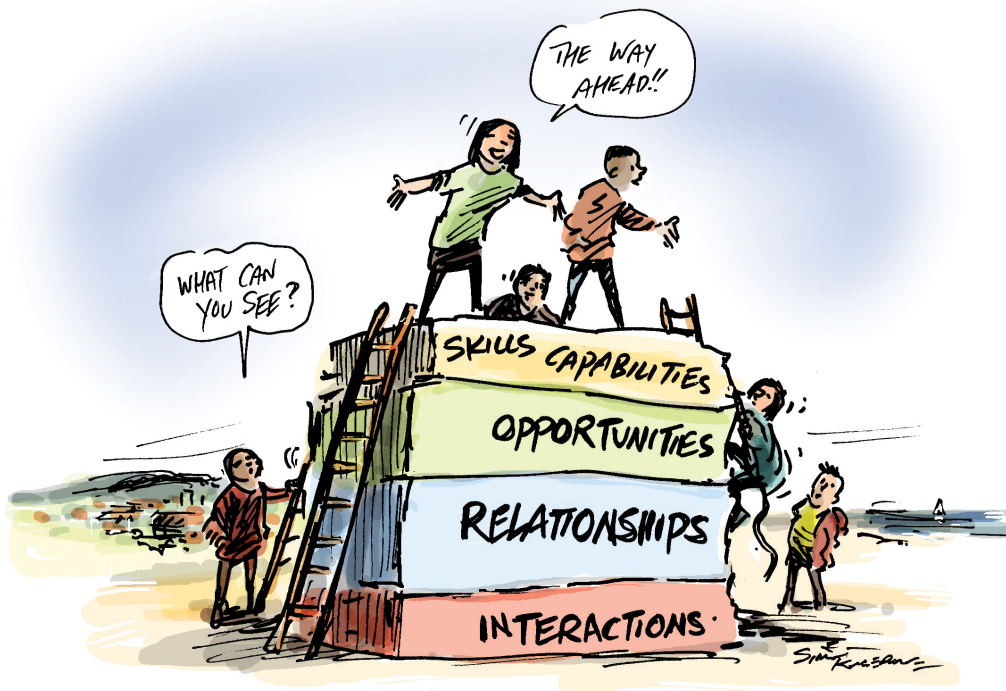

PLAYFORD YOUTH a new story



Ali Elder & Catherine Earl

City of Playford

Acknowledgements:

The authors would like to acknowledge the City of Playford for funding this work and the Playford Data Observatory for the development of the project.

Most importantly, the authors would like to acknowledge the young people who took the time to complete the survey and provide us with the insights for this report.

Authors:

Dr Ali Elder (Research Specialist and Project Manager, City of Playford)

Dr Catherine Earl (Senior Policy, Advocacy and Community Engagement Officer)



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	6
Background	10
The City of Playford	12
Playford Youth in Context	12
Research Approach	15
Opportunities for Capability Development	16
The research design	16
Sample Bias	17
Analysis	17
Our Playford Youth	18
Part 1: Looking Back - The Influence Of Family	22
Family Structure	22
Housing	23
Family Resources	24
Family Relationships	25
Family as Role Models	26
Parents' Education and Employment	26
Young motherhood	28
Parental Influence on Skill Development	28
Parents Knowledge and Interest	29
Social Issues in the Family	30
Leaving the Family Home	31
Individual Stories	32
Recommendations Part 1	33
Part 2: Significant External Relationships	34
Significant Relationships	34
School	35
School Counselor	36
Work Experience	37
External Service Providers	38
Case Workers/Case Managers	38
Little influence	39
Peer Pressure and Community Attitudes	40
The Impact of Adversity	41
Recommendations Part 2	42
Part 3: Opportunities	43
Volunteering	43
Playford Youth Volunteering	44
Sport	46
Playford Youth and Sport Participation	46
Creative Classes	48
Playford Youth and Creative Class Participation	49
No opportunities	50
Capabilities and Skill Development	50
Recommendations Part 3	51

PLAYFORD YOUTH

List of Tables

Table 1: Characteristics of Cohort 1 and Cohort 2	19
Table 2: Post-school Education and Training-Participant Sample	20
Table 3: Post-school Education and Training- Census 2011	21
Table 4: Family Structure and Living Arrangements	22
Table 5: Current Housing	23
Table 6: Family utilization of government income support	24
Table 7: Year 12 Attainment of young people and their parents	26
Table 8: Comparison between young people and parents' employment	27
Table 9: How interested were your parents in your future employment?	29
Table 10: How much do you think your parents were aware of the employment pathways available to you growing up?	30
Table 11: Reported prevalence of social issues while growing up	30
Table 12: Family use of support services while growing up	31
Table 13: Skill and Capability Survey Questions	50

A large, irregular red shape with white outlines, resembling a stylized splash or a map of a region, serves as a background for the title.

Executive Summary

This report provides a statistical snapshot and narrative of a small group of young people who grew up in City of Playford during the late 1980s early 1990s who at the time of the research were aged between 23 to 28 years. The research examines a range of factors contributing to their social and economic outcomes in order to better inform policy and programs for future generations of young people in the region. The young people in this research grew up at a time of major social, political and economic transformation, and have experienced a unique set of challenges to navigate their future. We recorded these experiences and make recommendations within this context, taking into consideration global youth employment challenges and their local environment within the City of Playford.

This research was undertaken by the Playford Data Observatory and funded by The City of Playford Council. The Playford Data Observatory is a group of representatives from local, state and federal government, and the not-for-profit sector. These stakeholders work together in the northern region of Adelaide to inform policy decisions in light of forthcoming employment transformations in the region, the young age of the population, and its predicted growth.

The project takes a strength based approach, that is, an approach that focuses on finding the optimum conditions under which a young person can thrive, taking consideration of their current context. We were interested in considering the social environment of young adults who had grown up in Playford and who have achieved relatively good social and economic outcomes. For this group, good outcomes include participating in the labour market at the time of the survey, those who were working either fulltime or part-time and/or who were combining work and study. The strength based approach is in contrast to more conventional deficits based approaches to researching young people and employment, which tend to be more focused on the problems of unemployment and the factors that contribute to this problem.

The data collected for this project included an on-line survey and qualitative material drawn from focus groups and interviews of young people aged between 23 – 28 years old. 199 young people were surveyed and two key groups of young people were identified from the study. The first, and most populated group, were those that reported having some form of employment at the time of the survey. The second group reported that they were not in employment at the time of the survey.

Our main focus was to investigate the range of elements common to the group of young people that reported some form of employment at the time of the survey. We examined the influence from within families and also influences from outside in the community and have structured the report around these two domains. Inside the family, much of the quality of the support for young people is relationship based, which can be difficult to influence or control, and there are already multiple organisations in northern Adelaide working in this domain. The stakeholders associated with this research are more readily positioned to influence factors in the community environment and outside the family, so our research recommendations are targeted accordingly.

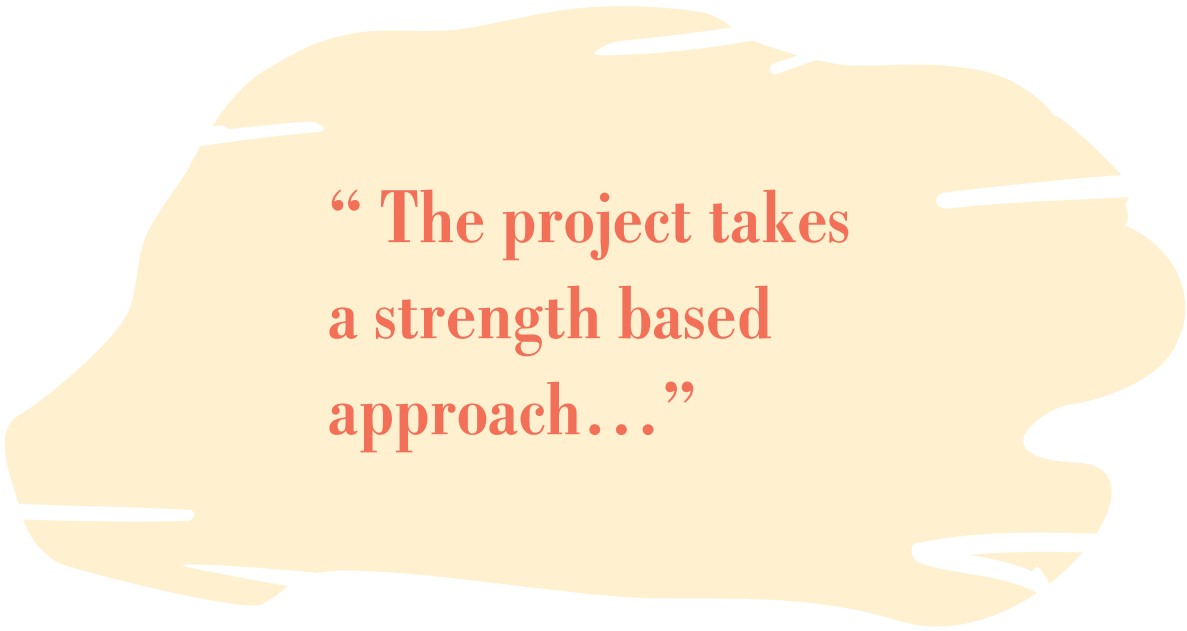
We take the position that it is the cumulative effect of a range of elements that contribute to the outcomes for young people. In summary, the findings reveal that the group of young people who had positive employment outcomes were mostly influenced by;

- positive parenting and relationships with their family;
- access to financial resources and housing security;
- positive interactions with trusted role models and mentors; and
- opportunities for skill and capability development.

For the young people that reported not having employment at the time of the survey, they were more likely to have reported;

- less favourable family relationships and less intact families;
- higher levels of insecure housing;
- they were less likely to have had access to positive role models and mentors; and
- had fewer opportunities to access activities or experiences for capabilities and skill development.

These findings highlight the importance of positive interactions and relationships and the influence these relationships have on the outcomes for young people. The research also demonstrates the importance of creating opportunities for young people to learn skills and capabilities during the crucial developmental years of childhood and adolescence. These interactions, relationships and opportunities can in some instances, alter the trajectory of a young person's life. The research provides numerous examples where, despite limited family resources and difficult relationships, some key pivotal relationships or opportunities mitigate against the disadvantaging effect of poor beginnings.



**“ The project takes
a strength based
approach...”**

Key Recommendations

Increased attention to education attainment to year 12 for all young people in Playford.

Strengthen mentoring capacity of teachers, especially for children around 10 - 15 years old to encourage school retention and successful post-school transitions.

Education/career and transition planning and assistance targeted at young women starting as early as primary school. Significant investment in education for young mothers to encourage school retention and clear career pathways. Provide the necessary childcare and transport services to enable young mothers to attend.

Education for parents of at risk children about the importance of interest and encouragement in fostering children's education and employment.

Adequately resource careers education and counselling programs for children, young people and their parents within educational setting about future training and employment pathways.

Review educational procedures regarding work experience. These programs should not rely on parental networks and should encourage greater employer engagement and improve processes to ensure positive experiences.

Playford Council to lead a child and youth friendly initiative where first point of contact services and professionals accessed by children and young people receive specialised training about their engagement and encouragement of young people.

Mentoring and support for young people who leave home 'early' through services in the region. Further investigation into the reasons young people in Playford leave home earlier than average.

Provision of low cost supported housing in the Playford region for young people who leave home before the age of 18 and who wish to remain engaged in education or employment.

Volunteering SA and City of Playford Council to partner in increasing volunteer opportunities in the region with specific focus on job ready skills embedded into opportunities. Volunteer SA to offer training on positive youth relationship development and mentoring. Schools to encourage volunteering opportunities as possible pathway to personal learning project (year 10).

Increased sport participation to be facilitated through clubs and schools. Department of Education to improve access and encouragement for young people (especially high school students) to continue to participate and actively engage in programmes that culturally and sensitively encourage young females to continue participation. Include education for parents about the benefits of sports participation. Playford council to lead or contribute to club coordination to encourage those without resources to be able to participate.

Greater focus on the participation of creative activities arts and culture policy facilitating and encouraging low cost or free programs accessed through libraries and community centres, and in partnership with service providers in the region as well as after school based programs.

Drug and Alcohol and Domestic Violence Services to provide education and outreach services to children and young people in the places they utilise i.e. schools, libraries, sporting facilities.

A large, stylized yellow graphic resembling a hand or a splash, positioned at the top of the page behind the title.

Background

This project was commissioned by the City of Playford Council, as part of the research agenda of the Playford Data Observatory. The Playford Data Observatory was formed in response to a desire to improve the level of collaboration between service providers and to better serve the community of Playford. A unique element of this group has been its consistent connection to the community at all tiers of government and the not for profit sector over the past 5 years, and in particular the past 3 years.

The Playford Data Observatory is a steering group consisting of CEOs and high level managers in organisations from federal, state and local governments as well as the not-for-profit sector. At the time of writing the current members include:

- Department of Employment
- Department of Social Services
- Department of Human Services
- Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Communities and Social Inclusion
- City of Playford Council
- Service to Youth Council Ltd
- Northern Connections
- Anglicare SA¹

The group has sponsored a series of community forums attended by service providers across government and the community sector resulting in key areas of focus to form the basis for the Playford Data Observatory terms of reference. These key areas include:

- Access to data across all levels of government and the non-government organisations
- Collaboration and co-design skill and knowledge development
- Community capacity building through leadership development

¹ Representatives from the Department of State Development have since joined the Playford Data Observatory

The Playford Data Observatory intended to support a more informed and collaborative decision making framework to better respond to the expected rise in both the quantum and complexity of need in Playford over the next 3-5 years. As a starting point, the group decided to focus on young people transitioning to economic and social independence in Playford as a way to demonstrate the benefits of using data to inform service delivery and improve outcomes. It was determined that a research project aimed at tracking the trajectory of a young person in Playford from a strength-based perspective would be useful to inform multiple levels of government and services about the key elements required for young people to achieve good social and economic outcomes.

The City of Playford provided funding to conduct this research project to collect insights into how young people in Playford are already successfully transitioning into social and economic participation. Creating a baseline, comprehensive local information source to support ongoing research and to encourage collaborative decision making among providers and informing government policy into the future was central to this project.





The City of Playford

The City of Playford is one of the fastest growing local government areas in South Australia and experienced a 10.5% increase in population from 2010 to 2014. Future growth will largely be focused within the Playford Growth Areas, which encompass Playford North, Virginia and Angle Vale, as well as the ongoing development of Playford Alive and the development of Buckland Park that together have the capacity to support over 100,000 additional people². As well as the expected growth, the City of Playford has a young community profile. At the 2011 Census the median age was 32 compared to 39 in Greater Adelaide, with young people aged 12-25 comprising 22% of the population (16,987 persons). Projections suggest that by 2031, the 10-24-year-old cohort will represent approximately 21% of the Playford population, while in the Adelaide & Outer Adelaide region and SA region this age cohort will represent only 18%.³ This indicates that the City of Playford will remain a comparatively young Council into the future.

The predicted youth demographics and the growth of the City of Playford needs careful consideration given that it is currently characterised by a high level of relative disadvantage. The City of Playford has a score of 871 on the SEIFA Index of Disadvantage, compared with 993 for Greater Adelaide and 1002 for Australia (a lower score on the index indicates a *higher* level of disadvantage). This index measures relative disadvantage based on a range of characteristics such as low income, low educational attainment, high unemployment and jobs in relatively unskilled occupations.

The economic challenges for SA and the greater Northern Adelaide region specifically are widely recognised. In the past, Northern Adelaide has been a center for traditional manufacturing industry which is now in steady decline and accelerated by the closure of GM Holden. The Northern Adelaide region (of which Playford is included) is recorded as being in the top 20 youth unemployment hot spots in Australia. At number 16 of the top 20, unemployment rates for young people aged 15 – 24 years old are 16.3%⁴ compared with an unemployment rate nationally for those aged 15 – 24 years at 12.5%.

Playford Youth in Context

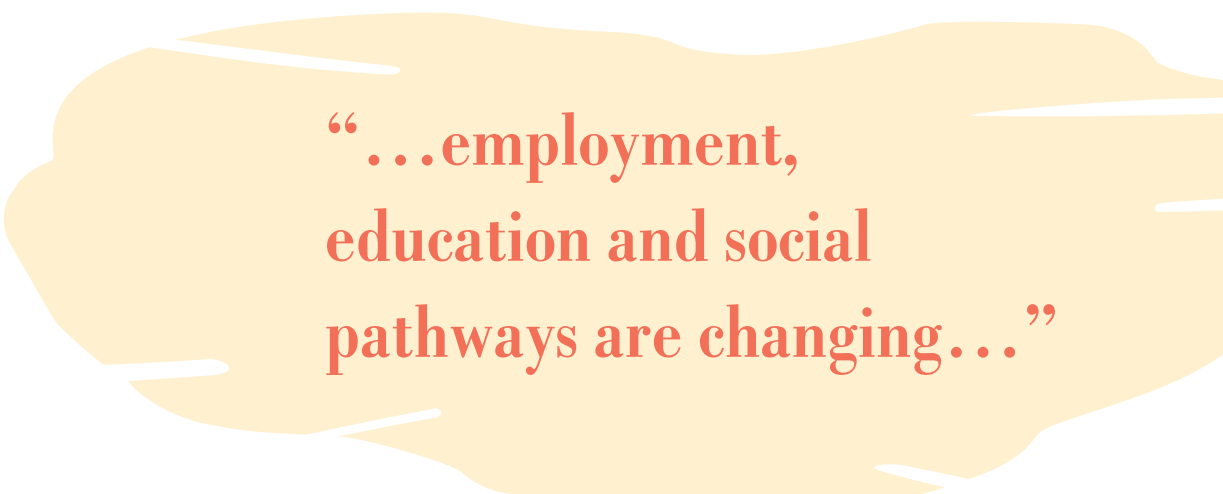
When considering the young people in Playford, it is also important to consider the broader context of all young people in Australia. It is also important to note that at times in this report, for interest, we draw from research looking at age groups that differ from our cohort. Most commonly the 15-24 year old aged bracket is used in youth research. We do this because the findings are relevant to the experiences of the Playford young people, who we asked to recall formative experiences. However,

-
- 2 Government of South Australia (2013) Playford Growth Area Structure Plan, Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure, December, accessed 12 October 2016 dpti.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/122831/DOCS_AND_FILES-8209645-v1-Formatted_PDF_with_Maps_-_Playford_Growth_Area_Structure_Plan_-_December_2013_-_lower_res_version.PDF p.9
 - 3 Government of South Australia (2016) Population Projections for South Australian Local Government Areas 2011-2031, Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure www.dpti.sa.gov.au/planning/population
 - 4 Brotherhood of St Laurence, Australia's Youth Unemployment Hotspots Snapshot, 2016.

we are cautious in making comparisons with research looking at the situation of young people in age-groups that differ from the Playford cohort who at the time of the data collection were aged 23-28 years of age.

It is certain that employment, education and social pathways are changing, with the stable linear pathways that may have once been a feature of many young people's transitions to adulthood now breaking down. Many young people face difficulties finding a job due to the mismatch between their education/training and labour market requirements. Innovation, technology and market developments have turned the world of work into a fast-changing environment, and a lack of experience means that young people may struggle to get a foot into more secure jobs in their field of training.

In Australia, researchers suggest that there has been a shift in research, policy and practice, since the 1970's, to a focus on the problematic nature of the "youth" life stage⁵. Wyn argues that this focus is strongly connected to the demise of the full-time labour market for young people⁶. The proportion of young people engaged in full-time employment has declined from 40% of all young people aged between 15 and 24 in 1995 to 29% in 2015. In contrast, part-time employment for young people increased over the period from 20% in 1995 to 30% in 2015⁷. The youth cohort during this period has come to be defined by the precariousness they encounter in the labour market, and young people are a central part of the "new precariat" for whom insecure and non-standard employment has now become the norm⁸.



**“...employment,
education and social
pathways are changing...”**

Since the global financial crisis, a heavy contingent of Australian politicians, business groups and non-government organisations have come to see youth unemployment as an endemic crisis. Unfortunately, the rhetoric matches the harsh reality as just under 290,000 young Australians aged between 15 and 24 are looking for work, including 60,000 long-term unemployed young people⁹.

While the reasons are complex, there is no doubt that young people are in a challenging position as the labour market is now characterised by long-term, steady decline in full-time jobs opportunities for young people, resulting in a longer transition period to full-time work¹⁰. At the same time,

5 Bessant, J. (1993). *Constituting Categories of Youth: Towards the Twenty-First Century*, Melbourne, National Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, La Trobe University & Wyn, J & (2004) *Becoming adult in the 2000s: New transitions and new careers*, *Family Matters* (68): 6-12.

6 Wyn, J. (2004). *Becoming adult in the 2000s: New transitions and new careers.* *Family Matters* (68): 6-12

7 Bowman D, Borlagdan, J & Bond S, 2015, *Making sense of youth transitions from education to work*, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Fitzroy, Vic.

8 Standing, G (2011) *The Precariat, The New Dangerous Class*, Bloomsbury Academic, London, UK

9 Denny, L, Churchill B, (2016) *Youth employment in Australia: A comparative analysis of labour force participation by age group*, *Journal of Applied Youth Studies*, Vol 1 Issue 2

10 Shu-Hui, L, & Nguyen, N (2011), *Successful youth transitions* National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Australia Dept. of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Commonwealth of Australia

young people spend longer in training and further education¹¹ because job seekers lacking relevant qualifications and/or experience are some of the hardest hit. While the global financial crisis and subsequent economic downturns have placed a greater emphasis upon productivity, young people's paths in and out of work and study vary. Data from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) show that young people may face higher rates of unemployment, cycles of low pay and long-term employment insecurity if they are not engaged full-time in either education or employment (or a combination of both)¹².

So, the youth life stage is now more complex and extended involving both work and study. To support a successful transition, young people as a cohort often require the backing of parents well into adulthood, which is considered problematic because the experience of young people today is constantly compared with that of previous generations. This comparison constructs young people as deficient contributing to the perception of young people themselves as 'problems'¹³. This depiction is both unfair and unhelpful. To address this perception, our research aims to destigmatize young people by focusing closely on those that are currently employed and therefore display employment capabilities. By looking at how these capabilities are developed, our findings will contribute to learning about what kinds of structural solutions may help young people who may be at risk.

11 MacDonald R, 2006, Social Exclusion, Youth Transitions and Criminal Careers: Five Critical Reflections on 'Risk' Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology Vol 39 Issue 3

12 Shu-Hui, L, & Nguyen, N (2011) op cit.

13 Wyn, J, & Woodman, D, (2007) *Generation, Youth and Social Change in Australia*, Journal of Youth Studies, Vol? p.168-169



Research Approach

This research takes a strength based approach or positive youth development approach which highlights what the young people in Playford were able to do and be, and their capacity for developing employability capabilities given their life circumstances, resources and access to opportunities. The impetus behind this decision was twofold.

Firstly, there is already a body of literature that investigates the consequences of growing up in poor life circumstances and the likely outcomes including higher rates of long term unemployment; poor health and mental health; becoming at risk of homelessness; and possibly becoming involved in the criminal justice system. Such research has its place, of course – but the group sponsoring this project believed that a different approach was needed. The group wanted to obtain a fuller understanding of how opportunity could be created and nurtured, and what roles different organisations could play to create opportunities for young people. This is particularly important in cases where those opportunities were not able to be created or nurtured sufficiently within a young person's immediate family. We wanted to shift attention away from the negative aspects of growing up in an area of reported disadvantage and instead, investigate the circumstances of young people who experienced life differently and had a positive outcome. Investigating young people's experiences from a strengths perspective provides new insights from which to make recommendations for future generations in the area.

Secondly, the City of Playford is currently undertaking a major social and economic transformation as it moves away from traditional forms of manufacturing (particularly auto- manufacturing), to re-inventing itself as a 'smart city' embracing new technologies and future industries. This future is complex and challenging and given the predicted growth in the area and the relatively young population, it is imperative that future generations of young people are supported to navigate these changes. By focusing on the more positive aspects of the young people in Playford, we hope to lift the aspirations of others and to contribute to shifting the sometime negative narrative that often plagues the northern suburbs of Adelaide.

A strength based approach or positive youth development approach is based on the premise that at-risk youth are not 'broken and should not be viewed as problems to be managed, but that all youth can be developed given the right relationships, systems and encouragement'¹⁴. A common feature of this framework is to focus on developmental assets as opposed to risk factors, and that simply 'removing risk factors from youths lives although important, is not enough to ensure their long-term success. A more intentional focus on the attainment of capabilities is necessary'¹⁵. Youth development builds the personal strengths that create positive attributes in young people.

14 Roth, J, & Brooks –Gun, J (2003) Youth Development Programs and Healthy Development – A review and next steps in Romer, D (ed) Towards an Integrated Approach, Sage, California

15 Pittman, K. J., Irby, M., Tolman, J., Yohalem, N., & Ferber, T. (2001). *Preventing problems, promoting development, encouraging engagement: Competing priorities or inseparable goals?* <http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/preventproblems>

A strength based approach proposes that development occurs as individuals interact with the physical settings and individuals within the various contexts they frequent. Positive outcomes are viewed as an interactive and cumulative process between an individual and his or her environment, and are most likely to occur when there is a good fit between individual and environmental elements¹⁶.

Understanding that the surroundings of young people are both material and individual, and include elements such as family life (resources, assets, and capital such as human, social and economic); school and educational institutions; youth services and programs; external activities such as sport and extra- curricular activities; and their peer networks. Strength-based approaches are increasingly accepted as being the most effective for working with young people and these are being adopted in health, education, social policy and research.

Opportunities for Capability Development

Combined with taking a strength based approach, the research sought to uncover where young people had opportunities growing up in the City of Playford to develop employability or soft-skill capabilities that have led to positive social and economic outcomes. Capabilities generally refer to an individual's ability to access resources and opportunities to achieve the outcomes they wish. Research has shown that there are strong links between individual social and emotional capabilities (soft skills) and future employability. These key capabilities or soft skills underpinning employability range from good communication skills; confidence; creativity; managing feelings; planning and problem solving; relationship development; leadership skills; and resilience and determination.

Soft skill capabilities are inextricably linked to a number of individual achievements and characteristics which include: literacy, numeracy and language development; the attainment of qualifications; participation in attendance at learning and/or work; participation in youth activities and uptake of advice and support services; and individual choices and behaviors that affect health and wellbeing. The benefits of youth displaying these qualities, achievement or behaviours can include less need for health services; they are more likely to contribute to the economy through labour market participation; they are less likely to be dependent on welfare; they are less likely to be involved in the criminal justice system; they are more likely to strengthen their community through leadership and democratic participation. Therefore, taking a strength based approach and understanding the various opportunities available to young people in Playford is important to make informed recommendations to direct resources in the future, particularly for those that are at risk.

The research design

It was necessary to design a study that could capture the young people's early life circumstances growing up, as well as their interpretations of the key interactions, relationships, institutions and services that supported them or created a barrier to where they are now. The research used a mixed method approach that included both quantitative and qualitative methods to capture both the frequency of circumstances, as well as the more nuanced information needed from individuals.

The specific research tools we used were an online survey, distributed largely through social media, and focus groups of young people aged between 23 – 28 years old. To participate in the research

¹⁶ Lerner, R. M., Anderson, P. M., Balsano, A.B., Dowling, E., & Bobek, D. (2003) Applied developmental science of positive human development. In R. M. Lerner, M. A. Easterbrooks, & J. Mistry. (Eds.), Handbook of psychology: Vol. 6. Developmental psychology. (pp. 535-558). Hoboken, NJ, Wiley.

the young people needed to have grown up in Playford for at least half of their life. This age group was targeted as a way to gauge the influences of growing up in this area and in order to make recommendations for future generations. This research is a snapshot in time, and is not attempting to replicate a longitudinal study.

There were 199 fully completed surveys (326 partially completed) and 3 focus groups. There were 55 questions in total for the young people to answer ranging from individual demographics; early life growing up; family structure and living arrangements; education attainment through to their current living arrangements and employment. Throughout the survey, we asked multiple open ended questions for the young people to write about their experiences with particular services, activities and relationships. These open-ended questions, alongside the qualitative data collected from the focus groups provided a rich source of information and key insights into the lives of the young people.

Sample Bias

We set out to determine the factors that create a positive social and economic outcome for young people in Playford and the results of this survey suggest that the majority of the young people actually fell into this category (63%). Given the current levels of youth unemployment in the area, it is likely that we have captured evidence from a highly engaged and active group of young people. This was more by luck than design and it could be claimed that the design or marketing of the survey inadvertently precluded those that didn't have a positive outcome. However, throughout the survey, there are multiple examples of young people that came from difficult circumstances and not had a positive outcome, and there are also examples from young people who have had a positive outcome despite their circumstances. These particular young people provide information to make comparisons between the two cohorts.

Another significant sample bias is by gender. Of the 199 young people that completed the survey, 69% of the group are female and 31% of the group is male. Throughout the report, we consider the gender implications of this cohort within the social context, and the significance of their outcomes in terms of gender.

Analysis

It is evident from the findings that there is no single developmental factor or risk factor that has led to the outcomes for the young people. We show that there are various interactions, relationships, structural factors and opportunities that have had a cumulative (or clustering) impact over the life course of the young person. Outcomes have complex causes involving influences and interactions between multiple risk and protective factors for development. Therefore, it is not possible to suggest that any one factor has more or less impact than any other, but that the culmination of a series of factors are more likely to contribute to the outcome.

Our recommendations are based in a universal position of offering supports to lower the negative cumulative affects of multiple factors across the life course of a young person. Given the position of this research, and the capacity of the stakeholders, we would still recommend that early intervention be promoted to reduce the longer term impacts which may compound as time progresses. However, for the purposes of this research and the stakeholders involved, we propose to make recommendations starting at around the age of 10 onwards.

Our Playford Youth

We considered the definition of a relatively good social and economic outcome to include a young person being actively engaged in the labour market at the time of the survey, working fulltime or part-time and in some cases combining work and study. We have determined that it is the *capability* of a young person to be employed that is of interest, and therefore we have investigated the factors that have led them to this outcome. 63% of the group recorded some form of employment. This is consistent with the percentage of Playford young adults recorded as employed in the 2011 Census (i.e. 63.7%). Of the employed group in our sample, 61% of the group were working 35 hour or more per week, 15% were working between 20 – 34 hours per week and 22% of them were working less than 20 hours per week which included some studying and working.

This cohort has a relatively high level of full-time employment and as previously mentioned, given the reduction of full-time employment and precarious nature of the current labour market, and that young people in Australia have a longer lead time between education and training and the full-time labour market participation, we have considered this group as relatively high functioning and their circumstances worthy of investigation. This is the group we have named *Cohort 1*.

Those that did not record any employment at the time of the survey made up 28% of the participants. Of this group, 55% of them reported being unemployed and seeking work, and 45% of them reported being unemployed and not seeking work. There were 12 females, who reported they were at home looking after children or a full-time carer. This group of young people we have named *Cohort 2*.

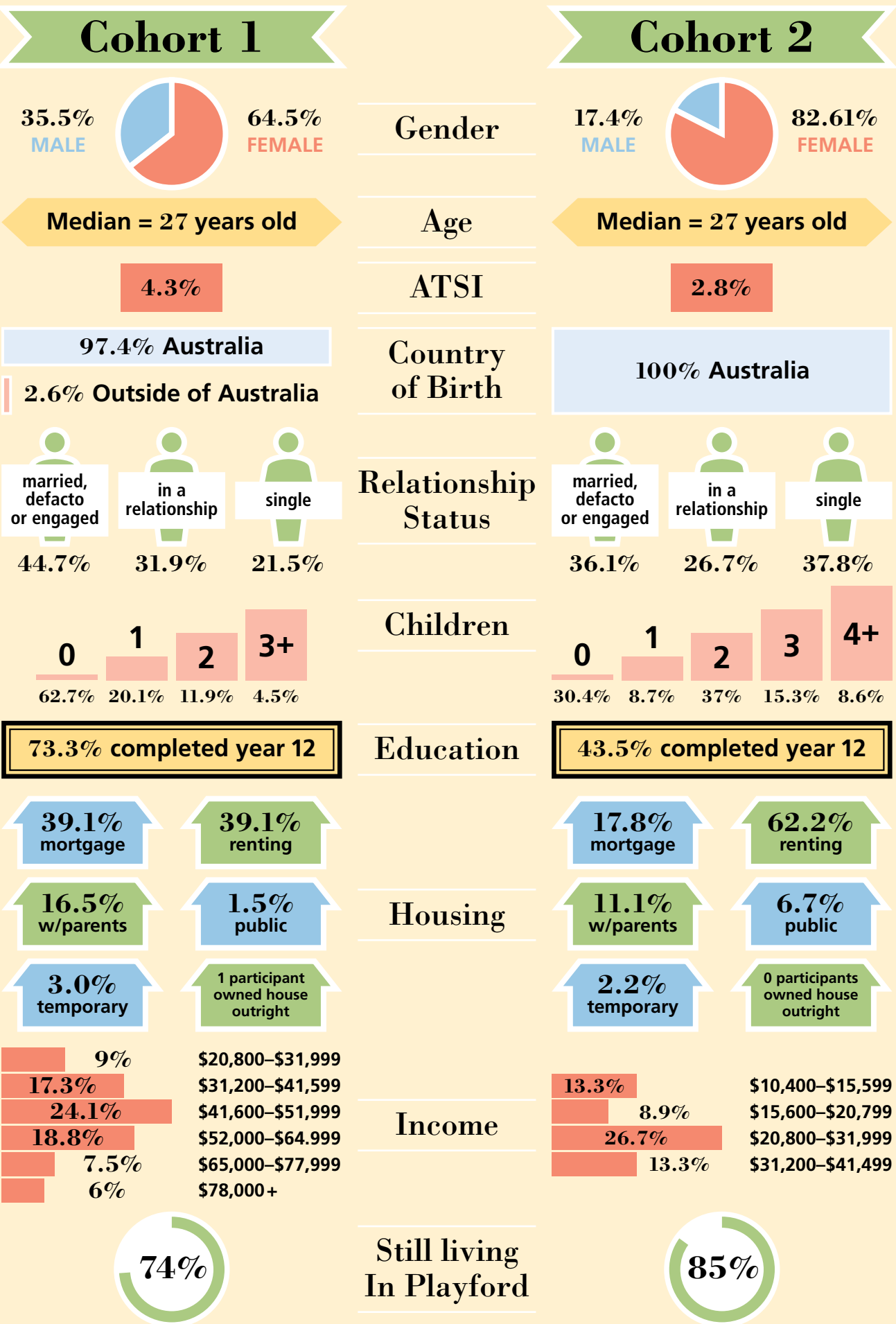
7% of the total survey respondents were in full-time or part-time study at the time of the survey. Where appropriate, we have included them in the analysis, especially in relation to their decision making around education and training.

Opposite is a table outlining some of the key characteristics distinguishing the two cohorts.

As previously mentioned, the sample is biased with an overrepresentation of female participants. Numerous factors may have contributed to this overrepresentation, including the recruitment methods. The overrepresentation becomes more distinct between the two cohorts with 83% in Cohort 2 being female, compared to 66% in Cohort 1. However, we are cautious in the conclusions we draw regarding gender because the sampling is self-selecting (from online advertising) and is likely not be representative. That said, when we consider together their relationship status, numbers of children, housing status and income we can see that a number of Cohort 2 are women who are sole parents with children, on low incomes and living in rental accommodation. We discuss this in more detail in relation to their outcomes further in the report.

The overall research cohort is also biased toward the upper age range (between 26 – 28 years old of the age requirement of between 23 – 28 years old to participate in the survey. The majority of this cohort have transitioned through the stage normally characterised as 'youth', with most policy categories finishing at 25 years old. With this in mind, when we made comparisons between our cohorts and national statistics at times, we needed to go beyond using statistics from the 'youth' category.

Table 1: Characteristics of Cohort 1 and Cohort 2



There are more of Cohort 2 that are single than Cohort 1, and more of Cohort 1 are married, de facto or engaged. This signals more stable relationships within Cohort 1, and is perhaps a further reason beyond their employment status for why their housing is more weighted towards having a mortgage, despite their age tending to be younger. Where couples can combine resources, they are more likely to have the level of income needed for home ownership.

Cohort 1 also reported higher numbers of year 12 attainment at 73.3%, this is high when compared with 2011 ABS Census data for this age-group in Playford and SA which were recorded at 45% and 65% respectively. When combined with higher incomes, and given they are currently employed, we can correlate year 12 attainment with better social and economic outcomes for the participant cohort in this study. This aligns with current national policies relating to year 12 attainment. However, the troubling statistic of 43.5% year 12 attainment of cohort 2 needs urgent attention, especially given this group is mostly female, with children. We address this issue in Part 1 of the report.

There are also distinct differences in post-school education and training between our two cohorts. Following is a table showing complete or partially complete post school education and training:

Table 2: Post-school Education and Training-Participant Sample

What types of education and training have you completed after leaving school?	% Completed	
	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Certificate - Level I	13	35
Certificate - Level II	32	48
Certificate - Level III	39	26
Certificate - Level IV	13	16
Trade Certificate or Apprenticeship	10	0
Technicians Certificate / Advanced Certificate	2	0
Associate Diploma / Diploma	11	3
Advanced Diploma / Associate Degree	2	6
Bachelor Degree	25	3
Honours Bachelor Degree / Grad Cert / Grad Dip	6	3
Masters Degree	4	0
Doctoral Degree	0	0
<i>answered question</i>	104	31
<i>skipped question</i>	12	5

There are significantly higher percentages of certificate level for Cohort 2. Considering Cohort 2 reported not having employment at the time of the survey, this may indicate that certificate training either during school or post-school may not be adequate for job readiness, or may not be providing pathways to further education and training or employment. At the other end of the table, there are higher numbers of Bachelor/Honors degrees for Cohort 1. We discuss the various supports and influences on the young people's decisions for education and training between the two cohorts later in the report.

Table 3: Post-school Education and Training- Census 2011

Persons aged 23-28 usually resident in Playford and SA : Post School Qualifications*	% Completed	
	Playford	SA
Certificate	30.64	24.88
Bachelor Degree	6.24	21.37
Grad Dip/ Grad Cert	0.35	1.02
Advanced Diploma /Diploma	4.26	6.45
Postgrad Degree	0.41	3.05
<i>Inadequately described</i>	0.79	0.85
<i>Not stated</i>	6.98	6.76
<i>N/A</i>	50.33	35.62
<i>Total</i>	100.00	100.00

*Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011

Drawing from 2011 Census data there are some significant differences between the post-school qualifications of people aged 23-28 years who live in Playford compared with state averages. The most striking difference is between those with certificate level qualifications versus bachelor or postgraduate level qualifications. The young adults from Playford are slightly more likely than their peers in SA to hold a certificate level qualification and are much less likely to have a bachelor degree or higher qualification.

Overall, there are significant differences between our two cohorts in terms of their social and economic outcome. These differences are evident across a range of demographics including their relationship status; their yearly income; their housing; the number of children they have; and their education. This is not surprising given the two groups are distinct in terms of their employment at the time of the survey.

We now turn our attention to the factors leading to these outcomes across two key domains. The first domain investigates the young people's experiences growing up, their family life, access to financial resources, and meaningful influences. The second domain is divided into two parts and investigates the interactions and relationships outside of the family as well as the opportunities the young people had access to. We reflect on the way these opportunities contributed to their skill and capability development and make recommendations accordingly, based on the capacity for the stakeholders engaged in the research to play a role in implementation.

Part 1: Looking Back - The Influence Of Family

This section reports on the young people's family circumstances growing up, and the cumulative effect this had on their development and employment outcomes. The young person's immediate personal environment and experiences are examined including both the material conditions as well as the family relationships and home life. In both the qualitative and quantitative data, we looked to identify factors that contribute to a positive outcome and make comparisons between our two cohorts to highlight the particular circumstances resulting in a not as positive outcome. Recommendations related to this section are included at the end of Part 1.

Family Structure

There is evidence to suggest that family structure is associated with education outcomes for young people, for example those from non-nuclear families are reported to be at greater risk for early school leaving and early school leaving is associated with lower overall educational attainment. Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (LSAY) data shows that 22% of young people from single parent and other non-intact family background do not complete year 12 compared to 13% of young people from nuclear families¹⁷. Data from the Youth in Focus study showed that young people who left school, having completed Year 10 or less, were significantly more likely to be from families other than nuclear families¹⁸. Below is a table outlining the family structure and living arrangements of our two cohorts.

Table 4: Family Structure and Living Arrangements Growing Up

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Lived with both parents	62%	42.1%
Lived with one parent – visiting the other	14%	15.8%
Lived with one parent	20%	42.2%
1 – 3 children growing up in the household	83.3%	62.86%
4+ children	16.2%	36.46%

It is evident from this table that more of the young people from Cohort 1 have grown up in families with two biological parents and with fewer siblings than those that were in Cohort 2. Through a comparison of the two cohorts, the young adults who grew up in two parent families with fewer siblings were more likely to have obtained an employment outcome than those that didn't.

¹⁷ Curtis, David D. and McMillan, Julie, "School Non-completers: Profiles and Initial Destinations" (2008). LSAY Research Reports. LSAY Research Report; No 54 http://research.acer.edu.au/lsey_research/4

¹⁸ Ibid

Parental resources can be stretched when supporting two households and the disruption of visiting another parent may be problematic for a young person's optimum educational attainment. Having greater numbers of children in a family can also place financial stress on resources and it is clear from the table that Cohort 2 were more likely to live in a family with higher numbers of children.

Housing

The effects of housing mobility may be negative, negligible or in some cases positive depending on individual circumstances¹⁹. However, in recent studies there is some evidence to suggest that housing instability, such as frequent moves, renting rather than owning and having strained finances may affect the quality of family relationships and the ability of parents to create a nurturing environment for children and young people. Evidence suggests that there are negative impacts on child health and wellbeing and poorer socio-emotional outcomes where families are subject to unstable housing and frequent moves and/or where there is housing stress. Households in receipt of housing assistance and experiencing housing stress have been correlated with socio-emotional outcomes, which suggests parental stresses are transmitted to children²⁰.

We asked the young people to tell us about the types of housing they grew up in as an additional indication of their family financial and economic capital. Table 4 below is a comparison between the two cohorts and shows the various types of housing that they grew up in.

Table 5: Housing Growing Up

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Parents owned house outright	9.1%	5.3%
Parents paying off mortgage	63.6%	44.7%
Rental accommodation	14.0%	23.7%
Public housing	9.1%	8.4%
Number of houses growing up (1 – 3 houses)	74%	62%
4+ houses	24.2%	37.8%

There was a difference between the two cohorts with regard to parents' home ownership and the stability of their housing tenure. The majority of Cohort 1 had parents who either owned their own homes or were paying off mortgages. This was less for Cohort 2 with only half of participants in this situation. More people in Cohort 2 grew up in rented accommodation compared with Cohort 1. Similar proportions of young people in Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 grew up in public housing. While most young people in both groups had moved house during their childhood Cohort 1 tended to move less often than Cohort 2.

¹⁹ Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (2014), What impact does a child's housing have on their development and wellbeing, AHURI, Issue 171.

²⁰ Ibid

Family Resources

Having adequate material resources offers greater scope for opportunities in terms of financial capacity, family stability and housing, all which contribute positively on young people's development. The family environment is shaped by material resources which can impact the health and wellbeing of family members and their ability for optimum family functioning, that is their ability to interact, communicate, make decisions, solve problems and maintain relationships. Changes in a family's material circumstance can affect the home environment and potentially influence how well a family functions. As a result, families can go through stages of strength and instability²¹. Strong families are usually described as those that are cohesive, flexible and communicate well²².

There is evidence to suggest that having a higher socio-economic status is associated with greater educational attainment in Australia²³. Australian research indicates that there is a 20% gap in retention rates to the end of Year 12 between young people from lower and higher socio-economic groups²⁴. A contributing factor to this disparity is often parental separation which impacts family's socio-economic status, and subsequently has implications for educational outcomes. Divorce in particular has a significant effect on finances, with women more likely than men to experience financial hardship in the years following separation²⁵. Sole-parent families often struggle financially as a result of more restricted income-earning capacity and a reliance on government benefits whilst experiencing the normal expenses of a family with dependent children²⁶. The adequacy of welfare payments and a family's dependence on these payments can have a significant influence on the children and young people's development, so we asked participants about their families' reliance on welfare growing up.

The majority of participants from both cohorts reported that their parents had received some form of welfare payment. However, it should be noted that there was a low response rate for this question and nearly half of the survey participants skipped this question, which may be because they were not aware of their parent's finances and/or sources of income or because of the stigma associated with receiving welfare income.

Table 6: Family utilization of government income support

Did your family ever receive government income support payments for the following reasons?	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Unemployment	42%	41%
Disability/Sickness	31%	28%
Children	64%	91%
1 – 3 children growing up in the household	14%	21%
4+ children	14%	7%

21 Silberger, S, (2001), Health and wellbeing of young Australians: indicator framework and key national indicators, Bulletin no.77. Cat.no. AUS 123. Canberra

22 Olson, D, & Gorall, D, . (2003), Circumplex model of marital and family systems. In F. Walsh (Ed), Normal family processes: Growing diversity and complexity, 3rd ed (pp. 514–548). New York, NY: Guilford

23 Curtis, D. and McMillan, J, "School Non-completers: Profiles and Initial Destinations" (2008). LSAY Research Reports. LSAY Research Report; No 54: http://research.acer.edu.au/lsey_research/4

24 Robinson, L., & Lamb, S. (2012), How young people are faring, The Foundation for Young Australians.

25 de Vaus, D, (2004), *Diversity and change in Australian families: Statistical profiles*, Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

26 de Vaus, D, Gray, M., Qu, L., & Stanton, D, (2007). *The consequences of divorce for financial living standards in later life*, Research Paper No. 38, Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

While there is positive role modelling that comes from a parent working and the income that is provided allows for greater family resources and opportunities, the finding that so many families are reliant on welfare payments raises a questions about the adequacy and security of earnings from labour market activity and the adequacy of welfare payments. Attention should also be paid to the type of employment that the parents have access to. Unpredictable, long or unsocial working hours, particularly in combination with relatively low pay may have a considerably detrimental effect on family relationships. So it is important that job opportunities are available that will bolster family resources without diminishing the family's capacity to function. Where such jobs are difficult to find, welfare payments must provide a level of resourcing that allows children important opportunities to develop.

It is evident that the cumulative effect of adequate resources and stable housing and intact family structure is more common to those who have reported a positive employment outcome. Similarly, those that have fewer resources and less family stability and security are generally in Cohort 2. This demonstrates a tendency for protective or risk factors to cluster and produce different outcomes for individual young people.

Family Relationships

There are many benefits for children living in strong and stable families, regardless of family type, which include having positive role models for building relationships, the ability to cope with changing circumstances or stressful life events, and higher self-esteem. Research supports the notion that positive parent-child relationships and interactions lead to better developmental outcomes for children and young people²⁷. These are also strongly positively correlated to better support for young people in terms of economic security and employability.

Our survey of young people from Playford asked a number of questions that provide an indication of the nature of parenting and family relationships and there are differences between the two cohorts in their responses. Firstly, for the statement 'my parents/caregivers watched me closely', 67% of Cohort 1 and 51% of Cohort 2 answered quite a bit or a lot, that is, 16% more of the young adults with employment outcomes reporting that their parents watched them closely during their childhood and adolescence.

While it may not seem unusual for young people to have periods of difficult communication with parents during adolescence, there were also differences between the two cohorts when the participants were asked whether they spoke to their parents or caregivers about how they felt 48% of Cohort 1 and 38% of Cohort 2 answered quite a bit or a lot. Another measurement of the quality and closeness of parent/child relationship was the statement 'my parents/caregivers knew a lot about me' where there was an even larger difference: 64% of Cohort 1 and 41% of Cohort 2 answered quite a bit or a lot. So, whether or not a young person feels that their parent knows about them, is not totally dependent on the young person's direct communications about their feelings but it appears that a positive response for both measures is correlated with a higher likelihood of the young adult achieving an employment outcome.

There was also significant difference in the two cohorts when it came to closeness and support during challenging times. For the statement 'my family stood by me during difficult times', 72% of Cohort 1 versus 51% of Cohort 2 answered quite a bit or a lot. Providing a safe environment for its younger

27 Moore, K, Guzman, L., Hair, E., Lippman, L., & Garrett, S. (2004). Parent-teen relationships and interactions: Far more positive than not (Child Trends Research Brief). Washington DC

and most vulnerable members is a basic function of families and is important for children and young people’s development. For the statement ‘I felt safe when I was with my family/caregivers’, 79% of Cohort 1 and 65% of Cohort 2 answered quite a bit or a lot. So, while most people in both cohorts were provided with a sense of safety, there was a noteworthy difference between the two cohorts with those in employment, that is Cohort 1, is more likely to have agreed with the statement that they felt safe with their family.

Family as Role Models

The significant role of parents and other family members as role models and supporters is undeniable and was reported by many of the young people surveyed as being most influential on their employment decisions. Just under half of all respondents in both cohorts mentioned family and friends as an influential factor. Most often the influence was seen as positive but there were also negative influences reported. This section looks at parents’ education and employment, the perceptions of the participants regarding their parents’ knowledge of employment pathways and the influence they had on the participants’ employment decisions and outcomes. Young motherhood is also explored in this section.

Parents’ Education and Employment

One important aspect of role modelling relates to parents’ employment and their modelling of work ethic, expectations and employability skills and so, the survey asked participants about their parents’ educational attainment, training and employment. We also asked the young people about their own educational attainment and as previously mentioned, there was a considerable difference in year 12 attainment between the two cohorts. The links between educational attainment and employment prospects are well known, however it is clear that many young people from both cohorts are disengaging from schooling before completion.

Table 7: Year 12 Attainment of young people and their parents

	Cohort 1			Cohort 2		
	Young Adult	Mother	Father	Young Adult	Mother	Father
Year 12 completion	73%	30%	26%	43%	17%	26%

The results from the survey about their parents’ educational attainment shows major generational changes in education policy and cultural expectations. Comparing these completion rates with the participants of the research indicates a very significant increase in year 12 attainment between the generations of young people to their parents. The most interesting difference between the two cohorts and parental education relates to the education level of mothers. The educational profile for fathers was fairly similar but the participants in Cohort 1 who had employment were more likely to have mothers with a higher level of education.

The survey also asked participants about their parents’ further education or training post school. In Cohort 1 the majority of the fathers had completed a trade certificate or apprenticeship, with much fewer of those completing higher education. The mothers of this group reported the highest level of education was at certificate 3 and 4 levels. There isn’t a significant difference in the two cohorts in

terms of their post-school educational attainment, slightly less for the mothers. However, when we look at the employment levels of the parents by comparison between our cohorts, there is a significant difference.

The survey also asked participants to report on their knowledge of parents' employment type using the Australian Bureau of Statistics employment categories. We have separated the two cohorts and their parent's employment category next to them to show comparisons.

Table 8: Comparison between young people and parents' employment

Occupation	Cohort 1			Cohort 2		
	Young adult	Mother	Father	Young adult	Mother	Father
Manager	11%	8%	11%	0%	6%	0%
Professional	23%	11%	7%	17%	6%	3%
Technician and Trades	10%	2%	31%	0%	0%	30%
Community and Personal Service	4%	6%	4%	17%	11%	0%
Clerical and Administrative	14%	17%	2%	8%	0%	0%
Sales Worker	14%	10%	4%	0%	6%	3%
Machinery Operator and Driver	3%	0%	15%	0%	6%	15%
Labourer	14%	9%	18%	8%	0%	30%
Student	6%	0%	0%	50%	3%	0%
Home duties	0%	34%	0%	17%	57%	3%
Don't know	0%	2%	9%	0%	6%	15%

Parental occupations were highly gendered for both cohorts with fathers mostly occupied in traditionally masculine occupations such as trades, machinery operators or drivers and labourers. Again, similar to looking at parental education there is an interesting correlation between the employment outcome of the participant and their likelihood of having a working mother. Looking at the two cohorts, many more of the mothers from Cohort 1 were reported to have had an occupation and had higher representation in each of the occupational categories compared with Cohort 2. There was a stark difference in the numbers of participants from each cohort reporting their mothers' occupation as home duties, with 34% of mothers of participants in Cohort 1 and 57% of mothers from participants in Cohort 2.

This finding is of considerable interest given that the majority of those in Cohort 2 are young women with children. It may be that this is evidence of intergenerational patterns of early parenthood and labour market exclusion.

Young motherhood

Teenage mothers, and by extension their children, are among the most socio-economically disadvantaged groups in Australian society²⁸. Even women who have their first child in their early 20s can experience significant disadvantage. There are differing perceptions related to whether the trajectory from young parenthood is positive or negative. However, parenthood in the teenage years can have damaging consequences including interruptions in education; greater dependence on government assistance; increased difficulty in entering or re-entering the labour market; and relationship instability.²⁹

In some instances, negative attitudes from the community and social isolation can characterise the life course of teenage mothers. Alternatively, the social and economic disadvantage that teenage mothers and their babies experience may simply be reflecting circumstances that were present before the pregnancy and birth. The policy implications of these two causal assumptions are quite different. If young motherhood causes poor socio-economic outcomes then this supports policy interventions to discourage early pregnancy. An explanation deriving from socio-economic background, on the other hand, provides justification for using young motherhood as an identifier to flag those families most in need of additional support³⁰. Some research also suggests that young women with poor labour market prospects, will decide to become a mother as part of their pathway to adult status. Others argue that the attitudes of these women are not that different, but that having children provides a path to adult status, with this being particularly attractive to disadvantaged women who lack alternative opportunities via the labour market³¹.

The statistics around gender and employment and education at a national level reveals the importance of keeping young women in education even if they have children. Females with dependent children who had a Bachelor degree or above were more likely to be employed than those with other levels of educational attainment. Just over three quarters (77%) with a Bachelor degree or above were employed compared with 40% who had Year 11 or below. Females with dependent children are less likely to be in full-time employment (28%) than males with dependent children (82%). Females are more likely than males to be in part-time employment (37% compared with 8.6%) or not in the labour force (31% compared with 6.8%).

Parental Influence on Skill Development

The survey asked participants about their perceptions of the influence of parents on their current employment outcomes. The young people were asked, 'for any of the jobs you have had, who of the following people helped you get those jobs'. In Cohort 1, 68% and Cohort 2, 63% reported that their parents or relatives had helped them.

Many of the survey respondents reported experiences relating to family and friends as having a substantial impact on their current life situations, commonly citing their parents and other family members as having a significant influence, instilling work ethic and providing advice and opportunities.

28 Bradbury, B (2006), *The impact of young motherhood on education, employment and marriage*, Social Policy Research Centre Discussion Paper No 148. University of NSW

29 Hoffman S. (2008) *Updated estimates of the consequences of teen childbearing for mothers*. In: Hoffman S, Maynard R, eds. *Kids having kids: economic costs and social consequences of teen pregnancy*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press

30 Op cit Bradbury, B (2006)

31 Op cit Bradbury, B (2006)

This is to be expected, given the important role that close relationships play in modelling social interactions and fostering an individual's capabilities. Below are some examples from the qualitative data from Cohort 1 describing the positive influence of family and close friends:

My dad taught me to work hard at whatever job I did and to earn enough money to enjoy life.

Advice and support from my sister helped me get my first casual job where she worked.

Having positive role models and support. Now looking back, I think I was quite naïve in believing everyone had the same support as me. I'm so lucky to have the family and friends I do.

Some negative stories were also shared and there was a difference when comparing the two cohorts with regard to whether the impact of family and friends was negative or positive. Fewer of Cohort 2 recounted positive influences from family and friends, only 20% versus 40% of Cohort 1. Consistent with this, was that Cohort 2 were more likely to recount relationships with family or friends as having a negative impact on their life circumstances, 40% compared with only 14% of Cohort 1. The following is an example from Cohort 2.

Hanging around with the wrong people, lack of support and poor decision making.

Parents Knowledge and Interest

We asked the young people to report on how interested their parents were about their future employment and how much they thought they knew about future pathways growing up. This is particularly important given the rapid changes and substantial differences between the two generations in relation to labour market opportunities and educational pathways.

Table 9: How interested were your parents in your future employment?

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Very interested	57.9%	54.1%
Moderately interested	18.2%	13.5%
Somewhat interested	15.7%	2.7%
Not very interested	4.1%	16.2%
Not at all interested	4.1%	13.5%

More than half of participants in both cohorts reported parents were very interested in their future employment prospects. Perhaps the most notable aspect is the difference in responses between the two cohorts at the negative end of the scale. More young people in Cohort 2 reported their parents were either 'not very' or 'not at all' interested in their future employment. For Cohort 2, 29.7% of respondents reported this versus 8.2% in Cohort 1. This may mean that the absence of interest is particularly disruptive or damaging for young people in terms of their employment outcomes in early adulthood.

Another aspect of parental influence was their knowledge of employment pathways as this would underpin any advice that was given to the participants. The following table shows the participant's perceptions of how much awareness parents had and how much influence.

Table 10: How much do you think your parents were aware of the employment pathways available to you growing up?

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Very aware and heavily influenced	33.1%	19.4%
Somewhat aware had some influence	36.4%	38.9%
Not aware had little or no influence	30.6%	41.7%

The data in table 10 reinforces that a large proportion of parents in both cohorts had little awareness of potential employment pathways. For Cohort 1 there is a fairly even spread of parental awareness and levels of interest reported. For Cohort 2, there was a smaller proportion of young people reporting that their parents had a high level of awareness and influence, with more reporting parents were somewhat aware and then an even larger proportion reporting their parents were not aware of employment pathways and had little or no influence.

Comparing the results from the questions about parental interest with those about awareness, we see that parents may show an interest despite not having good knowledge of employment pathways. This is a positive result, which demonstrates parents' encouragement and hope for children. It is likely however, that having parents show an interest and offer good knowledge about employment pathways may better assist young people to achieve an employment outcome. This is evidenced by the more positive results in parental interest, awareness and influence reported by Cohort 1.

Social Issues in the Family

Experience of negative social issues such as domestic violence, substance abuse, gambling addiction or criminality can hinder parents' ability to provide a nurturing environment for children and can have profound effects on children's early development. The survey asked participants whether their family experienced any of the specified social problems during their childhood and adolescence. These issues have the potential to play a significant role in shaping family relationships and the development of young people growing up.

For the two cohorts, there was only a small difference between the proportions of people who reported that none of the specified issues were present in their family while growing up, 58% of Cohort 1 and 55% of Cohort 2.

Table 11: Reported prevalence of social issues while growing up

	Drug & Alcohol	Domestic Violence	Gambling Addiction	Criminal Activity
Cohort 1	26.3%	7.6%	6.8%	1.7%
Cohort 2	17%	21.1%	0%	2.8%

Of those who did report having one or more social issues present in their family, the two cohorts reported different patterns. For Cohort 1, drug and alcohol addictions were the most commonly cited issue. For Cohort 2, the reporting of drug and alcohol addiction was not as high, and domestic

violence was the most commonly cited issue. This was a substantial difference when compared with Cohort 1. Gambling addiction was more commonly cited as present in the families of participants from Cohort 1 than Cohort 2. Both Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 reported small amounts of criminal activity within their family while growing up, but for Cohort 2 it was just slightly higher.

Following from asking participants about their experience of negative social issues while growing up, the survey asked if their family had accessed any supportive social services. Many participants skipped this question and it is likely that this group could not recall their family ever accessing the services listed. However, table 12 below shows fairly high engagement with housing support services and family counselling in both cohorts.

Table 12: Family use of support services while growing up

	Drug & Alcohol Counselling	DV support	Housing Assistance	Family Counselling
Cohort 1	7.9%	2.6%	28.9	34.2%
Cohort 2	5.6%	0%	44.4%	27.8%

Considering the high level of reported domestic violence in families, especially those from Cohort 2, where 21.1% reported the presence of it in their families, none reported that their family had accessed support services for this reason, which is concerning. However, this may be related to the housing/homelessness sector providing these services in conjunction with domestic violence support. It is also striking how few families accessed drug and alcohol counselling when 26.3% of families of people from Cohort 1 and 17% of Cohort 2 reported this as an issue in their family. Housing assistance and family counselling were accessed by participants' families in both cohorts. For Cohort 1, family counselling was most often accessed whereas for Cohort 2, housing assistance was used by nearly half of families.

Leaving the Family Home

As a result of difficult family relationships and the presence of negative social issues such as those described in the previous section, leaving home is a strategy pursued by some young people to escape their surroundings. There is evidence to suggest that leaving home before the age of 18 puts a young person in a worse financial situation long term, and leaving home before the age of 21 appears to be too soon to support yourself, particularly while also trying to juggle further education and training. According to Housing, Income & Labour Dynamic in Australia (HILDA) data there are quite stark differences in outcomes for choosing to move out of home in late teens (or earlier). It shows that these decisions can have a large impact on future economic and social outcomes. Staying longer in a suitable home environment provides social connections and support enabling a young person to finish their studies and improve their chances of future economic stability.

The data from Cohorts 1 and 2 in Playford, however, are not consistent with that of the HILDA data because a large proportion (37%) of Cohort 1 (who had employment outcomes) reported leaving home between ages of 18 – 20 years old and only 16% still living at home at the time of the survey (see Table 2). Those in Cohort 2, tended to leave home even earlier, with 33% leaving between the ages of 15 – 17 and only 6.5% remaining at home.

Whilst the survey did not directly ask participants' reasons for leaving home, the data indicates that the home environment and parenting was likely to have been more supportive for Cohort 1 than Cohort 2, which would have contributed to more in Cohort 2 leaving home at an earlier age. While the decision to leave the family home may in fact be a wise move for a number of young people in Cohort 2, the impact of the lack of family support is likely to have contributed to their poorer employment outcomes. At the age of 16 and 17 a young persons' economic capacity to support themselves is severely limited due to lower youth wages and welfare payments. This is why it would be important for these young people to have access to supportive housing with encouragement to engage in education and or employment, to provide stability for their development and improve their future outcomes (as recommended in this report).

Individual Stories

When we looked closely at some individual stories of the young people, there was evidence to suggest that despite poor structural circumstances, such as low income or welfare dependency, high numbers of siblings, the presence of social issues within the family and/or young people leaving home early, there are still some relational factors that could mitigate against poor outcomes. By way of example, we have rendered some stories to illustrate this point.

The first example is of a young woman who grew up with 4 siblings in her family and a single mother who was on welfare for unemployment and children. Her mother had completed year 10 education but she was unaware of her father's education. She reported that there was drug addiction in the family and that she was aware they had accessed drug and alcohol services. This young woman had left home at the age of 15. However, she was able to finish year 12 with the help of Flexible Learning Options (FLO) at school, has a certificate IV and Advanced Diploma, is now currently renting with her partner, and working 34 hours per week which she has been doing for more than 6 months. She is a manager and not on any form of government supports.

When looking closely at this young woman's story, there are some key touchpoints that she has reported as contributing to her outcome. The first being teachers through the FLO program at school (we discuss the importance of external relationships in Part 2), and also, she reported that she had people to look up to in her community. Importantly too, her mother was very interested in her education and employment pathways, although only somewhat aware and had some influence on her employment pathways.

Another example of a young person growing up in Playford in less than optimal circumstances is from a young man who left home at 17 years old. He lived with one parent and visited the other, and lived with other family members growing up. He has 4 siblings. His mother has year 12 education, but he was unaware of his father's education. He is currently living with his de-facto partner with one child, has year 12 and a trade certificate, working 35 hours per week for more than 6 months and not on any welfare. Some of the indicators that suggest he was well supported is that he reported his parents were very interested and very aware of the pathways available to him for employment, indicating the importance of encouragement, support and knowledge of parents around future pathways.

It must be emphasized that having financial resources and family stability and relationships creates the optimum conditions for young people to do well is crucial, but these stories point to the need to support parents to be involved in a young person's future education and pathway. In this section, we investigated the relationships, social issues, resources and stability of families of the young people in the survey who grew up in Playford. Each individual factor alone cannot be attributed to the overall

outcome of the young people. However, it is reasonable to conclude that the cumulative effect of having more positive attributes of Cohort 1 have contributed to their outcome. In Cohort 2, it seems there are more risk factors and fewer protective factors available to them and hence, their outcome was not as favorable.

Recommendations Part 1

Increased attention to education attainment to year 12 for all young people in Playford.

Mentoring and support for young people who leave home 'early' through services in the region. Further investigation into the reasons young people in Playford leave home earlier than average.

Provision of low cost supported housing in the Playford region for young people who leave home before the age of 18 and who wish to remain engaged in education or employment.

Education/career and transition planning and assistance targeted at young women starting as early as primary school. Significant investment in education for young mothers to encourage school retention and clear career pathways. Provide the necessary childcare and transport services to enable young mothers to attend.

Education for parents of at risk children about the importance of interest and encouragement in fostering children's education and employment.

Drug and Alcohol, Domestic Violence Services and Gambling addiction services to provide education and outreach to children and young people in the places they utilise i.e. schools, libraries, sporting facilities.

Part 2: Significant External Relationships

In the previous section, we discussed the early years of our participants growing up in Playford and the impact on the outcome for the young people. We now turn attention to the young people's recollections of some of the activities they participated in, and the various relationships they developed in order to reflect upon the importance of these interactions to their social and economic outcomes.

The combination of healthy family relationships, access to resources (which includes time and financial resources), plus the opportunity to participate in a range of activities appears to create the optimum environment for a young person to fulfil their potential. In keeping with our focus on positive youth development and capability building, we have looked for opportunities where young people can extend their social skills through sustained and meaningful connections with others outside their usual family and social circle.

This section takes a more qualitative approach by using data from the individual stories from the focus groups and from the open-ended questions in the survey about the important relationships and opportunities they had. We compare the two cohorts in terms of their outcomes. We found that in some instances, despite less than optimum conditions growing up, when a young person had access to sustained, trusted and long term relationships and opportunities, they could sometimes alter the trajectory of their outcomes.

Significant Relationships

It is well established that trusted adult relationships can play a meaningful role in a young person's life. The most effective relationships involve frequent and sustained contact, emotional closeness, and high mentor self-efficacy³². Activities or services that are designed to support young people through sustained and trusted adult relationships can have a lasting effect on the decision making and outcomes for young people. These relationships are particularly important to young people with limited social networks and financial capital and can often be accessed in a range of locations such as through peer networks, the parents of peers, volunteering opportunities and sporting clubs. These relationships can also be accessed through interaction with any service provider that has face-to-face contact with a young person. In a school context, significant relationships are likely to be with their peer group, teachers and other adults such as school counsellors.

We were interested in the influence that these relationships had on employment and education decisions and outcomes and how they underpinned a young person's capability development. It became evident that in some cases, these relationships played a larger role in some of the young people's lives and had significant meaning for them.

32 DuBois, D.L., Holloway, B.E., Valentine, J.C., & Cooper, H (2002), *Effectiveness of mentoring programs for youth: A meta-analytic review*. American Journal of Community Psychology, 30, pp. 157–197.

School

For some young people, school can be a turbulent and difficult time, especially during the transition years of high school. Navigating additional work loads, peer pressure, alongside major developmental changes can be challenging for many young people, and more so for those who have difficult family relationships. However, school can also be a place where students can access relatively stable relationships with trusted adults.

The advice and encouragement that many of the survey respondents received from within the school environment was cited as an influential factor in their employment decision making. Looking at the whole group, 61.7% mentioned that teachers were an influence on their decisions moving forward. However, when filtered through the lens of employment outcomes, 65% of Cohort 1 and 58% of Cohort 2 mentioned teachers as providing advice and guidance. In terms of specifically helping the young people get a job, 17.1% of cohort 1 reported that teachers helped them get a job, whereas none from Cohort 2 reported teachers helping them. When considering the low level of year 12 attainment in Cohort 2, it may be that teachers have an increasing influence in the later years. If a student leaves school early (ie: year 9 or 10), the opportunity to form relationships with teachers could be limited.

There were a number of positive recollections about teachers as mentors and the influence they had in the outcomes for young people. All of these comments came from Cohort 1.

In high school, I had an amazing teacher who inspired me to study environmental science. Once at Uni I found a lecturer who became my mentor, employer, friend and honours supervisor. Having a good role model and earning their respect, in return they gave me so many opportunities for volunteer and paid experience. I still learn from my mentors, just not in a classroom.

Great teachers inspired me to become a teacher myself.

Teachers at school were the biggest contributing factors. They encouraged me to dream & succeed

The mentor I had throughout high school empowered me to make the most influential decisions for myself. The best advice I got was "You are the only person who will make yourself successful and happy." It was a simple statement like that which is what I live by now and ever since I was 14. That statement empowers me to be the driver of my success.

One of the young people spoke about the help she received from teachers that inspired hope and motivation to do well, especially coming from difficult circumstances:

I have dyslexia and a fair few mental health issues thanks to genetics. There were a few teachers in my school that gave me hope and let me see my true potential. I ended up top of my classes, just with some belief in myself.

One of the participants in the research came from compromised early life with multiple issues, but with the help of teachers at school was able to improve her circumstances and break the cycle of the welfare dependency of her family. This is Janine's^{*33} story:

33 This is a pseudonym for confidentiality

Janine moved out of home at the age of 15 and lived in public housing with her mother who worked as a community and personal service worker. Janine reported that there was some reliance on welfare for children and unemployment and she also reported drug addiction in the family for which they accessed drug and alcohol services. Despite her early years being difficult, Janine finished year 12 and is now working as a manager 34 hours per week.

Janine is now 25-years-old, renting a house in Playford and living with her partner. She doesn't rely on any form of welfare to get by. Janine reported that she had extremely positive relationships with teachers particularly through the Flexible Learning Options program and that her mother was supportive and interested in her future employment.

Factors other than Janine's relationships with teachers could have influenced her outcomes, such as her mother being interested and supportive of her future employment. However, Janine's early home leaving is significant. It is reasonable to conclude that her positive experience with teachers through FLO have played an important role in her development and her ability to secure and maintain full-time employment.

School Counselor

Another significant relationship accessible through school is the role of a school counselor. For some young people, a school counselor can be a safe and trusted relationship that does not involve their parents. While there was a very low percentage of the participants in the survey who reported that school counselors played a role in their education and employment outcomes, in the qualitative text, a number of the participants made reference to the support of school counselors. The responses do suggest that the relationship was positive, however, there were reflections on the counselor's limitations. These stories are from the young people who navigated their way through difficult circumstances with the help of a counselor:

During high school, I had an excellent school counselor who encouraged me to apply for a school based traineeship. It was because of that traineeship, the skills I gained and the connections I made during that time that kick started my professional career. She has absolutely had the biggest influential factor on my employment to date.

I had this woman and she would come in, not every day but most days she would come in. She would encourage me, she'd be, okay, do you want to do a course, she paid for me to get my learners, the program paid for that. So just the constant attention.

I remember a course advisor at school telling me that a job is out there that will suit everyone, you just have to find the "right" one.

A young person spoke about having strong guidance from a school counselor who helped create a pathway and gain important capabilities to pursue the goal of becoming a teacher:

I always wanted to be a teacher from when I was very young. Through working with the school counselor, I gained a job at Foodland where I worked on my people, communication and relationship skills.

However, other participants reported that the role of school counselor was not so favorable, largely due to the limitations of time and resources. They viewed the school counsellor role as important, but felt there was never enough time to really get to know the student. Here is a reflection of one of the participants:

I know that they only have half an hour worth of time for each student and it's just band-aid fixes. They have half an hour a week but there's no way they can fit half an hour a week in per student. There's too many students and they don't get enough time or funding or anything to actually fix people. It's literally get them in, make sure they're going to last until the next time you see them again. In that half an hour they need to fit in everything like personal issues, housing issues, employment, wanting employment, money.

The term 'going to last' refers to a young person's capacity for self-harm, which is troubling particularly if this is an on-going issue for the young person. Adequately resourced school counselor role in an education setting has the potential to play an important role in the outcomes for young people, given the proximity and access they have to students. This is particularly important for young people with limited social networks and difficult family circumstances.

While some school counselors provided careers advice and direction it seemed to be on an ad-hoc and individual basis. It is not clear whether young people received any support regarding education and career direction more widely, but certainly individual interest and advice was seen as valuable by the research participants.

Work Experience

There appears to be widespread acceptance that one of the best ways for young people to develop the non-technical capabilities needed to be successful in work is through workplace experience. However, to be valuable, the work experience needs to be authentic and incorporate real life problems to work on; have support provided by appropriately skilled and experienced mentors; incorporate preparation prior to the experience, as well as opportunities to reflect on the experience. However, those from a background of low social capital and networks are at risk of not having an adequate range of work experience opportunities, thereby rendering the experience meaningless. The Department of Education and Child Development in South Australia includes work experience in its curriculum and suggests that it plays an important role in providing students with access to the work environment.

There was quite a significant difference between Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 in relation to their accessing and finding benefit from work experience in getting a job. For Cohort 1, 55.2% reported work experience as being a strong influence in their decision making about their future, whereas for Cohort 2, only 27.8% reported work experience as being beneficial. When we take into account the combination of low levels of Year 12 attainment and also the less positive family relationships in Cohort 2, it is likely that this group would not have had the opportunities and gained the benefits of work experience in the same way that Cohort 1 have.

Accessing appropriate opportunities to participate in work experience relies heavily on family and social networks for placement, and on the willingness of employers to participate. Without this support, young people lose an important opportunity to fully benefit from work experience and often end up taking a position in an employment setting that is inappropriate or not of interest to them. However, if it is well executed, it can provide positive outcomes and the basis for decision making about the future as these young people reported:

I didn't have a specific field I wanted to work in but found a retail position that suited me just fine. Previous to that, employment studies at high school and doing work experience definitely opened my eyes to types of work in the area.

At school, my work experience included working in child care and school settings so I could make a conclusive decision. I've never been happier with my life choices.

Work experience opportunities require a coordinated effort between education institutions, local businesses and employers and parents or care-givers and can create tension in families and for young people if they are difficult to obtain. Opportunities also need to be easily accessed by the young person or family so as to not place additional pressure on family resources.

External Service Providers

There is a range of services that young people come into contact with outside of school and family that can be influential in decision making about their future. Interactions with services such as case managers or case workers, or job network providers in either general or youth specific services can provide advice and pathways for young people to make positive choices and gain skills for their future. Services or practitioners that focus on positive youth development and intentionally provide opportunities for young people to enhance their interests, skills or abilities offer a greater chance of a favorable outcome. In keeping with our strength based approach, we investigated various relationships with external service providers that have underpinned or influenced in some way the young person's outcome.

Case Workers/Case Managers

Case workers or case managers can be accessed in a range of settings from within youth services, or employment services and are often uniquely positioned to positively influence a young person and their decisions, especially if the relationship is sustained and ongoing. 22.3% of the participants across the two cohorts reported that a case manager was a positive influence on their outcomes, but equally 20% reported that they had a negative experience with their case manager. It was not clear from the survey which service they were reporting but the qualitative data provided interesting insights about what the young people wanted from these interactions.

To illustrate the significance of an on-going relationship with a case worker, we have included a story of the young woman Kate*³⁴. She moved out of home at the age of 16, having lived in 10 different houses (some of which were social housing). Kate was from a single parent home and reported the problem of gambling addiction as present in her household. She also reported that her separated parents were not aware or interested in her decisions about her future education and employment. This is what she had to say about the case workers she encountered;

I think that's why [name of service] was so good. I had the same 2 people from the start until I moved away. It's because there were so many inconsistencies in my life. Half the time I didn't know where I was going to be. I saw the case manager every week. So, they'd pick me up from school and we'd go and have a milkshake and it was just that one thing every week that kind of made me go there and be normal. It has motivated me to move back to where I grew up, where I was at the worst and to try to make a difference to someone else.

³⁴ This is a pseudonym for confidentiality

This young woman completed year 12 and also reported that a private training organization was extremely influential in her gaining an associate diploma. She is now currently studying full-time to be a youth worker. The ongoing and trusted relationship she developed with the case manager had a profound impact on her life contributing to her choice to study to become a youth worker and her hope to work in the community she grew up in. It is noteworthy that she recognised that there are many employment opportunities in the northern suburbs for her with such a qualification.

There were other examples of young people's experiences with case workers with similar effect and where the worker had taken a positive youth development approach to their interactions:

It was like a non-judgement thing from them, but it was also that they were telling us what we could do rather than what we couldn't do, and they were telling us about what we could do within the Northern Suburbs, what opportunities we did have rather than what we couldn't.

Another young person experienced her case worker within an education setting, and this comment draws attention to the value of looking for the strengths within a young person.

The case worker I had with Flexible Learning Options helped me to know that I was capable in holding down a job and finishing school. Her belief in me got me through when I wanted to give up.

Given the equal weighting of the positive and not so positive responses in the survey to the influence of a case worker, we can conclude that when the experience was not favorable, reasons might include limited time available for the young person, seeing multiple case workers in an organization, or not forming a trusting relationship.

Little influence

Some participants reported having received little advice or assistance that would be considered an influence. Most of these responses came from Cohort 2 where 15% said they had no influential factors. For Cohort 1 only 3% stated that no one or no factors influenced their employment decisions. The following are some examples of such responses;

First full-time job I got after many years applying on a job advertisement website. I never received any help.

I feel I lacked a lot influence in my school life. I felt unsupported and forgotten. I got okay grades but was never pushed into "where would you like to go from here" or "what would you like to do with yourself". I'm still only now just trying to figure out where and what I want to do and where to go and I'm almost 28 and it's tough. I don't even know where to begin sometimes and the fact I have to pay for my study, I can't afford it now my hours from work have been cut.

These two examples highlight the necessity for young people to have access to guidance at critical development points as a way to mitigate against long term difficulties.

Peer Pressure and Community Attitudes

Another important consideration is the role of peer pressure and community attitudes towards young people growing up in Playford. Earlier, we drew attention to some of the stigma associated with living in the northern suburbs of Adelaide. These attitudes are long-standing and deeply entrenched making it difficult for some young people to navigate an alternative path, especially if their own circumstances are compromised.

There were many negative social influences described by survey participants as part of the experience of growing up in Playford. Aside from unemployment they mentioned accessibility to drugs, alcohol and pressure to withdraw from education or downgrade their ambitions. We asked about the influence peer groups had on their decision making about education and employment and there was a significant difference between our two cohorts. 64% of Cohort 1 reported that their peers were positive or somewhat positive in their decisions and by contrast Cohort 2, reported that 47% of their peers were positive or somewhat positive.

Again, the qualitative data gives us greater insight into the effects of peer pressure on decision making. These three comments came from Cohort 2, those who were not currently in employment.

Not much peer support, very easy to slip into drugs/alcohol consumption from sheer availability.

I had no future hopes really. My friends were all naughty, we did really stupid things. I left school in year 8... My parents didn't listen to me much, so I left home at 13. To be honest, it wasn't great.

The peer pressure I had was to party, drink alcohol and take drugs.

Many survey participants reported that living in Playford had no influence on their employment decisions or that they in fact had had a positive experience of living in the area. For those who did not recognise an influence from living in the Playford, typical responses were:

I don't feel it affected me at all as I was always told I could do whatever I wanted. Regardless of where I live, my decisions had nothing to do with the area.

Many young people participating in the survey reported their positive experiences of growing up were more to do with the supportive role of parents rather than the area they were raised in. This was seen as a far more significant factor impacting their employment decisions.

Growing up in Playford had minimal impact on my employment decisions. There was no expectation for me to attend Uni or get out of school and join the Holden assembly line. My parents provided an opportunity to attend good schools and supported me the best they could throughout my studies which allowed me to find my own calling in life.

There were similar proportions of participants from both Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 who rejected the idea that growing up in Playford had a negative influence on their employment decisions or who reported positive experiences of area. However, in direct contrast, numerous survey participants described the poor employment prospects available in the area. Generally, they saw this as disappointing because many said they would like to continue to live in Playford and wished to work locally.

I like the area, but I had to go outside of the Playford area to find work. It more or less forced me into a shit job, as employment in my chosen field is basically non-existent in the North.

I don't see many opportunities for a career in Playford.

The Impact of Adversity

There was a sizable group of respondents who shared challenging life events and experiences of adversity when asked to report the life events that impact their current circumstances. Many of the challenging life events related to family issues but other examples included experiencing mental health issues, bullying or violence;

The death of my grandmother. She was my biggest support.

Losing everything, hitting rock bottom and seeking mental health assistance.

Growing up being constantly bullied really messed with me.

Being beat up by my daughter's father. I would have achieved more if that didn't happen.

My uncles suicide

When comparing the two cohorts, those from Cohort 2 were more likely to recount adverse life events as having a significant impact on their life situation at the time of the survey, 31% of Cohort 2 versus 14% of Cohort 1.

The young people that have reported adverse life events, experiencing negative peer pressure and having little or no trusted and ongoing positive influences for their decisions point to the need for adequate attention be given to the young people who are struggling. It is evident that there are multiple touch points for young people to experience either a positive or negative interaction from adults in their developmental years. Those who have reported positive experiences have benefitted from the interaction and have been able to make good decisions about their future. Those who have not had the benefit of a positive interaction or have been influenced by peer group pressure or adverse life events are more likely to not do so well. It is therefore important that for every young person who come into contact with services, a child and youth friendly approach is taken throughout community like has been done in other places of economic and social disadvantage such as Leeds in the UK³⁵.

“ Many of the challenging life events related to family issues...”

35 <http://www.leeds.gov.uk/childfriendlyleeds/Pages/default.aspx>

Recommendations Part 2

Playford Council to lead a child and youth friendly initiative where first point of contact services and professionals accessed by children and young people receive specialised training about their engagement and encouragement of young people.

Strengthen mentoring capacity of teachers, especially at around 13 – 15 years old to encourage school retention.

Adequately resource and support school counsellor programs to ensure access and ongoing support to the most vulnerable children and young people at high school.

Adequately resource careers education and counselling programs for children and young people and parents within educational settings.

Review educational procedures regarding work experience. These programs should not rely on parental networks and should encourage greater employer engagement and improve processes to ensure positive experiences.



Part 3: Opportunities

This section investigates a range of opportunities that young people in Playford accessed growing up and their reflections on the impact this had on their outcomes. We were particularly interested in the skills and capabilities these various activities afforded them, and how that may have influenced their employment decisions and outcomes. Again, we make comparisons between the two groups and highlight the benefits of opportunities that are outside the family especially for those young people who have come from difficult circumstances.

Volunteering

Young people make choices about how to spend their time outside of the family home for diverse reasons which can include a particular interest in the activity (for example sport, or creative pursuits), or to pursue employment goals or new skills (such as through volunteering) or because of the opportunity to have social activity with peers. While some of their decisions are driven by peer groups and their own personal levels of sociability, whether they choose to engage in extracurricular activities is important for their longer-term outcomes and skill development. It is well established that when young people engage in various structured activities, and they feel that their opinions are valued, they begin to develop initiative, and the ability to be motivated from within to direct attention and effort toward a challenging goal. Developing initiative is a key capability valued by employers and the prerequisites of initiative are associated with participation in structured voluntary activities. When young people have opportunities for meaningful participation in activities where they possess the requisite skills, and for which they receive positive acknowledgment and validation, there are more likely to be successful outcomes.

Volunteering provides opportunities that offer a range of social capabilities and skill development benefits. The appeals of volunteering for young people include being with friends, strengthening social relationships and working collaboratively with others³⁶. Young people look for volunteering opportunities that are of interest and reflect their values and priorities, but they also look for volunteering opportunities that link them to other young people³⁷. In a number of studies, young people identify considerable benefits of their involvement in volunteer activities including acknowledgement, appreciation, and a sense of being socially engaged³⁸. The desire to learn or exercise skills, including skills that may be useful in progressing or obtaining work and career opportunities, is a key motivation for many young people³⁹.

36 Moffatt, L. (2011a). Engaging young people in volunteering: what works in Tasmania? Executive Summary. Hobart: Volunteering Tasmania.

37 Ferrier, F., Roos, I., & Long, M. (2004). Passions, People and Appreciation: making volunteering work for young people. Canberra: National Youth Affairs Research Scheme.

38 Astin, A. W., & Sax, L. J. (1998). How Undergraduates Are Affected by Service Participation. *Journal of College Student Development*, 39(3), 251-263.

39 Muir, K., Mullan, K., Powell, A., Flaxman, S., Thompson, D., & Griffiths, M. (2009). State of Australia's Young People. Canberra: Australian Government, Office for Youth.

Volunteering has also been found to be advantageous for young people who may be considered socioeconomically disadvantaged as they believe that they can make a difference and have a more positive outlook on their ability to succeed in further study⁴⁰. Volunteering has also been found to foster greater career opportunities by giving young people access to potential employers and other organisations that can build their skill base for employability⁴¹. Volunteering increases young people's social capital, increases open-mindedness, leadership, communication, team work and other soft skills that formal educational institutions cannot always engender⁴².

In 2011, research conducted by LinkedIn found that 41 per cent of hiring managers consider volunteer work equally as valuable as paid work experience when evaluating candidates. Australian responses to the LinkedIn survey revealed one out of every five hiring managers in Australia has hired a candidate because of their volunteer work experience. This is echoed in research which found that "active volunteers were 27% more likely to get a job than non-volunteers"⁴³.

Playford Youth Volunteering

There was a difference between the two cohorts in terms of their participation in volunteering, where 31% of Cohort 1 reported that they did volunteering work compared to 23% of Cohort 2. However, when drawing from the qualitative material from those that had employment at the time of the survey, the importance of volunteering becomes more evident. This is noteworthy given the breadth of soft skill development and intrinsic motivations the young people identified which included, relationship building, leadership opportunities, greater confidence, and communication skills.

For example, a young man from cohort 1 spoke about the deep and long term social connections, similar to family, that came from his participation in volunteering at a local sports club:

I think when you join a volunteer group, it creates a sense of belonging... at my personal [sporting club] they are my family. ... I've been there 10 years, and you see them 3 nights a week, you see them more than your actual family sometimes. If there are people out there who aren't getting a sense of belonging at home, if their family aren't functional ... it creates something outside of them to be happy.

Regardless of the participants' intentions at the outset, it was clear that volunteering strengthened their capability to establish positive relationships, value, interpret and motivate others. Two of the young men and one of the young women from Cohort 1 spoke of the opportunity to develop their capacity for leadership which was significant and meaningful for these participants. One of the young men recognised the transformative value of leadership opportunity and intentionally provided these opportunities to younger people where he volunteered:

...a prime example is I've got a student now who's just turned 11 years old; ...so we've had him for the last 12 months just teaching five year olds and six year olds just simple stuff. It's not anything that is mind blowing, it's not anything too difficult but it gives him a sense of –

40 Spring, K., Dietz, N., & Robert Grimm, J. (2007), Youth Helping America: Leveling the path to participation: Volunteering and civic engagement among Youth from disadvantaged circumstances. Washington: Corporation for National and Community Service.

41 Haski-Leventhal, D., Lucas C. P. M, & Hustinx, L. (2010). The Third-party Model: Enhancing Volunteering through Governments, Corporations and Educational Institutes. *Journal of Social Policy*, 39(01), 139-158.

42 Jones, A. (2011). Theorising international youth volunteering: training for global (corporate) work? *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 36, 530–544.

43 Spera, C, Ghertner, R, Nerino, A, Di Tommaso, A. (2013), Volunteering as a Pathway to Employment: Does Volunteering Increase Odds of Finding a Job for the Out of Work? Washington, DC: Corporation for National and Community Service, Office of Research and Evaluation.

"I'm doing this, I'm helping them"... His mum and dad come to the class and watch him do it and they say that the last 12 months they've noticed a massive change in him outside of class... It does develop leadership in them; we like to encourage it, basically because as a young child, especially a lot of them nowadays that come to the class, are very unsure of themselves regardless of their life at home and their family and their friends – this particular student was very unsure of himself when he started with us but now we can let him run half the class with the juniors and just stand, walk around and assist with the very young ones.

Closely related to the capabilities associated with relationships and leadership are those of developing and improving social confidence. Participants felt they were afforded the opportunity to learn and grow through volunteering and described the nurturing environments which fostered self-esteem and confidence.

I was a very quiet person... It built my confidence... I think that came from the people actually caring. I felt like I was in a safe place, so I know I could be confident.

Typically, the volunteering opportunities also involved them developing and honing their capabilities around communication i.e. explaining, expressing, listening. One participant described how volunteering at an aged care home helped her improve her communication abilities and shaped her decision making for future employment:

It's mainly being able to talk to all different types of people, especially if they had a bit of a language barrier and it's made it a lot easier for me when I go to other places to talk to people normally. Volunteering helped me to understand people better which has helped me to work with a variety of people in a workplace. Hospital volunteering made me realise I wanted to help people.

Some focus group participants pursued these opportunities considering the prospect as an important networking opportunity for their future employment:

I want to get into the youth work field. So at first, it was just, oh this will look good on my resume... but I also learned a lot about networking.

One of the participants spoke about her motivation to improve her CV through volunteering, and although she was reluctant to work for free when she started, she soon realised the benefits more broadly:

I think it definitely gave me confidence and probably patience and networking. I met a lot of people that I don't think I would have met throughout my time working. I feel like people treat you a bit differently when you're a volunteer. They actually want to get to know you and see what skills you have and where they can help you. Whereas when you're just working I don't actually feel people want to get to know you.

Having supportive, trusted people in contact with a young person in a volunteer role can be important, particularly for those who have limited social networks. These relationships can be developed over time and volunteering offers a range of important opportunities for skill development and networking which otherwise may not be available to them.

To illustrate the intrinsic benefits of volunteering and shaping the outcome for a young person, following is a transformative story of one of our participants:

*Bill*⁴⁴ left school in year 9 and was also an only child with a single mother on welfare. At the age of 9 years old, Bill joined the police rangers cadet program at the encouragement of his mother. He said that volunteering gave him a sense of belonging, and feeling important, especially when he was confused for being a 'real copper'. Before he left the police cadet program, he had been awarded the rank of Sergeant wearing a badge on his shirt. After leaving the cadet program he continued to volunteer with organisations that had uniforms: St Johns and then the SES. Bill mentioned that he was taught extensive report writing skills, which included recall for dates and times of offences and needed to be an accurate representation of the various offences in order to be used as court evidence*

Bill currently lives with his de-facto partner and has 2 children. He has a mortgage, and works 60 hours per week in his own small business, earning around \$80,000 per year. He continues to be an active community member in Playford and wishes to contribute to the community through encouraging young people through mentoring.

These various recollections from the young people suggest that there are multiple benefits and opportunities to develop skills and capabilities that assisted them. Volunteering is an activity that with community support, can be made readily available to all young people, especially for those that have limited social networks and family support.

Sport

Another area of investigation related to activities outside of the family was to understand the benefits of sports participation on the social and economic outcomes of young people in Playford. Sport is known to benefit young people in a range of areas and offers a diverse set of experiences that have the potential to build skills. Sport, both informal and structured activities, provides wider social benefits and attracts a cross-section of the community, making the sport environment an effective way of building social networks and social capital for the individual.

The specific nature of participating in sport requires a young person to have contact with peers outside of their own family, have contact with a range of adults such as coaches and team managers, other parents and role models from other teams. There are many opportunities to develop strong mentoring or role modelling relationships with a trusted adult or older peer, as well as learn team building skills, cooperative behaviours, leadership and communication. For some young people, sport is not something they are/were interested in. However, we discovered that for many of the young people in Playford there were multiple benefits, particularly in relation to gaining experiences and skills beyond the sport itself.

Playford Youth and Sport Participation

There is a considerable difference in the participation rates in sport between our two cohorts. Cohort 1 reported that 71.5 % participated in sport, whereas for Cohort 2 only 47% participated. Given that participation in sport requires a reasonable level of financial resources and parental time, it is not surprising that Cohort 1 had higher representation. As previously mentioned, Cohort 1 had higher levels of intact families and housing stability, fewer children in the family and less reliance upon welfare so we can make assumptions that these families are more likely to have the capacity to support these activities.

⁴⁴ We have permission to use Bills name and story

The survey participants reported the value of sport and named social skills and capabilities they built through their engagement. The most widely reported skills were building confidence; learning about and valuing team work; participating in positive relationships; learning self-discipline; developing emotional intelligence; and building leadership capacity. These were recognized as important skills for self-development and employability as adults. The following quotes are from young people in Cohort 1:

I learnt to be part of a team and I encourage and motivate others by being a leader.

Being part of a sporting club growing up gave me a lot more confidence to socialise and also taught me how to deal with emotions i.e. winning, losing, bullying from another players on court, how to deal with coaches and umpires.

Engaging in these activities provided the young people with access to new social connections and many survey participants commented on the strong friendships they built. Some participants identified role models and mentors outside of their families and schools.

Sport provided a mentor, access to training, and positive role models. My mentor was the sole reason I became focused...

Often these relationships were recognised as more positive than those gained from peers at school and enabled young people to focus on enjoyable activities, which meant they were less likely to pursue undesirable social activity. Here is what one of the participants said

Sport kept me off the street and kept me out of trouble.

This young woman from the above quote, left home at 17 years old, and lived in public housing growing up with drug addiction in her family. She also reported that her family had limited awareness of pathways to education and employment post school. However, she completed year 12, and gained a bachelor degree. She is currently working 32 hours per week with a yearly salary between \$52,000 – \$64,000. Participating in sport exposed her to an alternative activity that may have contributed to better choices and positive opportunities along the way.

Another key benefit highlighted by numerous survey respondents was the potential for sport outside school to assist gaining personal insights into their individual interests and skills. These survey participants used these insights to identify potential career goals and direction:

I learnt to work as a part of a team. I also got to meet different people and this made me realise what sort of person I wanted to be. I wanted to help children.

I learnt to work within a group environment and to help me find out what I wanted to do as a career.

It is worth noting the gender implications of these findings. Female sport participation often declines in the teenage years for a range of reasons. Some significant barriers for young women include access to appropriate accessible and affordable facilities and services; lack of culturally appropriate facilities; social stereotyping; lack of role models; lack of time; lack of skills or perceived lack of skills; lack of financial resources; harassment; lack of confidence in approaching activities alone; poor self-image and cultural and social pressures

However, for females in Cohort 1 who had positive social and economic outcomes, 65% of the group participated in sport. Some of the participants in the focus group drew our attention to some of the specific barriers that reduced their opportunities:

[I]t almost wasn't cool to play sport anymore. So, I just went with that and I stopped in high school because none of my friends were doing it. Looking back now I think that was such a dumb thing because I loved playing sport until my peers didn't want to.

The influence of parents is also central to the encouragement or discouragement of sports. This young woman spoke about not having her parents there to watch her. Gender played a significant role in the decision making of her parents:

I got into netball when I was about 6 because my friend was doing it. I did that for a few years but because it was on at the same time as my brother's football, I never had my parents there. So that was one of the hardest things for me. Then there was the cost came in then and it's oh we can't really afford to buy you all the equipment for you to practice and get better.

Here is another example of gender stereotypes underpinning the allocation of parental resources:

I played netball since I was 8, I think, and then I got to year 7 and my brother decided he wanted to play sport. So, my parents couldn't afford both of us, so I wasn't able to play. Dad said it's too expensive.

This gender stereotypical attitude of parents places a significant barrier on young females to participate in sport, which is disappointing, especially when it is shown to be of such benefit to social and economic outcomes for the young women.

Creative Classes

A third area of activity we investigated was the role of creative classes such as music, dance, art or drama and the outcomes for the Playford participants. This area provides an alternative opportunity for young people, particularly those that struggle with confidence and social interactions which may be more important in volunteering and sport, and can be pursued individually or in groups.

The benefits of creative pursuits and the arts for young people is now widely documented and has shown to improve self-esteem and confidence; increase positive student/teacher relationships; increase confidence towards school work; increase social skills and improve self-expression⁴⁵. Creativity is being viewed as a key capability for young people in terms of employability and the skills required to navigate complex systems of education and training and work the 21st century. Creativity is also now being viewed as a critical skill for innovation and in leadership. There are also links between the arts and the inclination of young people to take action to positively affect the world around them⁴⁶.

45 Vaughan, T., Harris, J., & Caldwell, B. J. (2011). *Bridging the gap in school achievement through the Arts: Summary report*. Melbourne: The Song Room.

46 Gutiérrez, L. & Spencer, M. (2008). Excellence on stage and in life: the MOSAIC Model for Youth Development through the Arts. MOSAIC Youth Theater: Detroit, MI. <http://www.mosaicdetroit.org/mosaic-model.pdf>

Playford Youth and Creative Class Participation

We asked our participants to report on whether they participated in creative classes outside of the family and school growing up. Cohort 1 reported that 32% pursued creative classes compared to 21% from cohort 2, which is a notable difference. However, like sport, some creative classes (especially music and dance classes) need significant financial resources and time requirement. Young people with access to financial resources and their families supporting these activities are more likely to reap the benefits. There are however, multiple opportunities available to young people in communities to participate in creative activities that are low or no-cost which can be accessed through school, church, local drama clubs, libraries offering creative workshops or through local community centres.

Some of our participants spoke of the benefits of participating in creative classes and these activities having a significant impact on developing confidence, self-esteem and social skills. Important to consider is that some of these creative activities are accessed in schools, not needing additional resources. One young woman spoke of the benefits of participating in choir:

We used to do the big performances and I absolutely loved that. I especially loved when we did the big performances because there were so many people from the community that came and you were just like 'wow I can't believe it'. Just to see all of them- it was a good thing to focus on because you were working to achieve, to get to the end performance It was 'wow people care'.

The benefits gained by this young woman through participating in choir were significant given that she came from a dysfunctional family where domestic violence was present. Having people from her community take time to watch her group perform seemed to have a profound impact and gave her an opportunity to develop relationships with others outside her difficult circumstances.

Another young man spoke about the benefits of learning an instrument and the focus this required:

Learning to play bass guitar gave me something to focus on and feel good about. To feel successful at something.

One participant suggested that the community could offer activities for young people as a way to engage them in something that wasn't at home, particularly if their home life was difficult:

I think if there was a youth group type thing that was based around music or based around craft or something like that it just would benefit to people because I knew when I was growing up there was nothing like that. There was nothing to get us out of the house.

Enhancing the creative potential for young people has consistently shown benefits reaching beyond just the acquisition of technical skills. Learning creative skills with others, or individually can increase confidence and motivation.

No opportunities

Some of the survey participants reported that their families were unable to afford extra-curricular activities when they were growing up. Cohort 1 reported 17% didn't participate in external activities, compared to 26% from cohort 2. These young people responded regretfully about this and recognised the missed opportunity:

I believe if I'd had the opportunity to do more activities growing up, my support groups and friends circle would be larger. And I'd feel more supported.

We didn't really have anything because when you're younger you're not driving as well. My Mum wouldn't drive me back and forth to Gawler because I was in Virginia but besides that there was nothing else available. Even if I wanted to do drama or art classes-

There are numerous benefits of external activities outside of the family particularly for those who have limited resources and networks and have come from difficult circumstances. The opportunities to develop key skills and capabilities that underpin a young person's development can sometimes profoundly shape their outcomes and mitigate against negative influences. The relationships, support and skill development that the young people spoke about indicates that this is an important area of policy for governments and communities.

Capabilities and Skill Development

A key focus of this project was to investigate various opportunities that offered soft skill and capabilities development for the young people in Playford. As evident in the previous sections, those from Cohort 1 had greater opportunities to develop soft skill capabilities than those from Cohort 2 through their engagement with activities outside of the home. To test this, we included a set of questions within the survey to ask about some various skills and capabilities that the young people had gained growing up. These questions asked about resilience and determination, problem solving and self-awareness. We asked the young people to rate the questions and we have reported from the positive end of the scale where they reported 'quite a bit' and 'a lot'. Following is a table of the two cohorts and their responses to the questions:

Table 13: Skill and Capability Survey Questions

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
I tried to finish what I started	72%	55%
I was able to solve problems	78%	52%
I was aware of my own strengths	70%	39%
I had the opportunity to develop skills that I could use later in life	64%	40%

There is considerable difference between our two cohorts in relation to their opportunities and skill development. As we have previously mentioned, soft skills or social and emotional capabilities are a key employability requirement in the current precarious and flexible labour market. Cohort 2 is clearly underperforming in this area which is cause for concern given that they have reported not being employed at the time of the survey. It is evident that the cumulative effect of being well

supported at home in a safe and relatively financially secure family, plus having opportunities for skill development outside the home is more likely to have a positive social and economic outcome. The young people who haven't been fortunate enough to have this support, can hope for access to opportunities and form relationships along the way which may mitigate against their upbringing. As a community and all levels of government, we need to shift the tenuous position of hope into real opportunities and relationships for the young people at risk.

The combined elements of a growing and young population, and its relative disadvantage requires attention. Adding to this, the pending rise in unemployment expected in late 2017, and the persistent narrative and stigma of long term, intergenerational welfare reliance needs a whole community and government approach to find solutions. Focusing on young people in the region is one way to contribute to solutions into the future.

Recommendations Part 3

Volunteering SA and City of Playford Council to partner in increasing volunteer opportunities in the region with specific focus on job ready skills embedded into opportunities. Volunteer SA to offer training on positive relationship development and mentoring. Schools to encourage volunteering opportunities as possible pathway to personal learning project (year 10).

Increased sport participation to be facilitated through clubs and schools. DECD to improve access and encouragement for young people (especially high school students) to continue to participate and actively engage in programmes that culturally and sensitively encourage young females to continue participation. Include education for parents about the benefits of sports participation Playford council to lead or contribute to club coordination to encourage those without resources to be able to participate.

Greater focus on the participation of creative activities arts and culture policy facilitating and encouraging low cost or free programs accessed through libraries and community centres and in partnership with service providers in the region as well as after school based programs.

PLAYFORD YOUTH