, coach them over time and reflect with them on outcomes. At the moment, the outcome star sheets are an indication of the potential power of young people setting their own personal goals, but there is a sense that more time spent reflecting on progress would be beneficial.
3. There is a definite need to provide mentors of both genders to meet the needs of young male and female users.
4. More trained peer mentors would allow paid mentors to take on the more complex or pressing cases, with peer mentors continuing to support users with more everyday concerns.
5. The positive outcomes from careers support, life skills and other training and work experience pathways, and the pressing need for local employment opportunities, point to the potential of devising an additional role to lead on life skills. The postholder might research, build and establish strong mutually beneficial partnerships with local agencies and businesses to secure solid work experience and training opportunities for users. They could also help cover planning and organisational time for in-house life skills training. In a survey with regular volunteers in December 2014, 86% asked for more training workshops and 64% wanted more work experience opportunities.
6. A Life Skills Manager could also establish a mooted Youth Forum to build on users' motivation to represent their peers and the karting track more generally, enabling individuals to build their confidence and experience in leadership at the track and beyond.



7. The provision of more trips and residential was a consistent request among service users: in the December 2014 survey with regular volunteers, 100% shared this desire. Feedback from participants points to positive outcomes in terms of personal growth and enjoyment through team-building adventures with their karting "family" beyond Oasis' gates. Exciting projects such as building a double engine kart from scratch and establishing the track's race team really captured users' imagination: staff and participants identified how positive it would be for Right Track users to compete with other teams at rallies. Such missions can be expensive, so further investment would be required to achieve this.

8. Greater support for disabled children or those with additional needs. As an Oasis Children's Venture project, Right Track is affiliated with the organisation's Inclusion Project and as a result is accessible to and inclusive of disabled children and young people. Contact with disabled users normalises diversity of ability among attendees and marshals. To build on this good work and maximise the project's potential, further investment in a part-time role with a specific remit to support disabled users would widen the spectrum of project participants, supporting these young people with next steps into training and employment.

9. Boxing activities: Boxing at Right Track has been repeatedly requested by users and volunteers and would provide beneficiaries with a controlled outlet for anger and frustration, building up their fitness (with a variety of physical and mental benefits), honing their discipline and providing an alternative to gangs. It would also boost participants' confidence.

10. Girls' night: The Right Track's Girls' Night element was taken out of the programme in 2012 due to staffing issues. It was reinstated from October 2014 and is now gathering momentum. Investment in a mentoring role with a particular remit for supporting girls and young women, many of whom are particularly vulnerable, tied in with a weekly Girls' Night could deepen the track's highly successful self-development and mentoring work.

11. Additional Junior Inclusive Karting Club (extra junior session targeted at inclusion children but all juniors welcome) Junior Inclusive Youth Club would tackle issues before they become more entrenched. It would offer younger users positive role models via peer mentors and staff, teaching them first-hand the responsibilities and skills they could access and the benefits they bring. The club could give them voice and promote leadership among their ranks, perhaps with representatives on the mooted Youth Forum. A race team catering specifically for these users would generate excitement, offering users risk and reward in full measure.



Oasis Children's Venture Main Office
33 Priory Grove, Stockwell, London SW8 2PD
Tel: 020 7622 8756
Email: info@oasisplay.org.uk

Produced March 2015



Charity No. 1019626