



Organisational Strategy 2023-25



The Challenge

When unaccompanied young people seeking sanctuary arrive in the UK after long and difficult journeys, they are traumatised and exhausted. Most have experienced loss, separation, isolation and violence. They have lost contact with their support systems essential for their emotional and physical health and wellbeing. They no longer have the adult guidance needed to navigate the complicated UK institutions they must understand to get help.

There is a well-recognised set of pre-migration (war, trauma and exploitation) and post-migration issues (separation from family, navigating asylum procedures and lack of access to support services or housing) faced by young people seeking sanctuary.

The specific challenges our young people face navigating the hostile environment for refugees and asylum seekers include language barriers, navigating the multiple institutions, appointments and professionals involved in the asylum system, re-traumatising relocation at short notice, as well as the usual adolescent stressors. They lack access to supportive housing, communities, stable adults / consistent social workers, financial stability, and appropriate medical support. Most also experience a lack of access to educational support, classes and opportunities to learn new skills they need to thrive in their new environment. The majority of young people we work with are experiencing extreme trauma, PTSD, sleep deprivation and interrupted emotional growth.

At any time 500+ asylum-seeking young people are based in Croydon. Organisations and services set up to support them often have long waiting lists and limited resources.

Who We Are

Play for Progress (PfP) is an award winning trauma-informed creative charity supporting unaccompanied young people seeking asylum, founded in 2014 and registered as a charity in 2016. From our Croydon base, we have since 2017 worked with 500+ young people to reduce their isolation and re-traumatisation, develop practical and social skills, and improve their wellbeing.

PfP works with young people to support their

- exploration of self-expression through creative arts, music, and therapy
- development and healing through access to therapy and education
- advocacy needs, when they face barriers to accessing vital support or need help navigating the asylum 'system'

At Play for Progress, we understand the practical and physiological challenges extreme/compounded trauma and PTSD present. Our expertise enables us to use creative methods to effectively work through those challenges and support young people seeking asylum with their healing and wider development.

The young people we first worked with, now in their 20s, support their community of peers as Young Leaders. This group meets regularly to provide feedback, run projects and act as session assistants.

What We Do

Each young person's journey with us is as individual as they are. Our expert team works with them to identify their needs. Through us they can access practical, social and emotional support. Our activities are in person, but 1-2-1s can take place remotely as needed.

Our delivery focuses on creative and body-centred therapeutic methods and is grounded in evidence-based trauma science. We deliver two core strands of work.

- **Creative Programmes:** drop-in group projects open to any young person seeking asylum. These include after school classes, half term projects, cultural outings, leadership residentials, exhibitions and performances all involving engagement in music, art, dramatherapy, and wellbeing practices.
- **1-2-1 support:** Once we have established trust with young people they ask for help in other areas, as other local support is either over-subscribed or inaccessible. We offer 1-2-1s with specialists in therapy, education and casework (including advocacy, practical support and solidarity in navigating the asylum system).



As well as these two core strands, over time we support young people to grow in confidence and agency, particularly in order to self-advocate. We also organise projects to develop young peoples' leadership and employability skills including a work experience programme shadowing MPs in Parliament and have developed a mentorship pathway for emerging leaders.

This range of programmes means we maintain a holistic awareness of young peoples' needs and support them across multiple areas.

Organisational Health: PfP also places considerable emphasis on 'organisational health'; in order for our team to provide the best support to young people, the teams' own mental health and wellbeing must be attended to. Stress and burnout of staff in the refugee/migration sector is a huge problem. PfP ensures that secondary trauma is recognised and every member of the frontline delivery team has access to therapeutic supervision and support.

Our Impact

Sensitivity to our young participants' traumatic experiences informs all of our evaluation and impact work. We acknowledge that the imposition of asking for too much first-person feedback can be more harmful than helpful in building healthy and trusting relationships. We primarily use the expert eye of our staff to provide qualitative feedback. The depth of our support also means that 'success' in the context of our work is very nuanced and does not often follow a linear trajectory.

A new Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework is being introduced to evidence our impact, balancing this need for sensitivity with the value of first-hand testimony about our impact, without filters or assumptions.

This framework is aligned to our Theory of Change (below) which was updated in 2023 after informal consultations with some of the young people we work with, exploring what Play for Progress means to them.

Key themes to emerge were the value young people place on consistency, kindness, trust and community. There was a strong sense of young people staying engaged with PfP over long time periods because it is a place where they know they can always find friendship, support and a place to express themselves, letting go of stress and trauma. It is a place where they can find caring adults who are on their side, no matter what.

Our key outcomes are:

SURVIVE: Young people feel a sense of safety and belonging

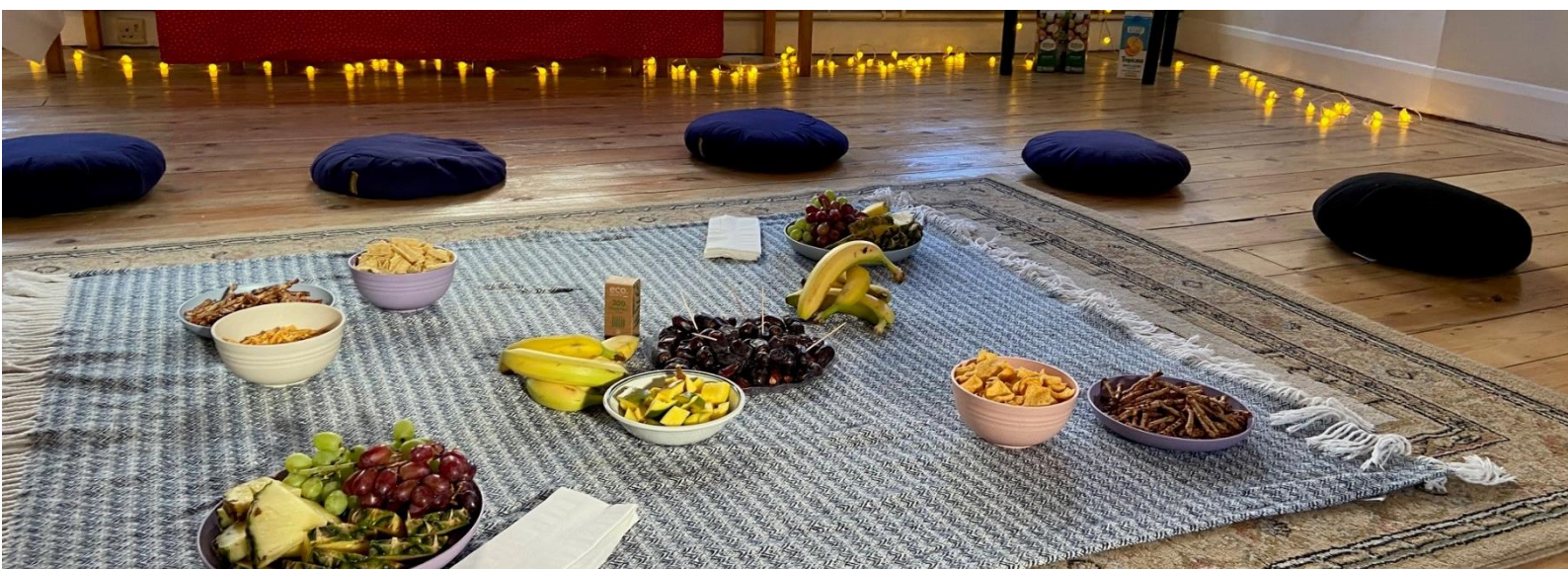
HEAL: Young people have access to safe space to express themselves and to heal

THRIVE: Young people have access to timely advocacy and support to effect positive changes across housing, education, health and immigration

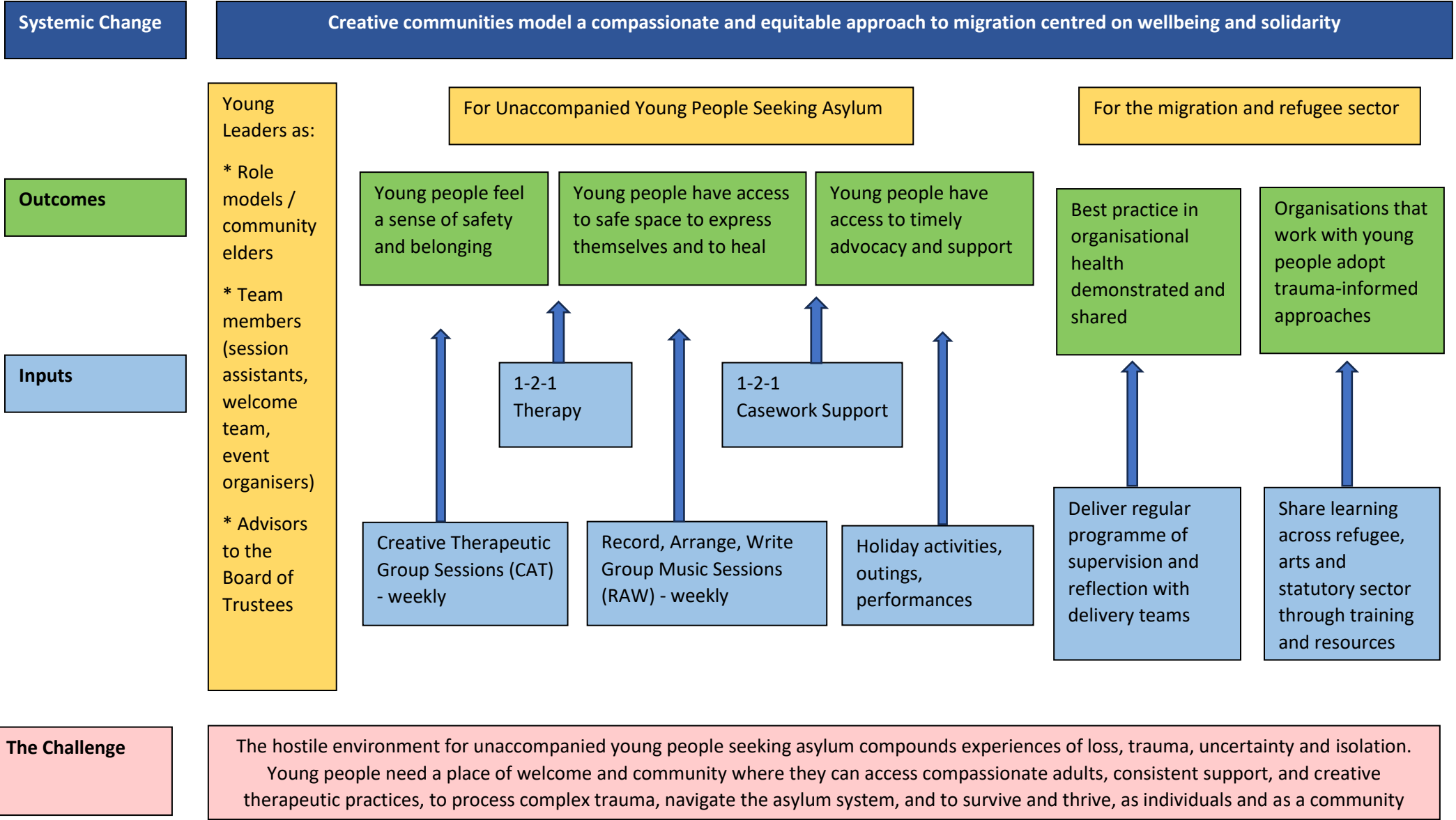
PRACTICE: Organisations that work with young people adopt trauma-informed approaches

In 2021/22:

- We reached 350 young people aged 14+, who were socially isolated, previously trafficked and/or fleeing conflict, traumatised, and from several different countries
- We provided over 330 hours of 1-2-1 support
- 100% of our young people have told us that as a result of our work they feel they have new skills and increased confidence



Our Theory of Change



Strategic Goals

PfP is a small, dynamic and committed team. Covid, followed by the cost of living crisis, has meant that we've been under immense pressure. We are focusing on building longer-term financial resilience to ensure the ongoing sustainability of our regular services and enable us to quickly respond to need and crisis. We're confident that our trauma-informed approach to our 1-2-1s, group sessions and advocacy work. Our duty of care to our community of young people means it's been vital to prioritise consistent delivery of our services. This remains our core objective in the long term.

As PfP looks towards systemic change, we will also begin to consider our role in communicating and advocating for changes in policy and practice, drawing on learning from our programmes which demonstrate how creative communities can model a compassionate and equitable approach to migration centred on wellbeing and solidarity.

Our organisational focus areas for 2023-25 are:

Strategic Goal	Outcomes
To consolidate our core support services for young people and scope feasibility of new programmes to meet emerging needs	<p>The financial resources are in place to deliver a consistent programme of weekly activities</p> <p>Our committed community of freelance musicians, therapists and artists is secure and well-supported</p> <p>An active outreach programme ensures that young people are able to find PfP, feel welcomed, and access our support (including consideration of specific provision for girls)</p>
To centre the leadership of young people with lived experience in organisational governance and decision making	<p>A mentorship programme is in place to offer leadership pathways for young people</p> <p>PfP's Young Leaders Council is supported to develop (membership, scope, ways of collaborating)</p> <p>Mutual accountability between the Board and the Young Leaders Council in place, including a route to channel Young Leaders perspectives into Board decision making</p>
To develop and diversify the Board and executive leadership	<p>Stronger, more diverse and representative Board (at least 40% people of colour, at least 30% with lived experience of migration)</p> <p>New Executive Director in place providing vision and leadership to the next phase of the organisation (as Co-Founders step away)</p>
To embed trauma-informed impact measurement across the organisation	<p>MEL framework in place (using non-extractive proxy measures, storytelling and qualitative feedback from the community)</p> <p>Methodologies for young people-led impact assessment in place</p>
To expand PfP impact by supporting others to implement trauma-informed organisational health models	<p>An open source resource package in place</p> <p>A training outline for experiential learning produced</p> <p>A marketing/outreach plan developed</p> <p>At least four organisations commission PfP to deliver package</p>