



Evaluation of UKCRF Skill Mill site – Northamptonshire

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Executive Summary

Skill Mill offers an intensive six-month work experience programme designed to help vulnerable young people break the cycle of re-offending. It provides young people with a paid job in combination with training, advancement of job-related and social skills. The young people engage in environmental maintenance services and often work in locations where their results are visible for the local communities.

Skill Mill started in the northeast of England 2013 and has expanded across England. Skill Mill's model is to provide outdoor jobs for the young people who work in groups of four with a supervisor with the follow-on job opportunity depending on their progress.

A Community Renewal Fund (CRF) has funded Skill Mill in three sites in 2022 and this is the evaluation report of the Northamptonshire site. This report presents the developments and the outcomes of replicating the Skill Mill model in Northamptonshire.

The project in Northamptonshire had a difficult and hectic start with a long delay related to the significant delay in confirmation of funding from Central Government. It was accompanied by the lack of information about the extension of the delivery time. This created difficulties in recruitment of the young people. Another severe hindrance to the recruitment process was created due to the fact that Northamptonshire County Council did not second their staff member to the Skill Mill which is the model which has been used in other Skill Mill sites. This last-minute unexpected change created the need for the supervisor to be found externally. The 2 supervisors who were supposed to rotate in their jobs quitted early leaving young people waiting with uncertainty and putting the stakeholders in a very difficult position. The hectic start might have had the knock of effect on the trust of the managers in the YOT and potential commissioners of the work. Despite the difficulties the 3 young people were employed and one of them showed very good individual results by decreased substance use and increased level of self-esteem and confidence. The supervisor recruited during one month into the project, managed to source some voluntary work for the young people to do.

The engagement of the partners who would pay for the service, remains the biggest challenge for the sustainability and continuation potential of the Skill Mill if no other funding instrument becomes available.

1. Introduction

The Skill Mill is a social enterprise providing jobs to young people with the aim of reducing youth crime while generating positive societal and environmental impact in the local communities. The young people with criminal convictions are provided jobs mostly in water and land-based management. The work of the Skill Mill is considered innovative and effective as evidenced by a number of awards¹ received. The most recent includes two Queen's Awards for Enterprise 2021 for Supporting Opportunity and Sustainable Development and the Children & Young People Now Youth Justice Award 2021.

The Skill Mill model includes outdoor work for young people in teams of four with a supervisor for a six-months period. The work is commissioned by clients including local authorities, businesses, and non-profit organisations.

Since its foundation in Newcastle-upon Tyne in 2013, the social enterprise has extended successful training and work experience programmes for young offenders to 13 sites across the UK of which 3 have been financed by the Community Renewal Fund. Eight sites out of 13 are being financed by a Social Impact Bond (SIB). The current document covers the evaluation of the Northamptonshire site.

2. Background and context

2.1 The Skill Mill

The Skill Mill provides jobs for vulnerable young people who have serious and /or prolific offending record, preferably with experience of custody. Young employees acquire knowledge and skills by working alongside the supervisor. They also undertake accredited training to achieve a nationally recognised qualification (for example, in construction skills or health and safety). Follow-on employment opportunities with partner organisations and the wider labour market are sought for each young person taking part. The teams of young people work with a supervisor who are secondees from council services. The supervisors serve as the link between the Skill Mill and the council services that refer the young people.

The intervention is underpinned by the concept of desistance, which proposes that offenders need to move towards an alternative, coherent and pro-social identity in order to justify and maintain a crime-free life. The Skill Mill model has been recognized as valuable and good practice in the youth justice system in "Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation: Annual report: inspection of youth offending services (2019-2020)". Furthermore, HM Inspectorate of Probation has in "An inspection of youth offending services in Surrey" recognized that the

¹ <https://www.theskillmill.org/awards-1>

Skill Mill is a “significant strength” within the youth offer which targets post-16 education, training and employment provision.

Generating social impact is at the heart of a social enterprise. This makes measuring and understanding social impact vital in order to prove effectiveness and improve organisations. The Skill Mill has kept track of its performance since its foundation in 2013. It has had a rigorous impact metrics including the number of reoffences upon completion of the program. By 2022 the Skill Mill has employed 305 young people and 23 of those have been re-convicted². This makes the re-conviction rate 7,5 % compared to the national reoffending rate (England and Wales) for young people aged under 18 in the year ending March 2020 stood at 72 %.³ The successfulness of the Skill Mill was proven by the evaluation of Long et al (2018)⁴ who analysed The Skill Mill employees and control group cohort (age 8 in 2006) from 2006-2016. Those youths employed by the Skill Mill committed 1.12 fewer offences per quarter than the control group and had less serious offences compared with non-Skill Mill participants after the programme was completed. In addition to the direct metrics around reconviction rate and further employment, the outcomes include qualitative benefits from increase in the well-being and self-confidence of the young people to awareness-raising in eco-friendly practices and developing environmental ethics, some of which have been captured by White and Graham (2015)⁵.

The work which the young people engage in with the Skill Mill is commissioned from public sector organisations or companies. The work is either paid for by fees from the commissioners or covered by grant funding depending on the site, time and nature of work. For companies, there is potential to add value to tenders for public contracts under the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 as well as increasing their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) profiles more broadly.

2.2 UK Community Renewal Fund

The UK Community Renewal Fund (CRF) has provided £220 million in the period of 2021-2022 to help the transition away from the EU structural fund programme. It focuses on pilot projects in communities which support innovative responses to local challenges and local need across the UK. The funding aims and helping to remove barriers that people face in accessing

² The Skill Mill primary data

³ Youth Justice Statistics 2020/21. England and Wales. Youth Justice Board / Ministry of Justice. 2022 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1054236/Youth_Justice_Statistics_2020-21.pdf

⁴ Long et al. 2018 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10610-017-9365-y>

⁵ White, R. and Graham, H. 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azu117>

skills and local labour market opportunities, building the evidence base for future interventions and exploring the viability of new ideas.

The program priorities include:

- Investment in skills
- Investment for local business
- Investment in communities and place
- Supporting people into employment⁶.

3. Evaluation Design

The evaluation in Northamptonshire considers that The Skill Mill model is already built upon clear and well-established impact metrics that focuses upon delivering meaningful outcomes for the young people the Skill Mill works with. The main focus of the evaluation is outcomes for the young people and the ways the programme has changed their lives. It will also consider success factors for local partnerships, and how the programme in Northamptonshire contributes to Community Renewal Fund goals for communities and the environment. The evaluation is designed to assess the following:

- appropriateness of initial design
- progress against targets
- delivery and management
- engagement of employers
- outcomes and impact for young people
- lessons learnt.

There are three evaluation objectives:

- **Understand the difference the programme makes for young people**
- **Identify ways local partnerships are built and sustained**
- **Assess the contribution to UKCRF goals**

The evaluation relies on the Theory of Change (ToC), which has been studied and followed by the Skill Mill with its partnership. ToC allows analysis of interventions from the problem to outputs, outcomes and impact in a logical sequence. Theory of Change work can help articulate how various options are expected to work and the strength of the evidence that underpins them. It will become clear what data are available and where uncertainties and risks lie⁷. The underlying long-term objective of the Skill Mill programme is to help the young people move

⁶ UK Community Renewal Fund Prospectus 2021-22 Policy paper. UK Community Renewal Fund: prospectus 2021-22. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus-2021-22#uk-community-renewal-fund-an-overview>

⁷ HM Treasury. Magenta Book. 2020. Central Government guidance on evaluation.

into sustained education, training or employment. In addition to improving the life chances of the young people, another key focus for the programme is improving the natural environment in the areas where the Skill Mill works.

Data were collected by interviews, reviews of documents and datasets, and observation of activities and events.

In total 3 interviews with two Youth Offending Team representatives and a supervisor were carried out virtually over Zoom platform in April and May 2022, 1 interview with a young person over phone in September 2022 and additional data about the progress of the project was obtained from stakeholders in August and September 2022. While referring to the interviewees as well as the young people the names are not mentioned to ensure the persons are not identified.

In addition to interviews the following events and meetings were attended and observed:

- Theory of Change workshop May 2021
- Skill Mill national event in Alnwick, September 2021
- Skill Mill development day in October 2021
- Ceremony in Newcastle for the Queen's awards, February 2022
- Strategic Board meetings in August 2021 and March 2022
- Skill Mill Board meetings in February 2022, June 2022
- Supervisors' meeting in July 2022

An extensive review of documents and on-line materials including meeting records, e-mails regarding the setup processes, presentations, publicity materials, newsletters, blog posts was carried out.

4. Results

4.1. The case of Northamptonshire

The Northamptonshire project had a problematic and complicated start which impacted the following process (see Annex 1). The application for funding was submitted in March 202 and the successful applications were supposed to be announced in July 2021 as the projects were expected to run from August 2021-March 2022. The confirmation of the funding arrived only by the beginning of November 2021, and the YOT had an estimate of a start date around the first of January 2022. According to the initial information the projects were still expected to finish in March 2022. The delay in the announcement of funding significantly hindered the planning activities as the as the contracts for funding had to be signed before the recruitment processes could start. The recruitment of the supervisor became another necessity since the Northamptonshire County Council did not provide any secondee for the Skill Mill's supervisor's position which is the operational model in other sites and which they had been committed to in the funding application. The Council's explanation was that there was a very short timeline from gaining the funding and needing to start the project so there was not time to set up a back fill for the position if it was a secondee. There was also a capacity issue at the Council at the time with a lot of work with young people coming in and the YOS having little capacity for recruiting to cover those positions.

The Skill Mill started the recruitment process and there were no suitable candidates found. The recruitment agency which advised the Skill Mill insisted in increasing the salary for the supervisor's position which was also done and resulted in no suitable candidates. The time when the recruitment process started was not the best time in the job market as there was very low interest when the job was advertised and sent out to recruitment agencies

Finally 2 supervisors were employed and they had agreed to rotate the job between the two of them. One of them managed to even participate in the induction with the young people and then resigned a day after starting the job and meeting the young people. One of them was interested in the job and the other was rather reluctant. The one who got employed and left had admitted that he underestimated how difficult dealing with the young people was going to be.

It is important to note that all the supervisors need to go through the Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks which take two weeks on average and may last even up to four weeks. This procedure prolonged the processes even further. In the absence of the supervisor, the Skill Mill had to recruit through an agency, which was a very expensive move.

Due to the significant delay in the official start, it became difficult to recruit young people over the Christmas period and the supervisor was not recruited because the Skill Mill was not able to advertise that post until Northamptonshire got the confirmation of the funding. The selection of the young people between 16-18 was done by the YOT based on the Skill Mill criteria, specifics of the site, risk assessment, safety and well-being of the young people. As there was a delay in starting, some of the young people ended up receiving custodial sentences, or some

other employment opportunities. Finally, there were 3 young persons to start the pilot. No typical employment interviews were conducted with the young people as there was no competition to the team which normally would consist of 4 young persons and a supervisor. After the 3 young people started, they were told to wait until a supervisor is found because he decided to quit unexpectedly.

From the YOT's perspective the pilot seemed rushed as not everyone had been involved in the background work and application processes. There was some feeling that they had not been in control of all the process and that it was disorganised and a month was too short to get things going. According to the YOT staff, the clarity of understanding between Skill Mill and the YOT as to how the project would be run was not as good as it could have been, which was again very much due to the rush for recruitment. The YOT expected the Skill Mill to sort out a supervisor without YOT needing to recruit the post. At the same time it was expressed that from the young peoples' perspective it would not have been good to keep them idle and waiting. Yet, according to the Skill Mill staff the YOT had insisted that the young people were recruited in advance of the supervisors, which left them waiting. It turned out to be a mistake in the process and was done without any Skill Mill's involvement.

There was also some a sense of obscurity around the roles of the YOT staff. It was not clear in the beginning where the supervision would come from after the secondment idea was dropped or whose task it was to search for work for the young people. It was reflected that he must have found it to be a much harder job than initially thought. The YOT case manager was on leave during the time of the induction with the young people and learned about the situation of having no supervisors and no projects upon arrival. This left a long gap in the pilot. The supervisor could not take time to look for the placements because the YOT demanded that he should get involved with the young people. Thus, he had a difficult time looking for options without having the time to set anything up. Eventually a new supervisor got recruited in March 2022 via the recruitment agency who started sourcing the work for the young people.

From the Skill Mill's perspective there were not the relevant people involved from the start. Only in the end of the pilot, there was cooperation with the ETE manager. It was also only discovered right at the end that there was a reparation manager in the Council that the Skill Mill was never told about and who could have been involved. From the Skill Mill's viewpoint the local service should have worked in partnership, but it did not happen.

4.2. The difference the programme makes for young people

In the following subsections the results are presented reporting the views of the various stakeholders involved in the Skill Mill pilot.

The evaluation of the Northamptonshire project is framed by the Theory of Change.

According to the ToC of the Skill Mill the desired impact for the social enterprise includes⁸:

⁸ Internal Skill Mill work document.

- Reduction in offending 12 months after their programme
- Social Return on Investment
- Belief in capacity to change
- Belief in ability to work
- Increased self-belief
- Young people feel part of society
- Improved relationships
- Young people start to see a future
- Community benefits from reduced offending and improved environments
- Young people ready to contribute to society
- Young people able to succeed
- Young people move from being seen as a challenge or a burden to their community to becoming a visible asset to their families and community

The Northamptonshire team started with 3 young people. All the 3 young persons started off being enthusiastic, very motivated and hard working. After the induction day the YOT staff recognized the positive attitude of the young people. *“They all did well and all seem very keen, they are also VERY happy that they are being paid from today.....” Three happy young people discussing where they will be working, what work they will undertake and building a rapport between themselves and the new supervisor was great to see.*

Young person A had problems on the site and his contract had to be terminated. The problematic behaviour of his had been addressed but he still chose to behave in the indecent way and cause damage to the property where he was working.

Young person B was one with complex substance misuse problems and it was anticipated that she might cause issues but she did very well in the job.

Young person C was charged with an offense that he had committed before the Skill Mill and he was anticipating an upcoming court hearing at the end of May which caused him some anxieties and his attitude changed for worse. He lost interest as he expected to go to prison and he had lost the meaning in work. After discussions with the supervisor he continued to be engaged. He was transitioned to probation and due to the upcoming court there was no likelihood of him coming back to work.

In the literature on desistance Maruna (2001) identifies that “to desist from crime, ex-offenders need to develop a coherent, pro-social identity for themselves”. For this kind of identity building a positive role model is relevant and in that particular site there was a good combination of a female supervisor working with a female employee, which is a rather unique team for the Skill Mill. Over the years the Skill Mill has employed 13 females and 4 female supervisors +1 part-time assistant female supervisor⁹. The importance of the positive role model is further supported by the cognitive transformation theory, where the main driver for change is not a turning point that is external to the individual but a subjective reflection on the

⁹ The Skill Mill primary data

self (Giordano et al, 2002). As young people mature, they may undergo changes in identity that prompt them both to desist from crime and to look for work (Giordano et al., 2002). Cognitive transformation theory would expect that desistance was based on access to “the hooks” for change and the person’s determination to search for them (Cid, 2007). Consequently, the identity change would desist a person from crime.

The role of the supervisor was positively assessed by the young person and her attitude was liked. The relationship with the supervisor was described as follows: “Good to talk to and discussed random topics. That helped to keep the motivation up” (Young Person C).

Young person B’s progress was generally viewed positively by the YOT staff. *“It’s had an enormous impact on her in a really positive way. She’s a young person who is extremely vulnerable but also risky and she has been four days a week out working in the community with a positive female role model. She isn’t using substances as regularly as a result”*.

Young person B established more structure through her day and she was looking better physically. Her people skills and her social ability improved and she described feeling more confident. She loved the work and to the point where she commented that she would like to be involved in a post with Skill Mill. Her behaviour changed for more caring one through the work in the community.

Young person C viewed his experience with the Skill Mill positively. He learned about teamwork and how important that is. He acknowledged that “the type of work needs people to work together”.

Criminological research discussing the impact of peer relationships on behaviour tends to polarise peers into “anti-social” pressures or “pro-social” influences, with each category representing different people or groups. Thus, people talk about the need for disassociation from “negative” influences and re-connection with pro-social former associates or the development of new pro-social relationships (Sapouna et al, 2015). People’s social networks can be a context that triggers the desire to change.

Young Person B’s substance misuse was reduced and she did no longer go to see the friends where she would use the drugs. *“She’s got a responsibility that has been a real step forward for her”*.

The young person himself recognized the positive impact the Skill Mill made. “I appreciated the opportunity. Keeping out of trouble” (Young person C).

The supervisor was very positively minded and gave an overview of the young people and how they have done in the end of every week with the case manager who shared it within the YOT service on the system. The supervisor viewed her role as supporting the young people mentally. She stressed the job was about building relationships and understanding social situations.

“Trying to build my role, I believe is that I’m trying to help them build their confidence, help them build their self-esteem”. The supervisor tried to motivate the young people as well as support them. It was noticed by them, however not always followed with positive reactions. *“One of the other young people didn’t pull their weight. Just ignored it. The supervisor tried to address it”*.

The young people recognized the positive visible achievements and that they have actually done something or they would have just been sitting at home, doing nothing. The good impact motivates the supervisor in turn. *“She is making good choices, you know and it's yeah, it's really lovely to see it. Really it's the good part of the job definitely”*.

Two young were still working with the YOT after the programme ended. The ones who managed to complete the program benefitted from it. One of them got employed which was helped by their experience with the Skill Mill. The other one took some courses and wanted to go to a college to do an apprenticeship, e.g. in plumbing.

4.3. Local partnership building

For the benefit of the young people it is important that the stakeholders in the employment process share the same goals and values. In that respect the YOT viewed the goals similar to the Skill Mill:

“..it would be some tenable experience and practical experience, having some work history, which is obviously one thing that's for anybody with an offending record is quite difficult to get to then have that positive factor of that, gain some skills and knowledge understanding of like a working week as well, you know, getting used to that rhythm and routine”.

According to the theory of desistance from crime, employment is seen to reduce crime by providing routines, supervision, and reduced economic incentives for criminal activity (Sampson and Laub, 1993). These aspects are the ones that the Skill Mill offers and were viewed positively as potentially contributing to good outcomes. However, research on employment and desistance is mixed, suggesting there are other variables impacting the desistance and employment relationship, such as age, work intensity, job type, co-workers normativity (Long et al, 2018). While there is no systematic evidence identifying a relationship between having a job and giving up crime, it is safe to argue that employment itself does not produce desistance in a deterministic sense and may, in and of itself, not play a causal role. Instead, what emerges as significant in enabling or reinforcing efforts to desist are the meaning and outcomes of the nature and/or quality of the work or simply participation in employment and how these experiences influence an individual's self-concept and social identity - as well as how they interact with a person's priorities, goals and relational concerns (Weaver, 2015).

The work with the Skill Mill teaches the young people rules and certain routine but also being managed by other people which is not easy for them to cope with, to be told how and what to do.

“And teaching them about money, income, managing their money and really just working with other people as well, other young people from other different backgrounds, as well as working with somebody that is their supervisor, their manager”.

A source of motivation for the young people is the perspective to have the follow-on job. The local partnerships are therefore relevant to make sure that there are further employment

opportunities for the young people, so that they can *“move on to bigger and better prospects with bigger business partners”*.

In order to be able to form partnerships with companies, it is important to have a positive track record of helping young people locally and achieving some good results. After that it would be possible to present young people as potential employees. The local partnership building requires time and trust which can be built by showing the work. According to the supervisor *“People need time to believe in what we're doing a bit more. Seeing is believing, isn't it so? If young people are doing really good job that message travels quite quickly”*. The list of potential positive aspects that the Skill Mill could provide in view of the partners includes skills, equipment to use and training that one can add on a CV for the future. Salary is a bonus but more importantly, occupying their time and giving them less time to be involved in negative activities is an advantage.

There was no paid work during the whole pilot as there was CRF funding. However, for the sustainability of the pilot, the partnership work would have been important. According to the Skill Mill staff the Fermyn wood was a good project. Kingswood was another good project. They also developed links with the local authority neighbourhoods team and did graffiti removal for the local authority. The YOT insisted that the pilot should be Kettering focused and had to include Kettering young people. As the Kettering office was open only once a week, the team had to go to Northampton on the other days (over 20 miles away). That much daily travelling was the problematic aspect of the work for the supervisor.

Despite the potential work places such as recreation and park areas, care homes, food banks, community Kier Group, recruiting of national partners was never done. According to the YOT staff: *“All the sites except one (where one of the young people caused some vandalism so lost the trust for Skill Mill) would be happy to support anything in the future and were very happy with the work that was completed with them”*.

According to the Skill Mill staff *“the YOT made it clear that they were not going to continue with the programme after 6 months”*.

4.4. The contribution to CRF goals

To nurture innovative thinking and offer flexibility, the CRF expects that the projects align with one, or deliver across several, of the following investment priorities:

- Investment in skills
- Investment for local business
- Investment in communities and place
- Supporting people into employment

In the Northamptonshire pilot the 2 young people out of 3 stayed until almost the end of the pilot. The young people B got a lot of support from the supervisor and responded very well reducing her criminal behaviour and contacts with similar peers.

In addition to the benefits for the young people, the aim of the pilot was to contribute to the local community and environment, to offer the jobs which are environmental based and “*to try and support the local community*”.

The CRF goals are reflected in the Skill Mill’s environmental values. The work done contributes to the UN sustainable development goals as indicated below.

Goal 13 – Climate Action

The Skill Mill is an environmental services organisation. In Northamptonshire’s case the young people helped to keep the local green spaces, parks and recreation areas clean. The works helps reduce the risks created by the climate change.

Goal 15 - Life on Land

The jobs like clean-ups and litter picking contributed to the protection of natural habitats and green areas.

Goal 1 – End poverty

The work was done with the young people who are disadvantaged and ended in the criminal justice system. By allowing the young people break the cycle of poverty and getting a follow-on job, the pilot contributed to that goal.

5. Conclusions

The current report presents the results of piloting the Skill Mill model in Northamptonshire. Based on the interviews with the front-line staff the Skill Mill work experience could give them the needed skills, training, the habit of work routine, salary, self-esteem and a positive role model and potentially a follow-on work opportunity which would contribute to reducing their re-offending behaviours.

There is evidence of a number of co-incidentally occurring obstructive circumstances. Regrettably, the pilot had a very cumbersome start with delays in confirmation of funding. Northamptonshire County Council's failure to keep the commitment of the secondee which triggered a series of slow and otherwise unnecessary actions culminating in two supervisors being selected and quitted. There was lack for suitable candidates according to risk assessments to take up the job, delays in getting the young people employed and out to work due to the absence of the supervisor and finally the actual work to undertake.

Some confusion was reported from the YOT's side on the role of the supervisor and the expectation to search for the actual work for the young people to do.

There was some criticism towards the Skill Mill of not being very explicit around its work processes of setting up sites and hence some activities got done in rush and with less preparation than all the stakeholders would have wanted or like one of them expressed it: "*I wanted an example off the top, how it works....*".

At the same time the essence and success of the Skill Mill model lies in its innovative nature. According to the typology of scaling social innovations and enterprises, there are many more ways than just one process. The Skill Mill has gained a high profile and received excellent public recognition. Translating this success into external contracts could generate income and ensure sustainability remains a significant challenge.

The report has its limitations. Despite the importance of relationships with employers in the corporate sector there is not enough information to report about the particular site due to all the aforementioned reasons which were made available by talking to the Skill Mill and YOT staff.

The recruitment was seen as a process which could be better managed and which had quite a detrimental impact in that pilot. There is a need to be clear with the supervisor at the point of recruitment of the expectations of that role.

The recruitment of young people was difficult because there was not enough time to identify the people and not enough therefore to choose from and hence the process was not done properly. The communication around the project was problematic.

Despite all those circumstances, the 2 high risk young people have managed to not engage in offending again.

6. Recommendations

The delay from the CRF was significant which hampered the delivery of the pilot in an efficient and timely manner. It would be important to avoid and at least communicate to the applicants such significant changes.

Trust and commitment are important for a social enterprise. Keeping the commitment of the Northamptonshire YOT to provide the secondees would have been helpful in order to avoid the long recruitment process of supervisors and the experience for the young people that they have been let down.

It would be necessary to coordinate the communication between the Skill Mill and the YOTs very clearly around the expectations of the role of the supervisor as well as the responsibility to source the work that the young people do.

A clear process around the recruitment of young people with the determined criteria would be helpful. It would be relevant to have the job places ready by the time young people are recruited to avoid unnecessary idle time for them which may result in losing the young people. Using Mind of My Own app with the Skill Mill employees would be useful in order to capture their experiences better. It is an app which is used by the YOT with other groups of young people. The app allows to say how they are feeling, what support they need and tell their worker about things that are important to them.

Building on some early successes there is a way to go to engage corporate partners. Theoretically there is no maximum to employer sales, unlike other outcomes revenues which are capped

The Skill Mill has gained a high profile and received excellent public recognition nationally and at local level. Translating this success into external contracts that will generate income and ensure sustainability remains a significant challenge.

Some local business forums could be attended where the evidence of the work done by the young people is shown. Skill Mill leaders have established good contacts with some of the large business organisations such as Kier, Balfour Beatty, United Utilities, CEG, Bowmer & Kirkland, the success of which can be beneficial in other sites where they have operations.

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Annex 1 Northamptonshire project's process

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