

akt



Trans Pathway Project 2022-2025



Evaluation Report

Dr Chris Wood

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Foreword by Adam Pemberton Wickham, CEO of akt

Thank you for reading this evaluation report examining the outcomes and learning from akt's Trans Pathway Project. It is a vital piece of analysis of important work that it has been our privilege to deliver over the past three years, supporting trans and non-binary young people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

We at akt are very grateful for the opportunity gifted to us by the St Martin in the Fields charity to pilot this project. As we come to the end of the pilot, I would also like to thank this report's author, Dr Chris Wood, the peer evaluators, the staff working directly on the project, the young people who shared their thoughts with them and the many colleagues who participated in the evaluation.

It is a particular source of pride *how* this evaluation has been done, through trialling an innovative peer-led evaluation approach in Year 3 of the project. Involving trans researchers with lived experience of homelessness is just one of the ways in which akt is seeking to put young people and their experience at the heart of what we do. The learnings from this approach are particularly valuable to us and will be, I'm sure, for others as well.

Reading this evaluation also makes me proud of the achievements of the project team. As the report shows, it has not always been easy and there are many lessons we can and will learn from this experience. But above all the testimonies from young people supported through the project about the difference it has made for them personally are powerful and deeply moving.

The insights that can be drawn from the project are many and varied and apply far beyond akt. They should be compelling reading for anyone working with trans and non-binary young people. We will be taking them forward in our own practice and will encourage others to do the same.

There are also a great many echoes in this evaluation of our recently published research, *There's No Place Like Home*, which found that the challenges faced by young trans and non-binary young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are even tougher than other LGBTQ+ young people. You can read that report [here](#).

This makes it even more disappointing that, despite strenuous efforts right up to the end of this three-year project, we have sadly been unable to secure funding to expand, or even continue, with the project. This perhaps speaks directly to the challenging climate for any provider of services for the LGBTQ+ community right now but especially trans and non-binary services.

We are making sure that we integrate the learnings from this project, as set out in this report, into our own practice. We will also continue to share the conclusions of the evaluation as far and as wide as possible. And akt will continue to support trans and non-binary young people because no-one should have to choose between a safe home and being who they are.

Executive summary

akt's Trans Pathway Project (TPP) was a three-year pilot in Greater Manchester, funded by St Martin in the Fields charity. From February 2022 to March 2025, it offered floating support and youth engagement to 18-25 year old trans and non-binary young people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. Overall, the project cost £319,768. It resulted in significant benefits for service users as well as important organisational learning that will inform future akt initiatives.

This report draws on documentation, data and feedback from young people, peer researchers and akt staff to evaluate the project's successes, challenges and lessons learnt. It focuses, in particular, on Year 2 and Year 3 of the project. An interim evaluation report was produced at the end of Year 1 for internal purposes only. It helped to shape project development.

The pilot project was initiated in recognition of the often complex challenges faced by many trans and non-binary young people that significantly impact their housing status, as well as the difficulties they face accessing trans-positive support from agencies and organisations.

The project successfully met or partially met most of its objectives. Across three years, 95 trans and non-binary young people were supported, close to the target of 100. Of these young people, four fifths accessed floating support and just under half accessed youth engagement activities.

Twenty four young people were supported to access safe accommodation of which 15 secured long term accommodation, slightly below the target. Additionally, there were 21 successful homeless prevention outcomes over the course of the project, involving 8 young people.

In Years 2 and 3, the project delivered 945 floating support sessions for 37 individual young people, exceeding its target. Sessions included support interventions via email, text messages, phone calls, one-to-ones and group meetings, all being integral to the in-depth casework.¹ Four fifths of these focused on housing support. Others commonly focused on health and wellbeing; identity; providing financial information; and advice on employment, education and training.

Young people reported benefits including improved self-worth and mental health; access to education or employment; and enhanced social inclusion. Young people receiving floating support also emphasised the importance of the TPP team's lived experience, their in-depth knowledge of trans issues, and their flexibility in adapting support to meet individual needs.

Across the project, 108 youth engagement activities were delivered, including skills workshops, guest speakers, wellbeing and career support, consultation and co-production opportunities, and participation in public events such as Manchester Pride. Sixty-nine sessions were delivered in Year 1 (above target), 27 in Year 2 (in line with target) and 12 in Year 3 (below target). In the final year of the project, the TPP team reduced the frequency of sessions to better meet the needs

¹ On average, TPP cases were open for a 401 days compared with 164 days for akt.

and availability of young people. Sessions were also paused for a period of time while a new TPP youth engagement worker was recruited.

Trans and non-binary young people who participated in youth engagement activities noted important benefits including learning new skills, expressing creativity, making friends, growing in confidence and building community in a safe space.

Responding to recommendations from the Year 1 evaluation, the team trialled an innovative peer-led evaluation approach in Year 3 of the project. Two externally recruited trans researchers with lived experience of homelessness interviewed seven young people and talked to others at a youth group session. The findings in the subsequent 'research report' highlight the importance of the Trans Pathway in supporting young people to access safe housing; assisting them with everyday necessities such as food, clothing and hygiene products; advocating for them and liaising with other services; as well as providing welcoming and free spaces to learn, develop and meet people, facilitated by trans staff who understand their needs and experiences.

Feedback from trans and non-binary young people, peer researchers, TPP staff and akt senior managers identified common strengths, challenges and lessons learnt from the project.

Major strengths include the development of a service led and delivered by trans and non-binary staff who deeply understand young people's needs; the development of 'holistic', wrap-around support integrating floating casework and youth engagement; advocating for trans and non-binary young people confidently and consistently with other organisations, gradually effecting changes in attitudes and behaviours and beginning to mainstream best practices; the provision of safe spaces for trans and non-binary young people to explore their identity, develop skills and build networks; the increased visibility of trans and non-binary young people and staff within akt and at external events; raising awareness of trans and non-binary issues and providing opportunities to share learning and upskill staff; and the emerging development of peer-led co-production as part of the wider consultation and engagement process with young people.

Key challenges include the pressures of delivering trans-positive services in the current political and socio-economic climate, with its housing crisis and often negative societal attitudes to trans issues; the impact of the project on the small TPP team's wellbeing and health, contributing to staff turnover and gaps in service delivery (which also impacted on some young people's engagement); a perceived lack of transparency and miscommunication around some decision making; the need to balance service independence with oversight and a focus on outcomes; and sensitivities in planning for the project's closure at the end of March.

Other important learning includes the potential benefits of the Trans Pathway as a model for other organisations; the importance of recognising intersectional needs and responsive service design; the importance of increasing trans and non-binary representation and learning in organisations working with trans and non-binary young people; and the value of embedding peer-led co-production into projects from the outset, ensuring that these often resource heavy approaches are proportionate and focused on the most beneficial outcomes.

Main findings and lessons learnt

- 95 trans and non-binary young people were supported across the project's three years, close to the target of 100. Of these, four fifths accessed floating support (76 out of 95) and just under half accessed youth engagement activities (45 out of 95).
- TPP participants ranged from 16-25 years old with an average age of 21. Just over two fifths were aged 18-20 (42 out of 95) and just over a third were aged 23-25 (32 out of 95).
- Of the 95 young people, 24 identified as non-binary, 18 identified as transgender, 15 identified as trans women, and 15 identified as trans men. Additionally, 8 identified as female, 7 identified as male, and 5 identified as questioning.
- 24 trans and non-binary young people were supported to access safe accommodation of which 15 accessed long term accommodation, slightly below the target of 30 young people accessing safe accommodation with 20 in long term accommodation. There were also 21 successful homeless prevention outcomes during the project, involving 8 young people (including two prevention of eviction and two maintained housing outcomes).
- In Years 2 and 3 of the project, 945 floating support sessions were delivered for 37 trans and non-binary young people, exceeding the target of 300 sessions for 25 young people. Session interventions included support via email, text messages, phone calls, one-to-ones and group meetings, all being integral to the in-depth casework. On average, TPP floating support cases were open for a 401 days compared with 164 days for akt.
- Floating support interventions most commonly focused on housing (41%); health and wellbeing (12%); identity (11%); financial information (10%); and employment, education and training (9%). Where available, outcomes data from trans and non-binary young people indicates that floating support had particular benefits in relation to improving self-worth and mental health, access to education or employment, and social inclusion.
- Five anonymised case studies highlight that young people particularly valued the flexibility of the floating support and the in-depth knowledge of trans staff who understood their needs and were able to advocate successfully on their behalf with other organisations and services (see Appendix B).
- 108 youth engagement sessions were delivered over three years: 69 in Year 1 (above target), 27 in Year 2 (in line with target) and 12 in Year 3 (below the revised target of 22). In its final year, the TPP team reduced the frequency of sessions to better meet the needs

and availability of young people. Sessions were also paused for a period of time while a new TPP youth engagement worker was recruited

- Youth engagement sessions included skills workshops, creative activities, consultations and attendance at community events such as Manchester Pride and Trans Day of Remembrance. Most commonly, sessions focused on wellbeing (33%), identity (32%) and skills development (29%).² Young people who participated in youth engagement activities noted important benefits including learning new skills, exploring their identity and creativity, increasing their confidence, and building community.
- A peer-led evaluation approach involving semi-structured interviews (n=7) was trialled in Year 3 of the project to capture deeper and richer feedback from young people. The findings highlight the importance of the Trans Pathway in supporting young people to access safe housing; assisting them with everyday necessities; advocating for them; and providing safe spaces to learn, develop and connect with other young people ‘like them’.
- The main project successes were the development of a service led and delivered by trans and non-binary staff; the development of ‘holistic’, wrap-around support integrating floating case work and youth engagement; the TPP team’s ability to advocate for trans and non-binary young people, effecting changes in attitudes and mainstreaming best practices; the provision of safe spaces for trans and non-binary young people; the increased visibility of trans and non-binary young people and staff within akt; the opportunities to share learning and upskill staff at akt; and the emerging development of peer-led co-production and evaluation approaches.
- The main project challenges were the intense pressures of delivering trans-specific services in the current political and socio-economic climate; the impact of the project on the TPP team’s wellbeing and health; a perceived lack of transparency or miscommunication between staff and senior managers; the need to balance service independence with project oversight; and planning for the project’s closure.
- Other important learning includes the potential benefits of the Trans Pathway as a model for other organisations; the importance of recognising intersectional needs alongside responsive service design; the importance of increasing representation and learning in organisations working with trans and non-binary young people; and the value of embedding proportionate peer-led co-production, consultation and evaluation into projects from the outset.

² Based on potential multiple focuses per session.

Introduction to the Trans Pathway

The Trans Pathway Project (TPP) was akt's three-year pilot project funded by St Martin-in-the-Fields charity. It provided support to 18-25 year old trans and non-binary people in Greater Manchester who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.³ The project ran from February 2022 to March 2025.⁴ Overall, the project cost £319,768 (with staff costs of £286,227). It resulted in significant benefits for service users as well as important organisational learning that will inform future akt initiatives. Through its twin approach of floating casework support and youth engagement activities, the TPP provided services, including:

- ✓ Non-directive advice
- ✓ Advocacy with other services
- ✓ Support to access and maintain safe housing
- ✓ Pathways to access education, employment and training
- ✓ Opportunities to develop life skills
- ✓ Opportunities to be part of a supportive trans and non-binary community

Context and rationale

Around a quarter of trans and non-binary people in the UK experience homelessness during their lifetime, often facing additional barriers to accessing support with housing and homelessness. These barriers commonly include transphobia from staff, residents or service users; lack of knowledge about supporting trans and non-binary people; difficulty accessing ID or housing documents; exclusion from gendered accommodation or services; and a lack of trans-specific housing and services.

Trans and non-binary people may be overlooked because they are 'hidden homeless', including sofa surfing, living in an unfit home or with an abusive partner, or engaging in survival sex work. Experiences of exclusion are often intensified for trans and intersex people of colour, trans women, refugees and asylum seekers, and disabled trans and non-binary people. The Trans Pathway Project aimed to provide targeted and coherent support for trans and non-binary young people facing these challenges.

The Project evaluation

This report is an independent evaluation of the three-year Trans Pathway Project (TPP), with a specific focus on Year 2 and Year 3. It includes an overview of the project outputs and outcomes

³ [the trans pathway project - akt](#)

⁴ The project team were not in place until April 2022 with the full suite of services and activities starting in May 2022.

in relation to targets set by the funder, as well as an exploration of the project's successes, challenges and lessons learnt for the future. An interim evaluation report was produced at the end of Year 1 for internal purposes only. It helped to shape project development.

The Year 1 report noted a number of achievements. These included the quick establishment of services that were benefitting trans and non-binary young people and had met (and in some cases exceeded) Year 1 objectives; strong leadership and senior support for the project; the importance of the lived experience of the project team; strengthened data collection and analysis; and the typically positive responses of trans and non-binary young people about the benefits of their participation in the TPP.

The report also identified recommendations for Year 2 and Year 3 of the project. These included reviewing targets with the funder; further enhancing the service offer subject to capacity; working with external organisations to share best practices; and identifying approaches that increased trans and non-binary young people's confidence when contributing to evaluation activities, enriching the evidence base and focus on young people's voices.

Evaluation approach and evidence

The evaluation adopts a reflexive mixed-methods approach, drawing on quantitative and qualitative evidence. This includes data provided by akt (see Section A), five case studies of young people receiving floating support (see Appendix B), and feedback from three TPP team members, two akt senior managers and two peer evaluators (See Sections C and D).

The overarching evaluation approach prioritises feedback from staff and young people with lived experience, sensitive to the fact that many of the young people in the project may be in vulnerable, chaotic and uncertain situations, and that trans and non-binary participants have previously expressed concerns about talking to a cisgender evaluator.

To this end (and in response to recommendations from the Year 1 evaluation report) the external evaluator worked with the TPP Manager to design a peer-evaluator led approach to working with young people. Seven young people were interviewed by two externally appointed trans peer-evaluators. The peer evaluators also ran a feedback activity at a youth engagement session.

The independent external evaluator subsequently drew on a thematic research report drafted by the TPP Manager and peer evaluators (see Section B). This provided a good range of direct feedback from trans and non-binary young people who had participated in the project.⁵

⁵ A relative weakness of this approach is that it did not enable the external evaluator to review the full interview data independently. It is recommended that this is considered for future projects which involve a combination of peer-led and external evaluation.

Evaluation focuses - outputs, targets and outcomes

The evaluation focused on a number of outputs (OPs) and targets identified (and revised) by the funder and akt across the 3 year project (see table 1).

Table 1: project outputs, targets, actual outcomes and RAG rating			
Project Output	Output Description	Target Output / outcome	Actual RAG⁶
OP1	Total number of young trans people supported by the service	100 trans young people across the 3-year pilot	95 trans young people across the 3-year pilot
OP2	Number of people supported to access safe accommodation	30 young people across the 3-year pilot, out of which 20 are long term	24 young people across the 3-year pilot, with 15 long term (plus 21 prevention of homeless outcomes for 8 young people)
OP3	Number of young people for whom interventions have a long-term positive impact on housing	70% of the young people supported into long-term housing (output 2) or allocated to the project with homelessness imminent/tenancy threatened have maintained housing 3 months on (Y3)	Data unavailable at the time of writing. The TPP team has made recent changes to consent forms and post closure feedback forms which is expected to improve data collection on maintained housing.
OP4	Number and type of sessions of floating support provided through the service	300 sessions for 25 clients in Year 2 and in Year 3 (with written case studies)	945 sessions for 37 clients in Year 2 and in Year 3 (with five written case studies)
OP5	Number and nature of youth engagement activities provided.	22 in-person fortnightly TPP youth engagement group sessions in the final year of the project, with TPP young people being supported to engage with wider youth engagement offer at akt.	12 in-person TPP youth engagement group sessions in the final year of the project (108 across 3 years)
OP6	The completion of an evaluation report of the impact of the service identifying key learnings, themes and best practice	External evaluation by the end of year 3, with focus on young people's voices.	External evaluation completed (March 2025), with focus on young people's voices.

⁶ A green rating has been assigned if targets were exceeded or met (90%+). An amber rating has been assigned if targets were mostly or partially met. A red rating has been assigned if targets were not met.

Part A: the data

Output 1: number of trans young people supported by the project (3 years)

1. Overall, 95 individual trans or non-binary young people were supported across the three year pilot project, close to the target of 100.⁷ Of these 95:
 - a. 50 accessed floating support only (53%)
 - b. 19 accessed youth engagement activities only (20%)
 - c. 26 accessed both floating support and youth engagement activities (27%)
2. Overall, four fifths of the trans and non-binary young people who participated in the TPP accessed floating support (80%) and just under half accessed youth engagement (47%).
3. Demographic information for the trans and non-binary young people receiving support from the TPP is provided in Appendix A.
4. Participants ranged from 16 to 25 at the point they started work with the TPP, with an average age of 21. Over two fifths (42 out of 95) were aged 18-20 and just over a third (32 out of 95) were aged 23-25.
5. Of the 95 participants across the three year pilot, 24 identified as non-binary, 18 identified as transgender, 15 identified as trans women, and 15 identified as trans men. Additionally, 8 identified as female, 7 identified as male, and 5 identified as questioning.
6. Of the 95 participants, 20 identified as bisexual, 16 identified as pansexual, 14 identified as queer, 12 identified as lesbian, 9 identified as gay and 7 identified as heterosexual.
7. Just under half of all participants identified as White British (52 out of 95). Additionally, 11 participants identified as White Other and 11 as Asian/Asian British Pakistani.

Output 2: number of trans young people supported to access safe accommodation⁸

8. Overall, 24 trans and non-binary young people were supported to access safe accommodation across the three year pilot project, of which 15 accessed long term accommodation, slightly below the target of 30 young people out of which 20 are long

⁷ Data provide by akt as of 21 March 2025.

⁸ Initially, 'trans specific' was specified in the output rather than 'safe'. Following discussions with the funder this was amended as there is no trans specific accommodation available in Manchester but "safe" encapsulates the need for it to be suitable for a trans person to live in. There is limited LGBTQ+ specific accommodation in Manchester with spaces only rarely available.

term (see table 2). Additionally, there were 21 successful homeless prevention outcomes over the course of the project involving 8 young people (including two prevention of eviction and five maintained housing outcomes).

Table 2: trans and non-binary young people accessing safe accommodation		
	Number accessing safe accommodation (includes multiple instances)	Number accessing long term accommodation
Year 1	14	8
Year 2	7	4
Year 3	6	3
Total (individuals)	24	15

Output 3: number of trans young people for whom interventions have a long-term positive impact on housing in Year 3.

9. A revised objective was set for Year 3 of the project that related to 70% of those young people allocated to long term housing (see output 2) having maintained it three months on. At the time of writing, no information was available for this objective.
10. The TPP Manager reported that, during the project, this information could only be gathered by checking directly with the young person (or caseworker if the young person was still working with akt). As a result of the small initial data set and some young people losing contact with akt (including where housing needs had been resolved) the team were unable to collect any meaningful data by the time of writing.
11. However, some positive progress has been made in this area. The TPP Manager noted that the team has updated consent forms to allow contact after closure. They have also created an automated feedback form that can be sent to young people (who have given consent) 6 months after the closure date. This has only been recently implemented but the new approach is expected to improve data collection in the future.

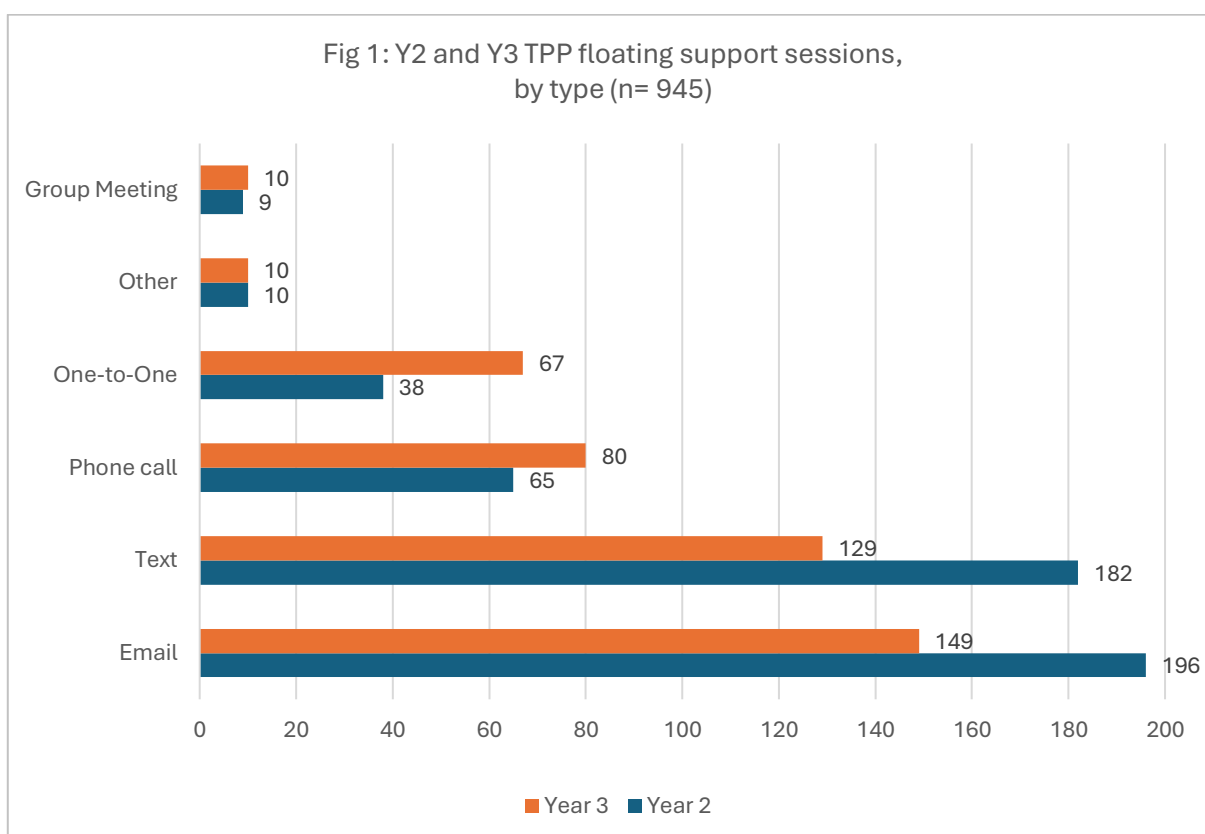
Output 4: number and type of sessions of floating support provided through the service in Year 2 and Year 3

Number of floating support sessions in Year 2 and Year 3

12. In Year 2 and Year 3 of the pilot project, 945 floating support sessions were delivered for 37 individual trans or non-binary young people, much higher than the target of 300 sessions for 25 young people. Sessions included all activities or interventions undertaken as part of the wrap-around floating support. Emails and texts were integral to the in-depth casework support and not merely transactional communications. Floating support timelines were typically much longer than for core services casework. On average, TPP floating support cases were open for a 401 days compared with 164 days for akt.

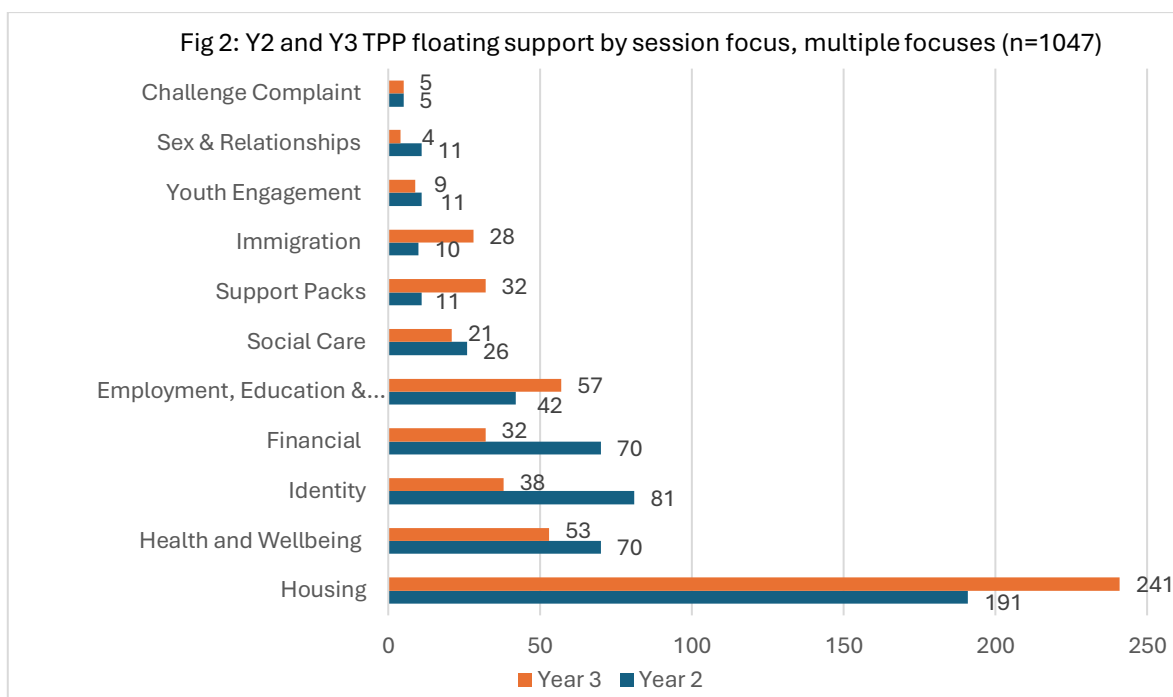
Types of floating support sessions in Year 2 and Year 3

13. Where recorded (see figure 1), the most frequent floating support interventions in Year 2 and Year 3 of the project were emails (37%), text messages (33%), phone calls (15%) and one-to-one meetings (11%).



Focus of floating support sessions in Year 2 and Year 3

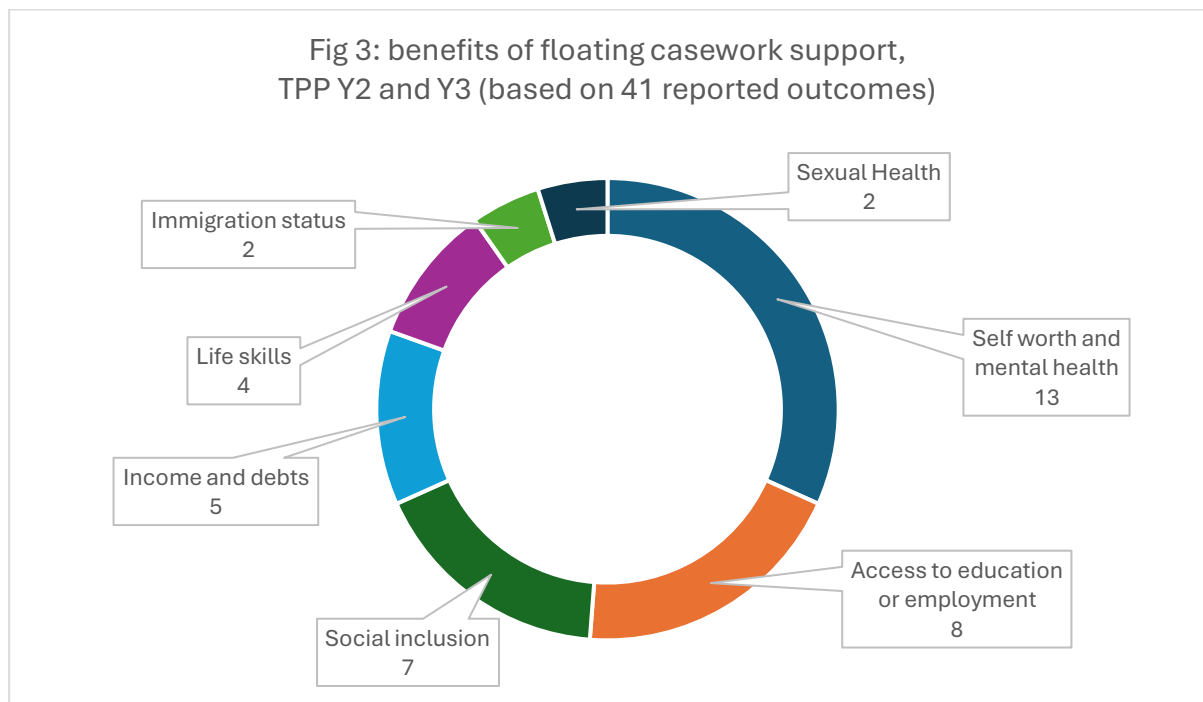
14. Across Years 2 and 3, the most common focus of floating support sessions (based on multiple focuses per session) related to housing (41%); health and wellbeing (12%); identity (11%), financial information (10%) and employment, education and training support (9%). Other focuses included social care, support packs, immigration, youth engagement, relationships and complaints (see figure 2).
15. In Year 2 of the project, the three most common focuses of floating support sessions other than housing support were identity and culture (15%); financial information (13%); and health and wellbeing, including disability and neurodivergence (13%). In Year 3 of the project, the three most common focuses of floating support sessions other than housing support were education, employment and training (11%); health and wellbeing, including disability and neurodivergence (10%); and identity and culture (7%).



The wider benefits of floating support - Year 2 and Year 3

16. From Year 2 of the project, akt collected information on the wider benefits of the floating support provided to trans and non-binary young people. Some information was self-reported by the young people. Other information was reported on the basis of the team’s knowledge and observations.⁹ This data (based on 41 reported outcomes) indicates that the floating support had particular benefits in relation to improving self-worth and mental health; access to education or employment, and social inclusion (see figure 3).

⁹ Data was not recorded in all instances. For example, if young people engaged with the service for only a short time.



Floating support case studies Year 2 and Year 3

17. To further illustrate the specific, often transformational impact that effective floating support can have on trans and non-binary young people, the team produced a number of anonymised case studies (see Appendix B). The five case studies provide compelling reading and highlight the complex, interrelated issues that trans and non-binary young people face. All highlight the prevalence and impact of transphobia and abuse (from family, neighbours or other residents) that leads to homelessness and sometimes physical harm, as well as the importance of holistic wrap around support and advocacy in helping these young people.^{10 11}

18. The success of the floating casework support lies in its typically multilayered approach, often involving numerous interventions, including:

- Advocacy with other agencies
- Brokering multi-agency support
- Subsidising travel and moving costs
- Financial support for household items and clothing
- Completing application forms
- Support updating driving licences and passports

¹⁰ <https://www.akt.org.uk/resources/charlies-story/>

¹¹ <https://www.akt.org.uk/resources/tashs-story/>

- Advice and guidance on transition and medical services
- Completion of deed poll for legal name change
- Referral to youth engagement and other LGBTQ+ support
- Providing opportunities to make friends, create supportive networks and be part of a community in safe, warm spaces.

19. Young people who gave permission for their anonymised case studies to be used by akt (and as part of this report), commented positively on the benefits of the floating support:

The best thing about the TPP is its knowledge of trans issues and services and being flexible to the needs of young people. One way of supporting one person may not support another person. So it's a really good project to go on and get support with obviously housing, but also understanding deed polls and gender care and knowing where you can go for certain things (Case Study 3).

There's the knowledge about being trans so if you're not sure where to go for your name change or how to access gender care, TPP can help you find out what your next steps can be (Case Study 4).

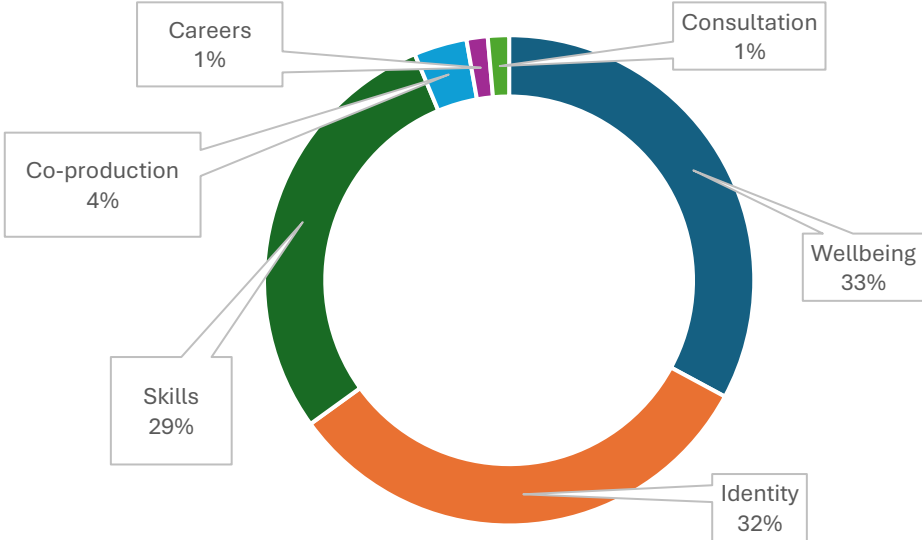
I have a very strong relationship with the people that I have now, it might not be the same people but I feel confident in the relationships that I have now and because I'm so secure with these relationships, I feel less lonely and I can just lean on them. (Case Study 5).

Output 5: Number and nature of youth engagement activities provided

20. Across the three year project, the TPP ran 108 youth engagement sessions, with an average attendance of around four or five young people. 69 sessions were delivered in Year 1 (above target), 27 in Year 2 (in line with target) and 12 in Year 3 (below the revised target of 22). In Year 3, the TPP team reduced the frequency of sessions to better meet the needs and availability of young people (see table 3). Sessions were also paused for a period of time while a new TPP youth engagement worker was recruited.
21. Across the three years, sessions focused on a range of topics and included skills building workshops, creative activities, social celebrations and attendance at larger scale community events such as Manchester Pride and Trans Day of Remembrance. Young people were also involved in consultation and co-production activities. Most commonly, sessions focused on wellbeing, identity and skills development (see figure 4).
22. Trans and non-binary young people who participated in the youth engagement activities noted important benefits including learning new skills, expressing creativity, making friends, growing their confidence and building community.

Table 3: TPP Youth Engagement Sessions in Year 3		
Date	Time	Session
24 May 2024	13:00	Planning Interview Panel – TP YE Worker
1 Aug 2024	17:00	Trans Pride placard making
3 Aug 2024	10:30	Trans Pride Manchester 2024
12 Sep 2024	17:00	Trans Pathway Group Agreement and Painting
26 Sep 2024	17:00	Bi+ Visibility and Coming Out Zines
10 Oct 2024	17:00	Black History Month Poetry Workshop
24 Oct 2024	17:00	Planning Free Haircuts Launch Scheme
7 Nov 2024	17:00	Peer Research Focus Group: World Café
20 Nov 2024	17:00	Trans Day of Remembrance
21 Nov 2024	17:00	TP Film Night
28 Nov 2024	13:00	Trans Admin Drop In
5 Dec 2024	17:00	Origami and Keychains

Fig 4: TPP youth engagement activities by focus, Years 1 to 3 (n=108)
 (% based on multiple focuses)

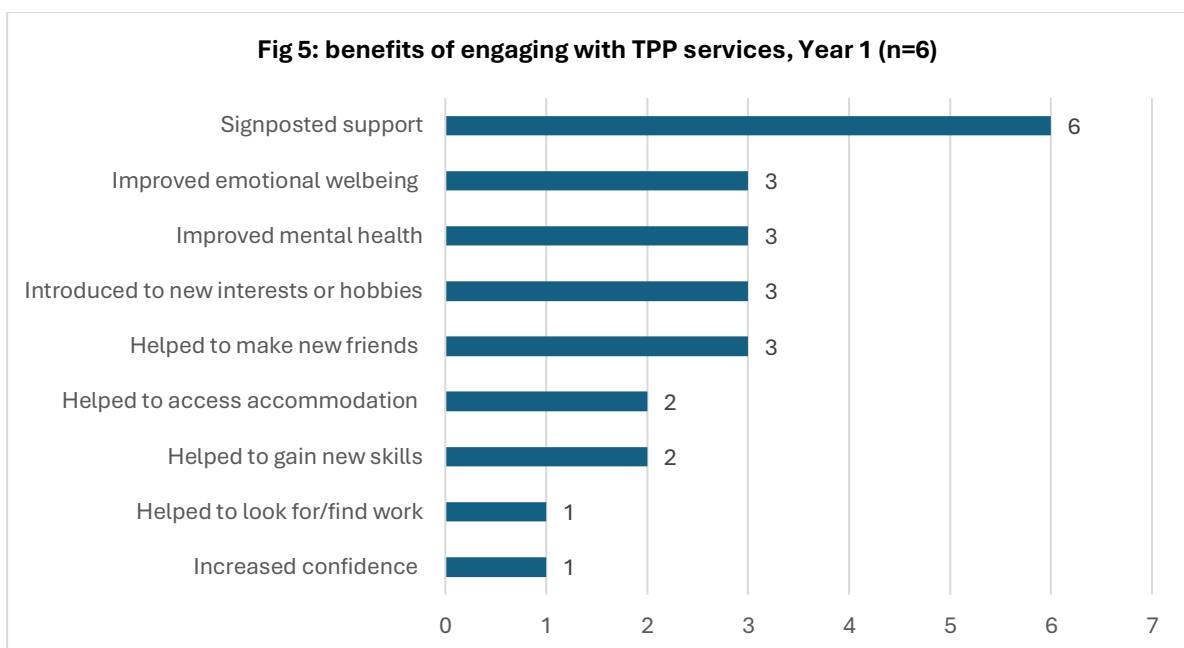


Part B: feedback from young people

23. From the outset, akt and the Trans Pathway Project team emphasised the importance of incorporating trans and non-binary young people's voices into decisions around service development and ongoing project evaluation.
24. Recognising a number of challenges in gathering feedback through more traditional approaches during Year 1 of the project, the team worked with the external evaluator and Groundswell to develop and trial peer-led evaluation activities with the aim of providing a deeper and richer qualitative data set, rooted in the young people lived experiences.¹²

Year 1

25. In Year 1 of the project, 13 trans and non-binary young people contributed to evaluation activities through their feedback at a youth engagement session (n=7) and through an optional survey (n=6). Although small in number, the young people were consistently positive about the TPP, particularly in relation to signposting of information and support, meeting new people, improvements to their emotional wellbeing, and gaining new skills and experiences (see figure 5). Those providing feedback at the youth engagement sessions noted that TPP staff were 'lovely', 'approachable' and 'friendly'. Those who completed the survey rated the TPP services as 4.8 out of 5.



¹² <https://groundswell.org.uk/>

26. Young people who provided written feedback for the Year 1 survey reported positively about the ease and speed of accessing help and support, the responsiveness of staff, the opportunities to develop new skills and try new activities, and the opportunity to talk about issues and improve mental health and sociability. Their positive comments were:

-The best part of the youth engagement aspects of the TPP for me has been the opportunities to try new skills and take part in activities I wouldn't normally have access to.. the support work gives me the opportunity to have a qualified adult who can listen, signpost and support me and my needs.

-The knowledge that there is a space that doesn't require payment or waiting lists months long, to feel safe and heard helps me to manage getting through some of my bad days.

-Knowing that there is support and that they try their best to help in every way they can. The ease of access, regarding information about housing.

-I had the opportunity to talk about my mental health and I improve being social. Super easy to contact support with quick replies.

Year 2 and Year 3

27. The Year 1 evaluation report identified several challenges obtaining in-depth evaluative feedback from young people involved with the project. Whilst some were keen to participate in evaluation activities, others were more reluctant, especially if evaluation activities involved talking to a cisgender evaluator.
28. To address this, a peer evaluator research approach was initiated in Year 3 of the project.¹³ This approach was designed to mitigate the concerns raised by trans and non-binary young people, enabling the project team to gather rich 'user voice' feedback.
29. In July 2024, akt recruited two trans adults with personal experience of homelessness as peer researchers. The peer researchers received training on conducting participant-led research, conducted interviews with young people supported by the TPP (n=7) and facilitated an insight-gathering workshop - World Café session - at the TPP youth group.
30. The findings from the peer-led evaluation activities were written up in a 'Trans Pathway Project Research Report' which provides the detailed evidence for this section of the project evaluation report.¹⁴ The report notes that the approach:

¹³ Peer evaluation can be defined as the process in which learners or users assess and determine the level, value, or quality of a service, product or performance of their peers who have the same status.

¹⁴ Written by the Trans Pathway Project Manager, the report outlines the approach, methodology and findings from the peer evaluation activities.

... represents a significant shift in akt's approach to evaluation. In contrast with traditional External Evaluation where an evaluator's distance from the affected community is assumed to provide objectivity, the Peer Researchers' lived experience can provide greater insight, relatability and trust for the interviewees. They are likely to have more personal experience as well as in-depth knowledge about key issues, and interviewees may feel less onus to explain and justify their experiences, reducing barriers to participation. This shift in approach reflects that trans-specific services which are not designed and evaluated with the involvement of trans people at every level are more likely to replicate transphobia and barriers to access. (TPP Peer Research Report, p1)

31. The interviews were semi-structured using an interview guide agreed upon by the peer researchers and Trans Pathway project frontline staff. Six interviews were conducted in-person and one over Zoom. Following the interviews, the peer researchers designed an insight-gathering workshop which they delivered at the Trans Pathway youth group. This workshop used a modified version of the World Café methodology to facilitate participant-led discussions exploring specific topics.¹⁵
32. Feedback from young people who participated in the interviews and World Café identified a number of strengths of the Trans Pathway Project. These related to:
- Supporting young people to access safer housing as well as day to day necessities such as food, clothing and hygiene products.
 - Staff advocating for young people and liaising with other services, which was noted as being particularly useful for neurodiverse participants.
 - Providing a space for young people to learn vital skills, such as cooking for themselves, and to express their creativity through art and poetry.

One young person commented:

He helps me with my adult life because I'm neurodivergent; I don't understand much, so he explains it all for me... A big one is that he helps me with my appointments. He helps me by coming to them with me, and also books them for me.

33. Young people also highlighted the importance of the Trans Pathway being a 'holistic' project that meets the specific needs of trans young people. The research report notes that 'the Trans Pathway also provides essential items and services for trans people, such as binders and deed polls'. It also can 'assist young people in accessing gender-affirming treatment by helping them with their referrals to NHS-funded gender identity services'.
34. Feedback from young people also highlighted the [positive] impact of Trans Pathway staff being trans, noting that 'they did not need to educate their caseworker on their additional

¹⁵ World Café is a method for knowledge sharing where groups of people discuss a topic at several small tables (like those in cafés) or virtual breakout rooms.

needs’ which led to ‘increased trust and safety for participants, especially those who previously had negative experiences with other organisations’.

As one young person commented:

In a lot of other situations, I won’t really talk about being trans... When you talk about your housing problems and stuff, I think it’s not considered. A cis person wouldn’t know that a trans person is thinking about these things safety wise... But the staff here know that young people are thinking, ‘Am I safe in this place?’”

35. The research report notes that participants indicated that the Trans Pathway project had helped them become proud of their trans identity. Through community building and trips such as Trans Pride, participants grew in confidence and experienced significant improvement to their mental health.

As one young person commented:

Now I can approach Queer people and Queer spaces a lot more comfortably... I’m a lot more assertive of what discussions make me feel uncomfortable, or make me feel objectified or devalued as a Queer person or a Person of Colour.

36. The trans and non-binary people also identified a number of challenges. In terms of the project itself, these related to:

- The lack of continuity in service provision as a result of high staff turnover and the loss of relationships with former staff.
- The temporary cessation of the TPP youth group, with participants losing touch with friends they had made through this space.
- The lack of structured group sessions, making it more intimidating for new or more socially anxious attendees (which sometimes led to interpersonal conflict or a breakdown in relationships between young people).

As one young person noted:

We all agree on this thing: we need consistency, continuity... We kept having people come and go. Like workers... you know I forget the names of some of them because they didn’t stick around that long... We need something stable. We need our little thing, and Trans Pathways is our little thing.

37. More widely, the young people noted challenges accessing timely trans-specialist support both at akt and beyond. The research report notes that ‘a third of participants felt that they had been negatively affected by long waiting times, either for the Trans Pathway itself or for onward referrals, such as for gender-affirming treatment.

38. The research report highlights that several young people had not known about akt or the Trans Pathway prior to referral, and ‘wished that they had been aware of the organisation’s services beforehand’. This led to participants feeling ‘regret about not receiving trans-specific support sooner’, with the delay in accessing NHS services ‘leading some to pursue unsupervised medical treatment’.
39. The research report notes that some young people reported a lack of a clear exit strategy or definition of success for the project. A minority felt ‘significant fear at the thought of aging out of the Trans Pathway’. Participants also highlighted that ‘no pathway, such as volunteering, exists for continued engagement with the community at akt’.

As one young person commented:

I don’t want to leave akt: not when my time’s up, not ever. I’m hoping that I can stay forever. Even if I end up in a better position myself and I can help other young people, like in a couple years’ time, new people who come to us.

40. In terms of lessons learnt, the research report states that ‘all the young people interviewed’ felt staff being trans or non-binary improved their ability to ask for help. They also highlighted the importance of:

- How intersectionality impacts housing and wider support needs, including: gender, ethnicity, disability and neurodiversity, race, care-experience, sexuality.
- Respect for complexities of gender identity and expression, including clothes, hairstyle, pronouns (including neopronouns, multiple pronouns, and changing pronouns), gender identities, names and name-changes.
- The importance of healthcare advocacy which goes ‘hand in hand’ with accessing safe housing for trans and non-binary people.

Representative comments from young people include:

It was really nice to be in a space where it felt like I didn’t have to mask... what makes me an individual was actually appreciated rather than something to gawk at.

They don’t care about what you wear, or what name you want, or what pronouns you want to use, or what hairstyle you want to have, it’s kind of just a place of acceptance. They know the journey.

I’m an autistic, I have physical disabilities, I’m a queer trans person, I’ve struggled a lot with money, I’ve struggled a lot with getting jobs, I’ve struggled a lot socially, and it is a really difficult to transition into adulthood and trying to find my place in the world and trying to find a place to live... and akt and Trans Pathway really helped smooth that transition and that is incredibly important.

41. The research report notes the importance for young people in making TPP spaces accessible, particularly in relation to:

- Reimbursing travel, offering food and drink, and providing warm spaces.
- Giving service users the opportunity (through co-production) to develop skills, take responsibility and make decisions about what they need.
- Maintaining a broad remit for those who are struggling to transition into adulthood... combatting isolation and fear of the future through meeting, connecting and learning from other trans and non-binary people.

As one young person commented:

When I joined Trans Pathway I had never met another South Asian trans person before. [At] Trans Pathway, I met two... and it was like looking into a hopeful mirror. Because I was looking at these people and they were at a completely different stage of life to where I am and I aspire to be them.

42. The research report notes a number of barriers faced by young people when trying to access support services which are helpful to consider when reviewing current interventions or planning new ones. In summary, these include:

- Past bad experiences with support services. Trans specific experiences of homelessness are often not recognised by mainstream services. Young people with intersectional rarely receive adequate support.
- Young people fear that opening up will be 'used against' them. They may be unwilling to leave an abusive home for fear of homelessness, without savings or work. Housing offered by non-LGBTQ+ services is often unsafe.
- Young people don't know about trans and non-binary specific services. Many trans or non-binary people don't know any other trans or non-binary people and are too socially isolated to be signposted by friends.

Illustrative comments from young people:

The TPP helped me understand that other people are not entitled to my trans identity... before then I pathologised my transness, because that's how it is in the mental health system... mental health services are not equipped to support trans people and it put me back in the closet for two years.

I just wasn't meeting the criteria, because I had somewhere to go back to. Except the place I had to go back to was just a living hell.

For lots of young trans people there aren't a lot of places that do support trans people. And it seems that the whole LGBT community, but primarily trans right now, are kind of forgotten about.

Part C: feedback from the peer evaluators

43. Two trans peer-evaluators with lived experience of homelessness worked with current and former Trans Pathway participants as part of a peer-led approach to incorporating young-people's voices into the end of project findings.
44. The peer evaluators reported feeling well supported by the project team. Both noted that the experience was enjoyable, had added significantly to their research skills, and built on their personal and professional experiences to date. They commented:

[I] was made homeless by my parents as a teenager and have since experienced instances of housing insecurity, the work was very close to my heart. On a professional level, I was excited to have the opportunity to use the research skills I gained in my postgraduate studies in a workplace environment. I am hoping to pursue doctoral studies in the future so I think that my involvement in the project will strengthen my applications for which I'm very grateful.

I've volunteered in trans support spaces for nine years now. The actual interviewing stuff was quite natural to me. I've done a lot of that before. I took this as a learning opportunity... to broaden that and do different things with my skills, especially because I have a background in research... and also on a personal level it gave me an opportunity to re-evaluate elements of my own past.

45. Their reflections on the Trans Pathway Project more widely, the young people's experience, the development of a peer-led approach and the subsequent research report findings, underscore the three year pilot's value and importance, particularly in the current socio economic climate. They commented:

I think programmes like these are needed. Having had some of the same experiences but not had a space, it was interesting to see and also to learn... to be like, oh yeah, my healthcare situation absolutely affected my housing back in the day. My trans status absolutely affected my health. If somebody is trying to get somebody back into work or into a house and they're treating those as isolated problems - then it's just not going to work. There is power in having a programme that is open to all the problems that somebody might be having that affects their housing.

Housing insecurity is a great problem generally at the moment given the socioeconomic conditions in the UK... But for trans young people in particular who often lack support and equal access to employment and education, it is even more dire. I hope that the research will at least provide a clearer picture of this reality to enable further improvement within the sector to better support our community's needs. I think that the final report is a good insight into the barriers that trans young people face when accessing housing support, and how the TPP team tried to mitigate these.

46. The two peer evaluators expressed nuanced differences in opinion when talking about the onboarding and training they had received. One valued the time taken by the TPP team to get them up to speed, the opportunities to get to know each other and the opportunities

to 'learn the language' of the approach, stating that 'I very much appreciated that so much care was taken. Even though obviously we're not full time or even part time staff'. By contrast, another felt that the training provided by the external agency wasn't:

the most efficient use of time... the trainers talked more about their own past projects, rather than helping us develop a firm plan for this research. For example, we briefly looked at the draft interview guide for less than an hour and that was probably the most helpful section of the training.

47. The peer evaluators were actively involved in developing the questions which went 'through quite a rigorous series of drafts' and noted that the young people who were interviewed 'were all very up for it'. Both evaluators valued the clear intention and efforts of the Trans Pathway to involve young people as part of the planning and development of the approach, but also recognised that this was not always possible. They noted:

I think it would have been useful to have a representative or two involved in the planning stage, almost as a consultant, just to provide feedback on the structure of the group session, the interview guide etc. I don't think this would have greatly changed things, but I'm sure there would have been useful insights and it may have led to a greater sense of buy-in from the service users.

There was really an attempt, it seems, made to get the young people involved at the very beginning of the peer research process... at the interview stage. And that, for whatever reason, didn't quite work out. But I think that that is good practice because we're specifically talking about people who have been used to being talked at and interrogated. I think this is a very good example of where I think peer research is very important.

48. Both peer evaluators felt the interviews were successful overall, with one noting that 'the interviews provided a snapshot into the experiences of people with differing backgrounds in the community whilst still highlighting the commonalities present'. A second evaluator noted some challenges when young people were unable to attend interviews 'at the last minute'. They also surmised that more young people may have participated had [the interviews and World Café] been at an earlier stage in the project, recognising that:

... the programme went through a lot of changes in terms of who the front facing support workers and programme leaders were by the time we came in as peer evaluators. These changes had affected at least some of the participants of the programme. To the extent that I think some of them weren't accessing it as much as they used to... It was kind of at a point of just beginning to sort of rebuild. I guess maybe if we'd come in year two, we might have been able to talk with a lot more people, get a lot more broad ideas of what was going on. I think we would have gotten more results if it had been at a time where the programme was running, had been running more smoothly for longer.

49. Reflecting on what they had learned from participants about the overarching benefits of the Trans Pathway, the peer evaluators highlighted the holistic, open and intersectional approach of the project, the added value of trans support staff, and the trans-specific and gender affirming support provided. They commented:

There were a lot of different ways that the people that I interviewed had come onto this programme. It wasn't necessarily being homeless. In that sense the only hard and fast rule of the programme is – as I understood - that people in some way relate to the trans community. Participants coming onto the programme or at least speaking with me about the programme were very aware of the fact that there were lots of different things that they could get support with. They were also coming onto the programme for lots of different reasons that weren't necessarily a small box that homelessness sometimes gets defined under. So, I think it's that sort of that knowledge of intersectionality.

It was encouraging to hear that some young people feel that they can receive inclusive support from non-LGBTQ specific organisations. However, I think that their stories do demonstrate the advantages and the greater ease with which they can work with case workers who are also trans.

I think the key benefit of the TPP for the service users interviewed was being able to access gender affirming items outside of healthcare. Things like binders, cosmetics, clothing swaps, etc. These can sometimes have a more immediate impact on the ease with which we can move through society than medical interventions, but are often less frequently provided by support services... and can be prohibitively expensive.

I think also having the access to community space and caseworkers who can liaise with mainstream housing charities to advocate for service users, especially for young people in care, seems possibly a more efficient use of funding than the organisation providing a dedicated housing service for trans young people.

50. Both noted the challenges raised by a lack of continuity in youth engagement support at points in the programme, and the impact this had on some young people, notably in terms of their sense of trust and security, as well as the relationships formed with each other.
51. One of the peer evaluators reflected at length on the value of peer-led research and evaluation, weighing up its benefits and drawbacks. Whilst concluding that it was the right approach for this particular project, they recognise that consideration needs to be given as to when and how best to use peer-led approaches. In particular, they note the sensitive balance that needs to be struck between the empowering potential of the peer researcher and the risk of closing down conversations or over-projecting. They commented:

Peer research isn't the right decision every time. The reason that they needed a peer researcher in this particular project is because we're talking about people who might not feel confident speaking to just anybody. And so in this case, having had some experiences that overlap in some ways means that it can empower people to speak about their own experiences because they know they at least can trust more. This person is going to actually hear what is being said because it's not just coming from a checklist point of view. It's coming from a 'yes, I understand exactly what you mean because I also I literally understand'. Some of the downsides of peer research are closing things down and also over-projecting onto participants. Something that really worked in this process was the fact that we were going through such a rigorous process. But there is that risk of it being about the peer element and not the peer element being in service to helping young people be able to speak.

Part D: feedback from the project team and akt staff

52. Semi-structured interviews, lasting between 45 minutes and an hour, were undertaken via Teams with the TPP Project Manager, TPP Floating Caseworker, TPP Youth Engagement Worker, a Senior Services Manager and the Director of Services.¹⁶ The interviews focused specifically on Years 2 and 3 of the project with a particular focus on the project's key successes and challenges and the lessons learned for the team and akt more widely.

The project's successes

53. The project team and akt staff identified a number of project successes. In summary these related to the advantages of a 'by and for' service; the development of a coherent, holistic, wrap-around offer; the positive opportunities for advocacy and mainstreaming best practices; the importance of providing a safe space for trans and non-binary young people to explore their identity, grow and find a community; the empowerment of staff and young people through visibility at public events; sharing learning and upskilling akt staff; and the development of co-production and peer-led evaluation approaches.

A 'By and For' Service

54. The value of a 'by and for' service was recognised by staff as a key contributor to the project's success.¹⁷ Lived experience was embedded in the project with all TPP staff from the trans and non-binary community. This had a positive impact on service users, building their trust and confidence, enhancing responsiveness, supporting improved outcomes and offering positive role models. As one TPP team member summed up:

One really big success is the fact that lived experience is so embedded in it. I think that's something that's really important to the young people. In their feeling that they don't have to constantly explain themselves. It can be really impactful as well to be supported by someone who's trans, because often you only see trans and non-binary people as someone who is being supported or having stuff done to them. You know, it's often a cisgender expert in quote marks that is dictating how your life goes. You're seen as passive in that. So I think it's really powerful to get that support from someone who is like them. Then they can see more possibilities for themselves... the possibility of leading projects that are about them.

¹⁶ Only one out of the five interviewees were involved in the project in Year 1.

¹⁷ In this report, the term 'by and for' is used to describe services which have been designed, developed and delivered by specialists who have lived experiences that are shared with those in receipt of the service offer.

A coherent, holistic, wrap-around service

55. The project's flexibility in providing wrap-around services, often over more extended periods of time, enabled staff to better meet trans and non-binary young people's complex needs, whilst maintaining a core 'housing first' focus. The project also enabled the development of a complementary, joined up approach to casework and youth engagement activities. The 'holistic' approach was characterised by good information sharing with youth engagement sessions often developed in line with priorities identified through casework. Reflecting on this, akt staff commented:

The fact that we have case work and youth engagement within the same programme means we're able to work really closely together to support young people in a holistic way. We're very good at information sharing. We can plan the youth sessions so that they meet needs people have identified in case work. If everyone's struggling to maintain housemate relationships we might do sessions about confidence and navigating conflict and respecting boundaries. Or if everyone's really struggling because they can't eat on a budget we might do a cooking project looking at cheap meals that you can make in a short time at home.

Having the floating support offer twin with the youth engagement, providing that wrap around approach is definitely something we can learn from. Our services team outside of Trans Pathway operates very differently. They're busy with a lot of crisis intervention... work that requires, immediate attention. It's hard to balance the link and cohesiveness between youth engagement and the core service offer. With Trans Pathway, the success was that they sat together and worked really closely together.

56. The ability of the TPP team to sensitively manage complex cases over longer time periods, without the same delivery pressures as akt's core service offer, was a key element in meeting the needs of trans and non-binary young people. Surmising that without this type of approach, the young people may not have received the support they needed, one akt staff member commented:

There is one person in particular on the programme... that has been a really careful and long bit of work for the floating support to offer. I really think without it they wouldn't have been able to get to where they are now. They're not housed, they're still street homeless... they still have such a long way to go, but I really think that without the service, they probably would just be destitute. If you're only doing one of those a year it's so special - because when you're working with people this age this could be a pivotal point. It is really good at that core age to try and work with people with complex needs and get them out of that trap that they're stuck in. But it takes intensive care and sensitive work - client led work.

Advocacy and mainstreaming best practices

57. Although TPP team members note 'mixed results', the project has led to more positive relationships with a range of partners, notably in terms of institutional advocacy. The team

has been successful in challenging other organisations to achieve positive outcomes for trans and non-binary young people, and have begun to see some organisations become more trans inclusive. As one team member explained:

I have so much contact with like local authorities and education and housing associations. I use that as a chance to advocate for institutional change. I feel like we've had some successes there particularly with Manchester City Council. They're becoming a lot more trans affirming... trans inclusive.

A lot of my role is like challenging decisions from the local authority. When we feel like they're not taking [young people's] additional needs into consideration. I've successfully challenged and overturned multiple local authority homeless decisions, often based on transphobia.

58. It takes time to effect change. Persistence by the TPP team has led to more positive partnerships with other organisations and incrementally improved mainstreaming of good practices. Notable examples of this relate to local authority housing support officers, accommodation providers, university support services and domestic violence services. Whilst the team note progress can be 'quite slow', they argue it represents 'a marked' difference in attitudes and behaviours. As a TPP team member explains:

I've developed some good relationships with specific housing officers, particularly the domestic abuse housing officers who originally didn't understand the significance of trans young people's experiences. But I think over a few joint cases I have seen a change in acknowledging the experiences that they have.

I've had a couple of young people move into support accommodation around here. When my first young person moved in they were quite bad, misgendering him and [they] didn't consider his additional needs around gender identity. I think it's my third young person living in that specific accommodation now and there's such a difference in the way the staff, like, respect their pronouns, respect their names. The staff have even started making referrals directly to Trans Pathway.

I've a good relationship with [a university] homelessness team. They've really started to recognise a need for trans young people who are at the university to have additional support. They offer it at first touch now, rather than having to keep going back and requesting it.

I've had a couple of cases that were domestic violence related and we were trying to get help from [an organisation] and they wouldn't really have it. But in the last few months they have really come around and they housed one young trans woman the other month. It's the first time they've done something like that. They are more willing to engage with me. I think that's [the result] of work over a period of time.

Providing a safe space to explore identity, grow and find a community

59. Another success of the project has been helping trans and non-binary young people 'to feel like they have a place' both within akt and the wider community. Providing a safe, warm, free unpressured space for trans and non-binary young people to explore their

identity and enabling young people to make friends, forge networks, and grow in their confidence and self-belief. Two staff members commented:

At the moment with how things are for trans people, it's very easy to feel isolated or there's no place for them. I think we're doing a lot of really good work around community building. A big thing is allowing them the space to explore their gender identity. Oftentimes our young people might change their pronouns, change their names often. I've had a couple of cases recently leave the trans pathway to move over to casework because they don't have gender identity needs anymore. So I think holding that space just to allow them to explore what feels right. We see a visible difference in the young people when we're a few months down the line... their confidence, their self-esteem.

It's very important for this space to exist for the young people that were accessing the service. When you read the peer research report there's a South Asian trans person talking about having never met other trans people, let alone South Asian trans people. That's a really cool experience for them in terms of their life expanding. To be able to facilitate that organically through people attending a group is really special.

Empowerment through visibility

60. For young people, as well as for the TPP team and akt more widely, the visibility gained through attendance at events such as Manchester Pride and Trans Day of Remembrance has been empowering, providing a platform to promote trans issues and celebrate the work being done through the Trans Pathway. Reflecting on this, akt staff commented:

One of the things that I'd noticed pretty soon into starting was that our outside voice and participation was quite limited. I felt that it was important to have a speech at Trans Day of Remembrance, but also to show up as an organisation regardless of whether we had young people coming or not. And that's what happened.

It's been important to understand that visibility at events is really important in terms of generating referrals and building strategic partnerships. I think within a Manchester context as well, it allows us strategically to have conversations with commissioners, senior stakeholders. It open doors for us. One of the proudest moments for me was when X and Y spoke at Manchester Pride. It was phenomenal what they said and having our organisation and the young people in that space is really important.

Trans people's experiences with politics are very different to LGBTQ experiences and so it does need to be like a separate platform of conversation. The visibility and campaigning for systems change... if we had more time and money, that's what we'd be focusing on. Alongside the delivery of services being able to be a professional body that can speak and educate on these things. Providing training to local authorities and housing associations and supported accommodations on how to work with trans people. I know that that's where they would have liked to have taken it. But what they did within that three years, even presenting learnings to the funder, like a massive mainstream charity, was really special.

Sharing learning and upskilling staff at akt

61. Whilst recognising in part that more could have perhaps been done at an earlier stage, the TPP resulted in positive opportunities to share research, insights and specialist knowledge around trans issues across akt more widely, upskilling staff and enhancing understanding at all levels of the organisation. As staff explained:

It's definitely allowed the staff on the programme to upskill other staff around trans-specific casework. It's given us a real ability to educate or increase understanding for our trustees, to understand the importance of trans and non-binary issues. It's not just one homogeneous LGBTQ covering everything.

Some of the positive learning was when Trans Pathway [team] presented at an all staff meeting on the peer research project. That was really, really special for all of akt to learn about the project. I think we need more of that in the future... more feedback service-wide on how it's going and what we're doing and why we're doing it. For people to take into their own practice. Because some of these things happening in Trans Pathway can be organically embedded into other people's practice.

Not all trans young people are on the trans pathway so often times... we used to have the case workers sending deed polls over to us and be like oh, 'I don't really understand' or 'can you do this for my own person?' So we had a session with other colleagues and told everyone how you do a deed poll how you do it for free... like the admin of it. And now they do that themselves with their own people rather than passing it to the trans pathway. That's just one example of like, upskilling other colleagues.

Co-production and peer-led evaluation

62. A final success of the project was the peer-led evaluation pilot. This included the benefits of co-production, the involvement of trans peer evaluators with lived experience of homelessness, and the valuable insights provided by the 'peer research report'.
63. There was common agreement that co-production and peer evaluation of services was a valuable approach that should be built into future projects from the outset. However, there was also recognition that it was difficult to achieve, time consuming, resource heavy and needs to be planned carefully to optimise its uses and benefits for service users and the organisation. To this end staff commented:

When I arrived there was this really brilliant report that X had been working on with a youth volunteer - an alumni of the project - to create this co-production report. A big part of my role has been about taking that forward. We've been able to make a lot of progress and do things differently - like the peer research project. That feels very like transformational, transformative. The thing that's challenging is it takes a lot of resource and it takes a lot of time to do it well. You need to establish what the appropriate level of co-production is for a different activities. You also need to set like clear parameters for young people so that the work that they do can be impactful rather than frustrating so they know what resources they're working with.

The piece around the peer research and having young people's voices more at the core, that is 100% one of the biggest successes. Having that ability to listen to feedback and respond and get the peer research training... that's you know been heavily influential in our youth voice work going forward. But it's also quite a commitment. It's also quite a cost commitment. It's quite a time commitment.

It was quite big for what it was delivering. It was quite time heavy. I would love to have used that model for other things, like creation. I would want to take that kind of set up and use it for the beginning of projects.

I think Co production is amazing, but everything doesn't have to be co-production. It's around where there are opportunities for co-production that are going to have the biggest benefit to the young people. Some things are more actually better if a specialist is helping.

The project's challenges

64. The project team and akt staff identified a number of common challenges and barriers to success across the three year pilot project. In summary, these related to the current political and socio economic climate, the wider housing crisis and negative societal attitudes to trans issues; the emotional impact of the project on staff's health, wellbeing and staff turnover; differing internal perspectives on representation, communication and risk; project closure and exit planning for staff and young people; and the need to balance flexible working practices with sharper oversight and a focus on outcomes.

Socio economic climate, housing crisis and societal attitudes to trans issues

65. A major challenge across the three years of the project (for TPP staff and young people) has been the political and socio economic climate, the housing crisis in the UK, exacerbated by a lack of trans-specific services, and negative or hostile attitudes to trans and non-binary young people in society and the media. As TPP team members comment:

It is really challenging to secure housing for any young people because of the cost of living crisis. But in support services there's not much recognition of the needs that trans and non-binary young people have. Our service user group is really vulnerable to abuse [and] violence. And yet because of transphobia they're not perceived as vulnerable. Often local authorities aren't taking the young people's needs seriously. They're listening to experiences of quite serious domestic abuse and thinking that it's just a family falling out or that it would be appropriate to ask a young person to go back into the closet so that they can go home.

Working within our current society, which I feel is inherently quite transphobic, it's hard to get the support that you need as a trans person. I think it's very hard for individual trans people to be heard and for their views to be respected. It's quite draining after a while to have to advocate for that for young people because it's something that we believe so strongly.

Emotional impact, wellbeing and staff turnover

66. Whilst the fact that the TPP team were trans was a central and positive factor in terms of their enhanced knowledge, understanding and approach to the services provided, it also presented challenges, notably in terms of their health and wellbeing. As one staff member commented there are pros and cons to having a 'by and for' service:

One being that the trans people that run and work in this service are very emotionally connected to the work. That can be the driving force in success, but it can also mean that they are themselves personally impacted by it. Their wellbeing is impacted. They can also develop a sense of feeling separated and being given all the responsibility for something which you identify with, especially if your cis counterparts aren't offering it. I think success in a by and for project would be that the people around it are also actively absorbing the learning and doing the work. If that doesn't happen, it just feels like you're punching the air.

67. The potential emotional impact of the pilot was recognised by all at the outset. Additional clinical supervision was in place, including group supervision which was valued by the team. However, at times, the demands of the project, exacerbated by the small size of the team, changes in personnel, increased workload, delays in recruitment, and additional pressures stemming from such a close, personal involvement in the project, led to illness and lowered morale. Reflecting on these challenges, staff commented:

Staff welfare and the pressure it puts on staff is the biggest [challenge] by far and the resources that takes as well. We built in additional clinical supervision that was kind of pre-empted. But gaps in staffing and staff leaving has an impact in terms of emotional wellbeing and the cost associated with sickness.

If you are deeply, emotionally connected to the cause and the work that you do, your emotional resilience will naturally be a bit lower. That is why we needed to have that extra clinical supervision in place and support processes for the team to be able to reflect. But there's always going to be a moment where people feel a bit devalued and that all of the responsibilities [are] on you. Another layer is that there was sickness and gaps, and the loss of staff. When you don't have someone in post for six months it's a really big deal.

When you're staffing something with only one member of staff per role, that is minimal staffing. You're placing so much pressure on one person to never get sick. We've kind of slowed down the project delivery a lot. So we went from weekly to fortnightly with the youth group. We're trying to embed this like care ethic as well because I don't want to be in a project where marginalised staff are burning themselves out.

68. Gaps in provision and capacity also impacted young people. Maintaining and building on engagement with youth activities has been a persistent challenge, relating in part to fluctuating staffing levels, capacity and continuity, but also the demands on young people with busy lives. As staff members explained:

Staff turnover also has a big impact on young people's sense of stability. I think for our type of young people who are very isolated or have never had stable adults in their life it's very hard for them to see [staff] coming in and out of their lives because they feel quite a connection to us. I think that initially had quite negative impact on engagement from young people with the project.

Engagement [is challenging] especially at this time of year. It's too cold. It's so long to travel, we can't offer Ubers to everyone. And people have a lot on because it's so hard to maintain a life outside of education and work. As a youth engagement team, we want to put on things all the time, but that obviously spreads the net of engagement. So on paper, it doesn't look like people are turning up to sessions but over a week it adds up. The hardest bit at the moment is not getting down about the lack of engagement.

Representation, communication and risk

69. Piloting a trans-specific project has been a positive but complex and multilayered challenge for akt. The TPP team note pressures stemming from what they view as limited representation at some levels of the organisation, inconsistent internal communications, and a lack of involvement in relevant policy development or decision making. At best these experiences are deemed 'frustrating', at worst they are felt to be 'microaggressions'. Cited examples involve 'not being included in emails', 'not being taken seriously' or being 'over supervised'. As TPP staff members explained:

No one wants it [TPP] to be successful as much as we do. So I think I've been frustrated that we're not always part of like the big strategic conversation. Or that we get involved at a late stage or a decision gets handed down to us once it's been made that really needed to have trans people in the room.

70. TPP staff would also like akt to take a more visible stance promoting its trans-specific work and projects, managing the risk associated with projects that can be seen as controversial or result in negative attention:

There's risk entering into this type of work. How [external] negativity can impact on project staff, your social media team, your fundraising as well. Asking have we not got fundraising...because its trans pathway? There are probably people who haven't funded us because we're doing this work or we're talking about it.

Project closure and exit planning

71. A final organisational level challenge for the pilot project relates to preparation and planning for it ending, and the impact this has on TPP staff and young people. Whilst the

three year programme provided greater continuity for staff and service users than shorter term funded initiatives, it was nevertheless time limited.¹⁸

72. TPP staff report finding the precariousness of the project additionally challenging, something that has been exacerbated by the view that the end of the project has not been well-planned for. For individual team members this can increase anxiety; for specific staff groups more widely this potentially leads to increased workplace insecurity; for the organisation it can lead to a loss of expertise and surges in workload for other teams; for young people it can lead to a loss of critical support. Reflecting on this, staff commented.

The way that it's ending has been difficult for everybody. It probably wasn't planned well enough. We should have been preparing staff to leave a bit earlier, even if we were seeking alternative funding. I think there was some mismanagement of the ending. I'm really glad that we get to do the showcase... to celebrate. But that's also the last day of everybody working there, so it's pregnant with many different kinds of feelings. It impacts the organisation and young people in a different way. We're handing cases over to the core Manchester team, which is fine because it's not like we're just going to stop in the middle of advocacy work, but it's the softer work... we can't have people on our caseloads in the core offer that don't have a housing need.

A big challenge at the minute is the insecurity of the project or the insecurity of our roles. It's been quite hard for me recently to feel positive about our successes in the future because we have no confirmation that the project is going to be extended past April. And I'm a trans young person myself. I'm only 25, so I'm like the cohort that we are working with.

73. akt senior leaders acknowledge the impact of this uncertainty on staff members and accept that there are lessons to learn from how the process was managed. Leaders explored avenues for continued funding well before and right up to the project's end date, wanting to keep staff informed without overpromising. Unfortunately, no further funding was secured and akt had to move to close the project.

Working practices, oversight and outcomes

74. The broad responsiveness of the TPP with its twin-focused floating support and youth engagement activities is seen as centrally beneficial to the success of the project.
75. However, also staff note that there is a balance to be struck between flexible approaches that meet the complex needs of service users, and the drive to deliver results, particularly around housing outcomes. Reflecting on this, akt staff commented:

¹⁸ At the time of writing, funding has not been secured to extend the project; it will close at the end of March 2025.

We're not being as strict on closures, on endings. It's not saying that there's not an argument for the cases to still be open. But I think some of the practices that developed quite responsively were maybe not aligned with akt elsewhere.

If I'd had more time and more involvement, I would have liked to have looked more at the housing element of Trans Pathway, like the housing goals. It doesn't mean getting more... it's just I would have liked to see a bit more learning around the client-led housing outcomes work.

Ongoing developments and lessons learnt

76. The TPP team and senior managers identified several associated areas of development and lessons learnt. These related to the importance of lived experience, intersectionality and keeping support simple; the value of flexible and responsive service design rooted in young people's needs; recognition that 'one type' of youth engagement is unlikely to meet diverse needs; the importance of increasing trans-specific representation, visibility and learning in organisations working with trans and non-binary young people; the potential for Trans Pathway as a model; and a need to enhance oversight and outcomes.

Lived experience, intersectionality and keeping it simple

77. Supporting trans and non-binary young people requires a good understanding of their lived experiences, 'the things' that are most important to them, the 'intersectionality' of the issues they face, and how these impact on achieving wider positive outcomes (housing, employment, education, health or wellbeing). As a TPP team member noted:

I think a lesson is the importance of lived experience roles. I really don't think that could be understated in a project and a role like this. I don't feel like we would have had a fraction of the impact if all our staff had been Cis or hadn't had lived homelessness experience as well. I think akt appreciates lived homelessness experience and I think a lesson they could learn is that that this also applies to other things as well.

78. Whilst recognising the complex needs of many trans and non-binary young people, the TPP team's experiences suggest that there may be a tendency to overcomplicate what is needed and that this can become a barrier in itself. As a TPP team member explained, whilst certainly nuanced, the solutions are potentially more straightforward:

You don't have to meet every need. But you need to understand some of the processes that are important to them. Within the housing sector, we would really like more people to understand the parts that are relevant to them, like deed poles, name changes etc. Being able to support someone to access a trans friendly GP in their area, that's relevant to housing because every time your post code changes, you might be losing access to essential healthcare. Understanding a bit about trans young people's mental health and the issues that are in the news that might be impacting them. I think it actually is quite simple what we want organisations to know. There's sometimes a tendency to actually over complicate it and to treat trans and non-binary young people as if they were like you know, so complex and so different from everyone else.

Flexible and responsive service design

79. Another key lesson learned was the importance of listening to young people and adapting to their needs as part of a flexible, non-prescriptive design process. Whilst this was not without challenges, such as balancing flexibility and outcomes delivery, the TPP team continually refined its approach to floating support to better respond to the ‘complex’, interrelated needs of trans and non-binary young people. TPP team members summed up the benefits of adaptation and client-led approaches:

We're focusing on the cases where the cause of homelessness are more related to transphobia and being trans and not having services that meet specific needs. Previously, we were taking on kind of like anyone who was trans and had, like a crisis situation. What was really needed was for us to focus on the circumstances where being trans and being excluded were the things that were adding that complexity.

I think maybe when the project was set up we were like, oh, it's mainly housing projects. And if they have additional needs, we can deal with that as well. Whereas we've sort of identified that the roadblock of identity for trans young people is so important to overcome before we can start [to support]. So we listen to them when they tell us that ‘I can't progress with this until I do this’. That's fine. We'll work with that. I think that's been really important. Not being prescriptive. You can be on the trans pathway even if you're just questioning your gender identity, you don't need to be pursuing transition. There is no one way to be trans.

80. The TPP was aimed at 18-25 year olds. Reflecting on the typical needs of the trans and non-binary young people accessing support, the team conclude that the slightly older age groups are often much better placed to benefit, but may ‘age out’ of the project quickly, limiting support. They suggest increasing the upper age limit would be warranted for future projects to mitigate such problems. As one TPP team member summed up:

Often trans people have delayed life experiences... oftentimes for trans people ‘my life starts when I start transition’ or when I start to feel I need to affirm my identity. A lot of young people are 24-25 when they come to us, which means we can only work for them for a year. But they've had delayed life experiences because they haven't felt able to progress with housing or jobs or whatever, because they've only just started hormones. I think I would like to see the age range change a little bit, maybe up to 28 or something like that.

One size youth engagement sessions do not fit all

81. Across the three year project different approaches to youth engagement work were delivered, refined, introduced and reconsidered in an attempt to find an approach that met young peoples’ needs, optimised their engagement (and attendance) and delivered positive ‘softer’ outcomes. In Year 2 and Year 3 of the project, the TPP team note making ‘a conscious decision to slow down’ the youth engagement group activities to enhance reliability, planning, quality and impact. This responded to the pressures on staff (a lack

of capacity) but also recognised the personal situations of the young people themselves that sometimes led to their low or erratic attendance. A team member explained:

Instead of weekly session - which was high demand on staff and creates circumstances where young people rely on that space. If you can't provide it, it's a big issue for them - we've tried to be more realistic about what we can reliably provide. So a fortnightly session rather than a weekly session that keeps having to get cancelled.

82. In Year 3, the team introduced a 'life admin' drop session, bringing together floating support and youth engagement as complementary and mutually beneficial activities. This session was seen to empower young people when completing important administrative tasks and made more efficient use of the caseworker support. A team member noted:

A change we've made recently actually is having admin sessions for people on Trans Pathway. It's really for trans young people accessing akt, but it's only been trans pathway young people that have come so far. It's basically just like drop in sessions every other week where trans young people can come and get life admin done. Whether that's like deed polls, updating name documents or those sort of practical things that don't need a whole casework session. It gives them the confidence to do it themselves. I think it also gives them a bit of ownership about those admin tasks, which can be quite scary for trans young people. I think that's [also] having a positive impact on my caseload and my capacity.

83. The appointment of a new youth worker midway through Year 3 of the project has led to renewed reflections on the different ways to plan and deliver youth engagement, recognising that there is still much to learn about which approach works best. They noted:

With the current kind of cost of living landscape a lot of young people are working insane hours and are juggling a couple of jobs and education. The timing - which is currently Thursday evenings every two weeks - doesn't quite work anymore. I think something a bit more regular and a bit more streamlined in terms of having a set programme where they know everything coming up front makes it a bit more engaging.

Increasing representation, visibility and learning

84. The project demonstrated the need for representation of trans and non-binary staff in organisations working with trans and non-binary young people, including akt, with regular opportunities for those staff (and young people) to share their lived experience, knowledge and expertise to inform strategy, organisational development and up to date best practices. Alongside this, the project also highlighted the value of akt sharing its trans-specific work in public arenas and working closely with other organisations to share learning and mainstream trans-positive practices. Reflecting on this topic, staff noted:

Representation is important but we're not representing all. We've got a broad range walking through the door but sometimes they are not the ones consulting with us. I don't quite know how you get round that because we have really tried to make sure we used different platforms and not just thinking about friends of friends. There's also...the importance of representation from that group within our workforce, particularly those frontline facing. The importance of space that's kind of ring fenced. Thinking about intersectional identities is key, whether that's thinking about our new strategy or how we consult young people. There's also something around internal training around trans and non-binary issues. It's a nuanced area. It changes quickly. The language is important... that staff understand and don't unintentionally create more trauma.

Being loud and being present; being as important in the organisation. Sometimes we feel separate and sometimes we're not. The Trans Remembrance Day really helped with solidifying our presence within the organisation and giving us the confidence that we can just take the reins and take the lead on trans issues and talk about them and educate. I think we often shied away from that up until recently. We don't work with other organisations enough closely. I think for me one of the big things is trying to share our findings as much as possible and make it clear that projects like this are super important. It changes people's lives.

The Trans Pathway as a model and widening its reach

85. Reflecting on the project, staff suggest that Trans Pathway 'as a model for other organisations' may be an approach that bridges the gap between wholly specialised services (that can become 'swamped' or 'self-isolating') and mainstream services which often lack the knowledge and confidence to embed 'trans-friendly' approaches as part of their day to day work. One TPP team member explained how this might work:

A housing provider of whatever kind, like the local authority or a refuge or something could have a trans pathway worker. They could have someone who has that enhanced knowledge about what trans and non-binary young people might need. [Someone] able to provide support and advice to their colleagues. That would be a way of getting [more of] that kind of in-house knowledge across the sector.

86. The TPP team also suggested that it would be good to consider developing the service beyond Manchester. As one team member noted, trans and non-binary young people are often better served in larger cities where they have more 'defined communities', whereas support in more rural or geographically 'isolated' areas can be almost non-existent:

We'd like to bring it to more isolated areas. I think in Manchester we're already very lucky that there is very defined trans community. There are other trans organisations here. I think the real risk for trans people is social isolation when there is no other trans person within, you know, 50 miles. I think those are the people that we need to reach. I think as well within the trans community knowledge is often spread through word of mouth, and those young people don't have access to that, whereas people in urban areas do have more.

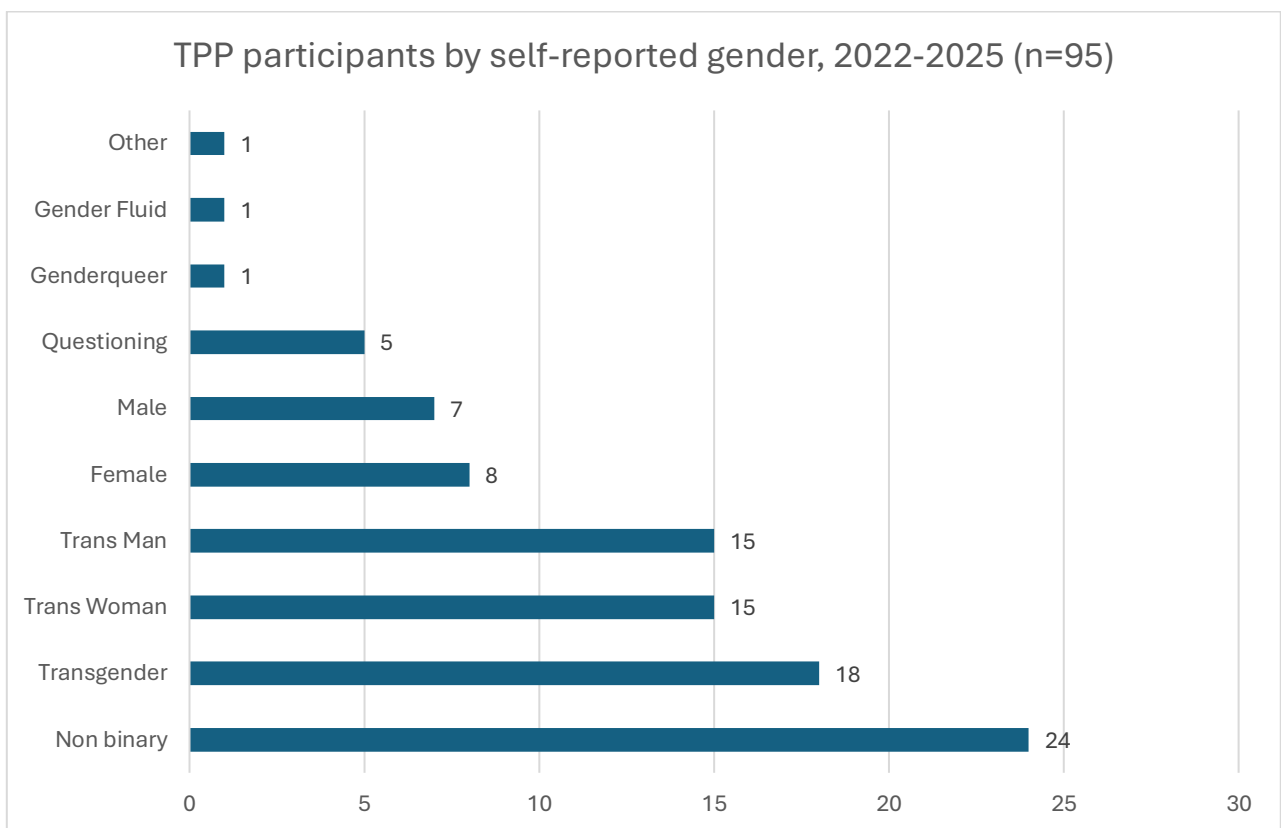
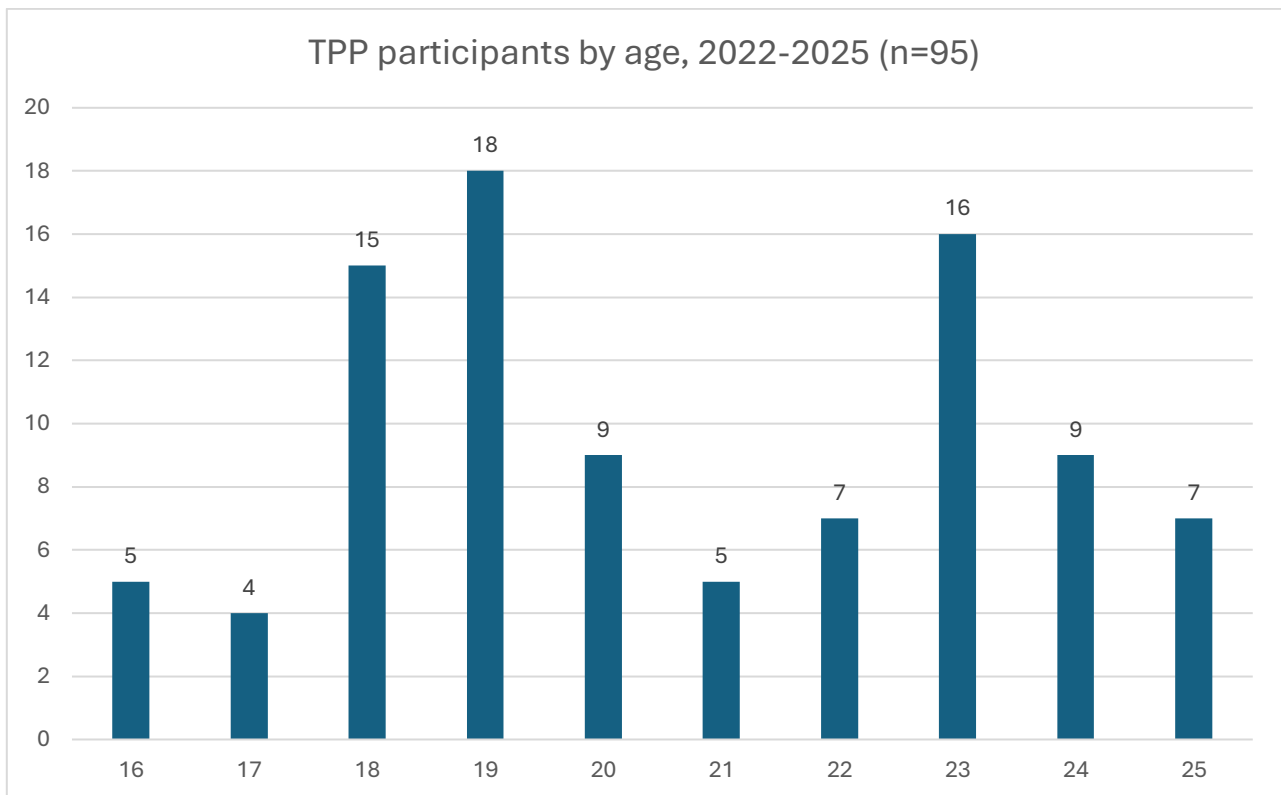
Oversight and outcomes

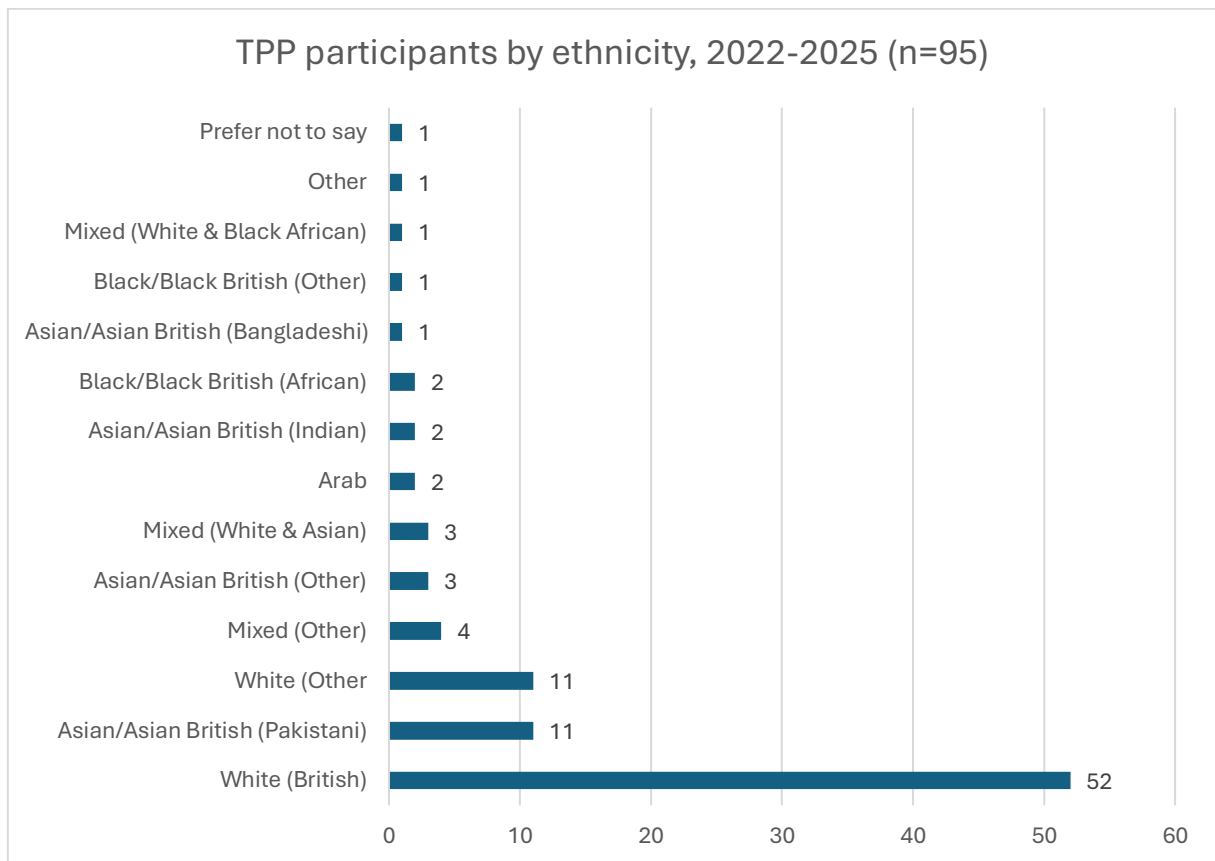
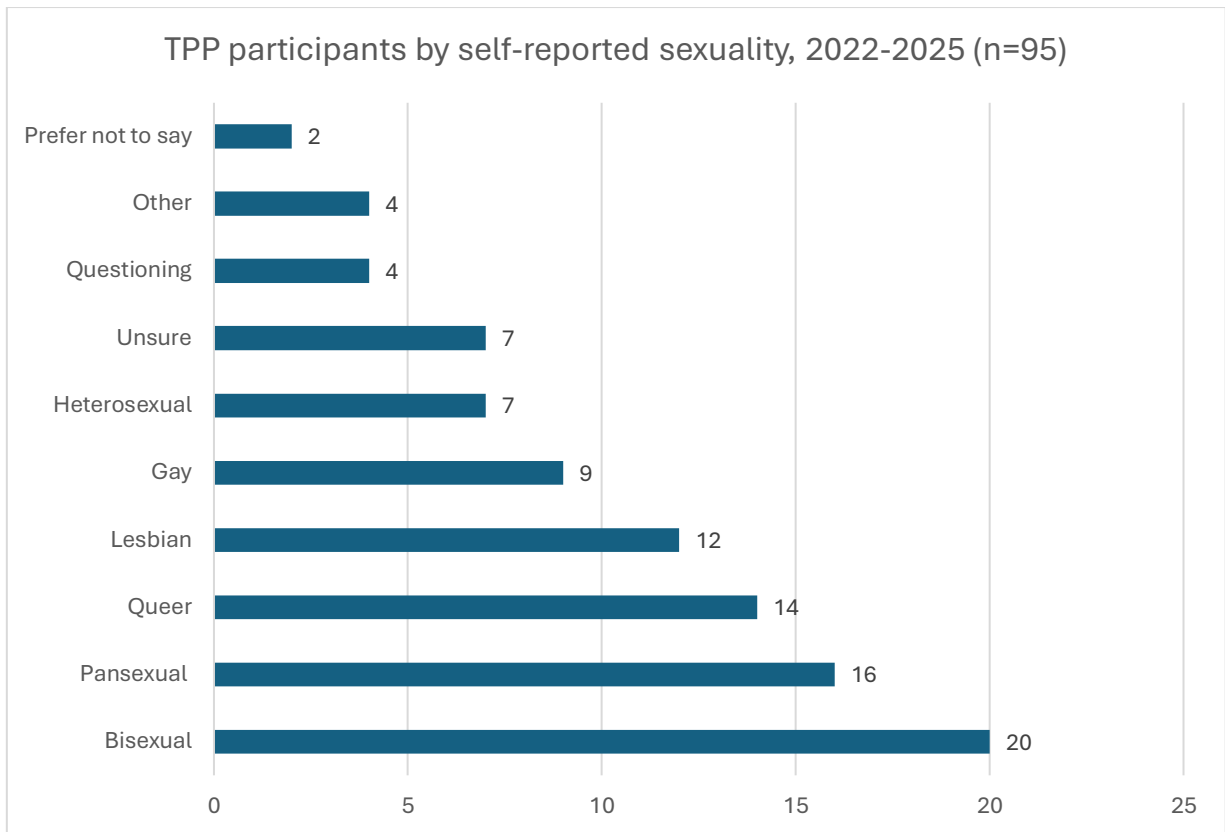
87. A final piece of learning from the project related to the importance of getting the right level of oversight, recognising the benefits of a responsive client-led service offer, whilst better aligning approaches and working practices to the organisation and keeping a sharper focus on delivering outcomes. Reflecting on this, staff noted:

It's had some really strong like outcomes. I think it's done some amazing work. I think the organisation is now in a better position across the board to deliver for young people. I think the decisions [to pilot] it in Manchester was the right one. But there needs to be... better oversight.

There's pros and cons. It's very time consuming and very resource heavy. The outcomes are small compared to what we do in the core services. And that's because they're operating on a very client led approach. There could have been a bit of learning and work done there throughout the project. I suppose empowering people to make changes... still with that lens of going when they're ready and not giving them ultimatums or a really strict set of options. But perhaps we could have looked at some stronger housing outcomes.

Appendix A: Demographics





Appendix B: Case Studies

Case Study 1: Xander's Story (Year 3)

Xander self-referred to AKT in May 2024, he was signposted to us. Xander was living in an abusive family home environment and needed help to flee to safer accommodation. There was risk of HBV as Xander feared his mother was making plans to send him back to their home country, and he felt there may be a threat to his life if family found out he was trans.

- Xander had contacted a few different options before AKT but had not received the help he needed. In his referral form, he said contacting AKT was his last hope before fleeing the country entirely.
- AKT urgently liaised with domestic abuse organisations to find Xander a suitable refuge placement. They arranged a train ticket for Xander via the Rail To Refuge scheme to safely flee his home, and sent uber vouchers to get him safely to refuge on arrival.
- AKT informed the police of HBV risk to Xander and advised of mum making possible false missing person's report once they realised Xander had fled home (This created significant concern as the police, without consent and proper safeguarding procedure, phoned Xander multiple times on the day he fled, this placed him at serious risk of harm.)
- AKT successfully advocated for Xander to be placed in a refuge. We faced significant barriers when trying to find refuge options due to Xander's gender identity. Xander successfully moved into refuge accommodation in early June and has remained there since. He is very happy with his current accommodation and will be receiving ongoing help from AKT to find permanent accommodation options.
- Services provided:
 - Advocacy with other agencies to secure safe refuge placement.
 - Arranged Rail To Refuge train ticket and uber vouchers for safe travel.
 - Assisted Xander with making new application to local authority and will be assisting long term with progressing LA homelessness case.
 - Advice and guidance to Xander around transition, local trans community and other gender identity related support.
 - Provided Xander with binder from donations box.
 - Provided Xander a £50 Primark voucher to get masculine clothing as he fled home with minimal personal items.
 - Helped Xander complete deed poll for legal name change.
 - Currently assisting Xander with updating provisional driver's license and passport to reflect name change and preferred gender markers.
 - Referred Xander to Manchester YE team; he has accessed BBPoC group and Trans TPP YE .
 - Referral to other LGBT+ services where Xander can receive wellbeing support.
- akt will be assisting Xander long term with finding suitable permanent accommodation, likely through social housing. AKT will also be assisting Xander with exploring/affirming his gender identity and strengthening his connection to local trans community.
- Xander is still settling into Manchester and familiarising himself with the local area. He has already begun expanding his social circles and engaging in various groups across the city, including training programmes and youth groups. He hopes to go into a creative career in future, possibly music. Xander is receiving excellent wellbeing support from the refuge who are best placed to provide trauma-informed wellbeing support.

Case Study 2: Jital' Story (Year 3)

Jital, an 18 year old trans man, was referred to AKT by a friend in February 2024.

- Jital initially came to AKT as he was living in shared accommodation and facing transphobia from other residents. His case was passed to the Trans Pathway team as his housing need was specific to his gender identity.
- Trans Pathway were in the process of advocating with the accommodation provider for Jital to be moved to a different accommodation when Jital was sadly the victim of a hate crime, a physical assault by another resident, in early March 2024. Jital was unfortunately hospitalised as a result of this assault and yet was still told by the local authority that he was not homeless as his accommodation was safe to occupy.
- akt provided a hotel for Jital for 1 night over the weekend whilst we advocated with the local authority and his accommodation provider. Caseworker arranged an emergency multi agency meeting between AKT, the local authority housing team, social care and Jital's college. This advocacy was successful, and Jital moved into alternative safe accommodation the next day. AKT helped facilitate a safe move of his belongings to his new accommodation using funds from the Rainbow Starter Pack. Trans Pathway were there on the day to help Jital unload his moving van, settle into his new home, and complete sign up forms at the new accommodation. Jital was very happy with his new accommodation and felt a lot safer.
- At this point we were also helping him with some gender identity specific needs such as: a donation of a binder, signposting and advocacy around medical transition, and signposting to local trans support spaces. As well as help updating all his IDs to match his gender identity. We also engaged in some institutional advocacy with his new accommodation provider and gave them advice on supporting trans/non-binary tenants generally. We have since built a good relationship with this provider and have supported some of their other young people since.
- The safety of his new accommodation gave Jital more capacity to put towards his studies as he was engaged in college courses. Towards the end of summer Jital got the good news that he had passed his college exams and had been accepted into a University in the North of England; he was keen to take up the place but had little support with the practicalities of his move. AKT again stepped in and held multi agency meetings with his accommodation support worker and the University's estrangement team to secure Jital appropriate accommodation and some financial support in moving to a new city. The akt caseworker successfully advocated for Jital to receive discretionary funding from university, so University paid the majority of costs towards his move. AKT supported with a train ticket and practical support on the day.
- Jital successfully made the move to Newcastle in early September and was very happy to be in his new accommodation in a new city, he felt it could be a fresh start for him. We referred him to the YE team as he still wanted to have a contact at AKT whilst he settled into his new city, but did agree to have his Trans Pathway case closed as felt he had achieved all housing and identity aims by this point.
- Jital now has good wrap around support at his University who have helped him access regular counselling, bursaries and other support to make sure he gets the most out of his studies. No doubt Jital will go on to do great things in future!

Case Study 3: Charlie's Story (Year 2)

Charlie was referred to the Trans Pathway Project after experiencing homophobic abuse from neighbours, leaving him sleeping on buses and sofa surfing to avoid the abuse he was enduring.

- Charlie grew up in the care system from the age of 9. He first came out as trans at age 11 to a teacher and then again at age 17 while living in a care home.
- Charlie started experiencing extreme homophobic abuse from neighbours and his door was kicked in twice. Charlie started staying out late to avoid the harassment he was experiencing at home. With nobody to turn to, he found out about akt and The Trans Pathway from staff at an LGBTQ+ youth group he was attending.
- “They found out I was sleeping on buses and sleeping on couches because my house was a homophobic nightmare, so they directed me to akt who have helped me out pretty much since then” Charlie said.
- akt placed Charlie on the Trans Pathway Project, a specialised service set up to support young trans people in Manchester who have had housing issues directly related to their gender identity. akt worked alongside Charlie’s care worker and building staff to make his accommodation safer by installing CCTV, changing his locks and keeping a record of the abuse. akt also helped Charlie look for safer long-term accommodation.
- Charlie sought a referral to a gender clinic from his GP but, after waiting a year, he found out that he had not been placed on a waiting list. Prior to referring to the Trans Pathway Project Charlie felt like he had to advocate for himself to find his own gender identity services, which was very frustrating. Through the Trans Pathway Project, akt worked with Charlie to help him move GPs so that he could receive care from someone more knowledgeable about trans healthcare. He has since been able to get a support pack for gender affirming items.
- Charlie says that working with the TPP was the first time the abuse was taken seriously. He has now moved into a new flat, and is excited to move on with his life, transition and finding a job.
- “The best thing about the Trans Pathway Project is the knowledge of trans issues, services and being flexible to the needs of young people. It’s really good to get support with housing, but also learning about deed polls and gender care and finding out where you can go for certain things.”

Case Study 4: Tash’s Story (Year 2)

Tash reached out to the TPP when she became homeless as a result of domestic abuse.

- Tash is a 19-year-old trans woman. Prior to contacting akt, she had become homeless as a result of domestic abuse.
- akt placed Tash on the Trans Pathway Project, a specialised service set up to support young trans people in Manchester who have had housing issues directly related to their gender identity. At first akt assisted Tash with securing housing in a domestic violence refuge to escape the abuse she was enduring. A year later, with support from the Trans Pathway Project, Tash was able to move into the safety of her own flat.
- Tash received a Rainbow Starter Pack from akt, which provided financial support for furnishing her flat. She also received support from the project to change her name by deed poll, find a supportive GP to help her access gender affirming care, and get funds for equipment she needed to start college from our Independent Living Fund.
- Tash says that during her time on the Trans Pathway Project, she has become more confident advocating for herself and what she needs. Tash also says she has been able to make friends with other young people on the Trans Pathway Project.

- “If you’re not sure where to go for your name change or how to access gender care, the Trans Pathway Project can help you find out what your next steps can be. They have a lot of knowledge.”

Case Study 5: Tom’s Story (Year 2)

Tom is a queer trans man who came to akt after a stay in a domestic violence refuge. He fled his family and sought akt for support with his housing and transition, and found community through the Trans Pathway’s warm space drop-in sessions.

- Tom (he/him) came to akt after fleeing domestic violence and became separated from his family, friends and support network, knowing that remaining in contact would mean his perpetrator could find him. Tom’s caseworker suggested that he tried attending youth engagement sessions to try and rebuild his community and connect with more people, as he was feeling lonely and isolated and this was having a huge impact on his mental health, experiencing very low days.
- Tom immediately felt the benefit of warm spaces stating that the first time he came was really impactful: “it made me want to come to the ones afterwards – there were people there and it felt nice, it was a familiar place. I know I’m not going to get hurt, it’s safe here.” Tom has become a regular attendee of warm spaces and other youth engagement sessions, particularly enjoying zine making sessions for LGBT History Month, where he got the opportunity to fulfil his interests of making things look nice, combining different art styles and images to make something pretty to look at, that he then puts up in his flat to bring it more to life. Tom also attended an art session on identity, where he painted something that represented his connection to Manchester, and was ecstatic when he saw this featured in the akt newsletter.
- The connections made through youth engagement have been invaluable. Tom feels that youth engagement “has made me feel more confident in myself. You’re with other queer people so you feel like you’re bigging yourself up, I feel like I can be more myself.” The opportunity to connect with others has made Tom feel less lonely, especially when they have shared his experiences. The groups have given a chance to chat about a range of topics ranging from religion and people’s experiences, which he found affirming, to why Bend It Like Beckham is the ultimate should-have-been queer film. Tom came to the group with a leak in his home, and another young person gave him specific advice on where to report it and what to say, and even checked in with him a few weeks later to see if he had fixed it. He recognized the power of community that exists in youth engagement. “It’s a way for you to build your confidence in yourself, it’s a way for you to do something with your time. People get caught up with everything that they’re doing and their problems – it takes you away from that and you can focus your attention on something completely different, you can just chill out”. He continues: “It’s safe, there’s different people there that you can just chat to. Young people, or the workers. You can sit in the corner and knit if you want to, we’ve done colouring you can zone out and colour, it’s just a nice space to vibe.
- The connections that Tom made within akt now exist outside the space too, as he is part of a group chat with akt young people where they chat and share cat pictures and this keeps him connected to the community. After being forced to leave an entire support network, Tom is now in a place where he feels comfortable and confident with the people around him: “I have a very strong relationship with the people that I have now, it might not be the same people but I feel confident in the relationships that I have now and because I’m so secure with these relationships, I feel less lonely and I can just lean on them.” Tom encourages anyone in akt thinking about attending youth engagement to just go for it, if you think you won’t enjoy it he is confident “you will, and will feel safe and listened to.