



RESEARCH REPORT 2

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## **Fight for Peace Academies in Rio and London - assessing their progress and impact**

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Alice Sampson & Maria Rita Villela

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of the research conducted by the Centre for Institutional Studies, University of East London between April 2012 and May 2013 is to independently assess the effect of the Fight for Peace (FFP) Academies on the lives of young people in London, UK, and Rio, Brazil. The research is also designed to provide information to inform practice and development of FFP as an organisation.

This report identifies factors which explain how FFP programmes impact upon the life course of young people and summarises the main outcomes.

A short report summarising the findings were published in November 2012 and can be found on the Centre's website ([www.uel.ac.uk/csjc](http://www.uel.ac.uk/csjc))

## 2. Researching Fight for Peace

### 2.1 Some challenges considered

There are a number of challenges evaluating multi-dimensional programmes like FFP which are multi-causal and located in complex community settings.

These challenges include:

Using a reliable research design which addresses contribution; that is, finding out if a programme has made a difference to the lives of young people, or if other factors account for the changes. In short, a robust evaluation finds out if the FFP programme is a *cause* that has an *effect* with the expectation that many complex causal chains exist and contribute to an overall effect. Some will be distinct logical chains, and others complex chains which are activated when they interact with other logic chains

According to many scientists attribution is most certain where an experimental design is used, and randomised controlled trials (RCTs) are considered as the 'gold standard', a position not subscribed to in this study.<sup>1</sup> For ethical reasons it is not feasible to allocate some young people, but not others, to a programme like FFP. Attendance at FFP is voluntary and creating a randomised control group would involve turning away some young people who would like to join and using them as a control group, and comparing what happens to those in each group; the group selected to attend FFP and the group of young people who have been turned away from FFP.

Another possibility is constructing a control group using similar young people who did not volunteer to join FFP. This is also problematic because 'being attracted' to boxing and martial arts is a defining characteristic of FFP members. It would therefore only be a meaningful comparative group if young people attending boxing and martial arts clubs are selected to be a control group, but this is not a fair test because these young people are also receiving 'treatment'.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, Oakley, A. (2000), *Experiments in knowing*, Cambridge: Polity Press, who argues that RCTs best test the effectiveness of interventions and policies. This study draws on the arguments made by Sampson (2007), 'Developing robust approaches to evaluating social programmes', *Evaluation*, 13,3: 469-485, that finds out about how well interventions address the problems they are intended to address have been modified, and under which circumstances.

Another challenge is understanding the complex relationships between participating in sport and expected outcomes such as a reduction in criminality or attending education programmes and finding work, and there is scant evidence that sport effects these outcomes.<sup>2</sup> Programmes such as FFP, affect intervening factors which are typically identified confidence and aspirations and it is these changes which, in turn, influence a young person's decision to start and complete an education course, or to stop committing violent crime, but intervening variables like self-esteem have been found to have weak links to such outcomes.<sup>3</sup> Thus, it has been found that increased levels of physical activity and its associated improvements in self-esteem are, at best, weakly related to improved educational attainment levels, and there is no discernible relationship between self esteem and offending behaviour—offenders' confidence can vary from very confident to low self-esteem.<sup>4</sup> In a three year study no support was found for the hypothesis that engagement in physical activity deters criminality, and the authors questioned assumptions that the intervening variable – character building – actually happens through participation in sport.<sup>5</sup>

There are also difficulties associated with measuring intervening variables. Improvements in self-esteem and confidence may happen in some social contexts but not others – young people may feel self-assured at home but lack confidence at school, or feel confident doing some activities at school but not others. These concepts are also multi-faceted. Participating in sport may increase a young person's confidence in their physical abilities or physical self-efficacy, but this does not necessarily mean that this improved confidence gives young people an increased desire to learn.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, commonly held assumptions that educational qualifications and finding work are the answers to young people's limited opportunities are not necessarily supported by research: paid work does not necessarily lead to a reduction in offending, people without work stop offending or continue to offend whilst in employment; and, paid work is not necessarily a route out of poverty and disadvantage due to low wages.<sup>7</sup>

Several commentators have noted that one of the paradoxes of sport is that it is the bastion of privilege and power, and it typically reinforces gender inequality, and therefore using sport for development in low income violence prone areas, is difficult to justify.<sup>8</sup> These researchers have also

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<sup>2</sup> See for example, Nichols, G. (2007), *Sport and crime reduction*, London: Routledge; Long, J., and Sanderson, I. (2001), 'The social benefits of sport: where's the proof?' in C. Gratton and I. Henry (eds) *Sport in the city*, London: Routledge, pages 187-203. Smith, A., and Waddington, I. (2004), 'Using 'sport in the community scheme' to tackle crime and drug use among young people: some policy issues and problems', *European Physical Education Review*, 10, 3: 279-298.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Bailey, R. (2005), 'Evaluating the relationship between physical education, sport and social inclusion', *Educational review*, 57,1: 71-90; Coalter, F. (2007), *A wider social role for sport*. London: Routledge.

<sup>4</sup> Weak or no links have been identified by numerous researchers including, Elmer, N. (2001), *Self-esteem: the costs and causes of low self-worth*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation; Nichols, G. (2007), *Sport and crime reduction*, London: Routledge; Coalter, F. (2007), *A wider social role for sport*. London: Routledge;

<sup>5</sup> Begg, D., J. Langley, T. Moffitt, S. Marshall (1996), 'Sport and delinquency: an examination of the deterrence hypothesis in a longitudinal study', *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 30: 335-341.

<sup>6</sup> Coalter, F. (2007), *A wider social role for sport*. London: Routledge, page 99. Fox, K. (2000), 'The effects of exercise on self-perceptions and self-esteem' in eds. S. Biddle, K. Fox, S. Boutcher, *Physical activity and psychological well-being*. London: Routledge, pages 88-117.

<sup>7</sup> Barry, M (2010), 'Youth transitions: from offending to desistence', *Journal of Youth Studies*,13,1: 121-136.

<sup>8</sup> See for example, Dagkas, S. and K. Armour (eds) (2012), *Inclusion and exclusion through sport*. London: Routledge, pages 124-155.

questioned how participating in sport can reduce discrimination and oppression for girls and young women by changing community norms.<sup>9</sup>

Another challenge is that the academic literature on the practice of boxing and martial arts or 'high body contact sports' has inconsistent findings and mixed opinions about whether or not they lead to positive moral and ethical development or facilitate aggression and violence.<sup>10</sup> Some studies have concluded that high body contact sports enhance violence and criminality outside practice sessions and account for a decline in moral values which are attributed to the culture of sport and a macho athletic subculture.<sup>11</sup>

A rigorously designed research study was conducted in Norway with 477 boys aged 11 to 13 years. It took place over two years and found that participation in 'power sports' (boxing, wrestling, weightlifting, and oriental martial arts) led to an increase or enhancement of antisocial involvement outside training sessions including, starting fights, use of weapons, vandalism and truancy.<sup>12</sup> These authors concluded that the negative behaviours are likely to stem from the practice of power sports itself and from 'repeated contact with 'macho' attitudes, norms and ideals with a focus on muscles and physical strength and a belief in the value of toughness, and maybe violation of societal norms'.<sup>13</sup>

Other studies have favourable findings, and concluded that martial arts students have a greater reduction in hostility than those participating in badminton and rugby. Military trainees who had martial arts training had higher improved feelings of self-control and lower scores for feelings of vulnerability and likelihood of attack, than those who had completed physical fitness training.<sup>14</sup> These findings suggest that martial arts training can produce greater positive changes than other physical activities.

However, the findings from these studies are unable to explain how participating in high contact body sports makes either a negative or positive difference, or to explain the circumstances under which they have no apparent effect. How is it that some people learn aggression using high contact body sports, whilst others learn self-control?

This evaluation study has been designed with these challenges in mind.

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<sup>9</sup> See for example, Saavedra, M. (2009), 'Dilemmas and opportunities in gender and sport-in-development' in eds., P. Levermore and A. Beacom, *Sport and international development*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Pages 124-155.

<sup>10</sup> Binder, B. (2007), 'Psychosocial benefits of the martial arts: myth or reality? A literature review', *International Ryuku Karate Research Society's Journal*.

<sup>11</sup> The following studies are all quoted in Binder 2007 op. cite., and see Endressen, I.M., and Olweus, D. (2005), 'Participation in power sports and antisocial involvement in preadolescent and adolescent boys', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 46,5:468-78.

<sup>12</sup> Endressen, I.M., and Olweus, D. (2005), 'Participation in power sports and antisocial involvement in preadolescent and adolescent boys', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 46,5: 468-78.

<sup>13</sup> Endresen, I.M., and Olweus, D., 2005, op. cite., page 477.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in: Binder, B. (2007), 'Psychosocial benefits of the martial arts: myth or reality? A Literature Review', *International Ryuku Karate Research Society's Journal*.

## 2.2 Research approach

To take into account the issues discussed above, this study:

- Uses the academic literature to identify theories which best explain youth transitions, how a multi-dimensional intervention like FFP might work in principle to identify possible causal links and contextual issues, and draws on information in discussions with staff, partners and young people to design the research.
- Uses brainstorming sessions and on-going meetings with staff and young people to identify expected causal links that explains how participating at FFP addresses problems and issues, and facilitates young people's potential. This information is used to develop questionnaires and face-to-face interview schedules to test the theories that are embedded in the programme. These anticipated causal links are the hypotheses upon which the effectiveness of the programme rests. Where theories that underpin programmes are identified and 'tested' then randomised control groups are not necessary.<sup>15</sup>
- Takes a problem-solving approach that 'tests', and refutes, the theories that are embedded in the FFP programme to ascertain if the problems the programme sets out to address have been modified.<sup>16</sup> Where data best fits particular hypotheses these are selected to explain how the FFP programme works.<sup>17</sup>
- Identifies generative causal mechanisms that explain effects, and recognises that these mechanisms are not always 'active', and that young people themselves, organisational ethos and management and community contexts affect causality. In other words, there is an inbuilt expectation that, at best, intervention programmes will positively affect some young people in some situations and circumstances.<sup>18</sup>
- Claims of effectiveness are made where the experience of attending FFP can be identified as making a difference to its aims described in its mission statement: '*working to overcome division and violence and promote the potential of young people in disadvantaged communities*'. This statement informs two key questions for the research:
  - 1) Has the FFP model contributed to overcoming division and violence?
  - 2) Has the FFP model promoted the potential of young people?

This study:

- Measures the impacts for young people during their time at FFP, and for those who attended intensive programmes up to six months after they attended their first programme, and some data on desistance from offending from 2010.

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<sup>15</sup> Weiss, C. (1997), 'How can theory-based evaluation make greater headway?' *Evaluation Review*, 21,4: 501-24.

<sup>16</sup> Popper, K. (1968), *The logic of scientific discovery*, 2nd edn. London: Hutchinson.

<sup>17</sup> Sampson, A. (2007), 'Developing robust approaches to evaluating social programmes', *Evaluation*, 13,3: 469-485.

<sup>18</sup> For a realistic approach to evaluation and its appropriateness for evaluating community sports programmes see, Pawson, R. and Tilley, N. (1997), *Realistic evaluation*. London: Sage; Tacon, R. (2007), 'Football and social inclusion: evaluating social policy', *Managing Leisure*, 12: 1-23.

- Recognises that the FFP model is specifically designed to work with young people in areas prone to violence and crimes referred to in this report are typically inter-personal violent crime, including sexual exploitation and drug trafficking.<sup>19</sup> Young people may be deterred from committing property offences but the mechanisms that may account for desistance are not fully explored in this study.

### 2.2.1 *Generating robust and useful evidence*

Our research is also designed to contribute to the development of FFP as an organisation and its Five Pillars model. To achieve this intention two aspects of FFP are particularly pertinent.

Firstly, FFP is an organisation that operates in more than one place. It retains its core values, Five Pillar principles and ethos on the one hand, and on the other, the FFP model is sensitive to local community and cultural settings and to shortcomings in the delivery of services by state agencies, and adapts its programmes accordingly. For example, an education pathways programme is run for 12 weeks in London and in Rio the course lasts for a year, and in Rio a lawyer and psychologist attend LPP every week, but there are no such formal arrangements in London.

Secondly, FFP places monitoring and evaluation at the heart of its organisation and uses the information to reflect upon their performance and to discuss how they can improve their programme. The research includes finding out about how the FFP programme works in different settings, and learning across sites – promoted by regular visits by staff between the Academies and regular Skype meetings, actively encouraged by the founder, Luke Dowdney, and, as a result, the monitoring and evaluation systems in London and Rio are similar.

It is in this context that a ‘robust’ evaluation includes generating evidence that is relevant and useful to the organisational practices of FFP and its goals, as well as assessments of effectiveness.<sup>20</sup> Features of a robust evaluation study of FFP include:

- *Incorporating critical factors for ‘success’ into the research* by ‘testing’ key assumptions that inform how the FFP programme works; for example, that boxing and martial arts attract young people and are a ‘hook’ to engage with the most marginalised and disaffected as well as those who lack opportunities to fulfil their potential, and that FFP is a safe place where young people are valued and respected.
- *Collecting data to incorporate an institutional analysis into the research* by recognising that programmes are delivered by organisations, and that institutional arrangements impact upon

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<sup>19</sup> The term drug trafficking is used in this report instead of drug dealing, as frequently used in the UK, because the dealing of marijuana, cocaine, and crack cocaine is part of everyday living in Rio project, and the term drug trafficking is used in Brazil.

<sup>20</sup> What counts as relevant evidence in this study is described in this section, and earlier in this chapter, using a broad definition. However, what type of evidence is able to reliably demonstrate that a social policy will be effective in more than one location is the subject of much debate with contested notions about how best to conceptualise and measure causality and what counts as relevant and reliable evidence when informing the development of policies, programmes and practices (see for example, Cartwright, N. and Hardie, J. (2012), *Evidence-based policy: a practical guide to doing it better*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. Nutley, S., Powell, A. and Davies, H. (2012), ‘*What counts as good evidence?*’ Provocation Paper for the Alliance for Useful Evidence, London, November).

the implementation of programmes and their effectiveness.<sup>21</sup> Thus, simply gathering data on activities that are linked to specified outcomes, for example training in writing CVs, and interviewing skills for employment to increase the opportunities for young people to obtain work, does not sufficiently explain how outcomes are achieved. Organisational ethos, goals, and staff commitment and confidence in working effectively with young people are all integral to finding out ‘what works’, ‘how’, and with what effect.

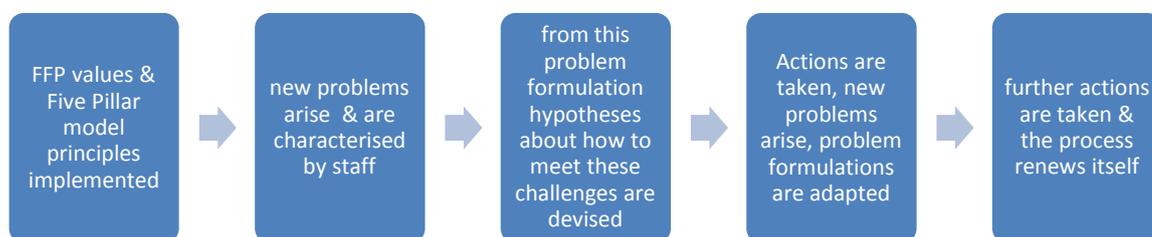
- *Judgements about effectiveness are made by drawing on information from several sources within the context of the programme.* These judgments include considering what is realistic to achieve in the circumstances, the amount of resources and effort invested in a particular activity, and assessing changes or levels of improvement that matter from a causal perspective. For example, in 2009 in the London Borough of Newham, 87% of the young people who completed a questionnaire said that they felt fitter as a result of participating in boxing and martial arts training. Although this finding indicates that the training was successful for the overwhelming majority, staff decided to work towards improving this statistic. They renewed their efforts by ensuring that coaches were training to a professional standard by replacing a coach and by introducing a ‘Fighting Fit’ programme for the gym, as requested by young people. By 2011, 95% of the young people who completed a questionnaire said that they felt fitter, an 8% improvement. Face-to-face interviews with young people found that ‘feeling fitter’ contributes to other positive improvements such as feeling calmer – rising from 74% to 77% and feeling better about themselves, rising from 60% to 87%, for example.<sup>22</sup>
- *Generating knowledge that contributes to the problem-solving skills of staff.* This can be achieved by working collaboratively with staff in designing the research, and giving them opportunities to analyse and discuss findings. This approach recognises that implementing a programme is a self-perpetuating cycle of problem-solving and staff routinely encounter new challenges as economic conditions change, new policies alter the behaviour of state agencies, and young people find new forms of excitement which can be illegal. The diagram below illustrates how this process of self-perpetuating problem-solving occurs:

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<sup>21</sup> Popper drew attention to how organisations are shaped by people and decisions are made from an organisational perspective. He observed: ‘*Institutions do not act; rather, only individuals act, within or on behalf of institutions.*’ Popper, K. (1992 [1969]), *In Search of a Better World: Lectures and Essays from Thirty Years*, London: Routledge, page 80. Thus, organisations are both social contexts and mechanisms that explain changes in the lives of young people.

<sup>22</sup> Statistical significance testing is not used in this study. Whilst this mathematical technique may be relevant in a closed system this is different from significance in a real world setting where things are significant only when we choose to label something as such. In complex social structures there are no limits to the causal chains that link interacting open systems and for evaluations relevant knowledge is about what causal links exist and under what circumstances, and how they may be strengthened and/or activated by policies and interventions. In real world situations it is therefore not clear why a mathematical significance test should be accorded a privileged position in assessing success (see Burgess, T. (1994), ‘Towards a social science: a comment on Karl Popper’s ‘twenty seven theses’. In eds., Pratt, J., Locke, M., and Burgess, T, *Readings in Institutional Studies, Book 1: Popper and problems, problems with Popper*, Working Paper 64, Centre for Institutional Studies, University of East London, pages 55-66).

**Figure 2.1:** *Implementing programmes: a self-perpetuating cycle of problem solving*



From this perspective useful evaluations are those which enable staff to understand, articulate and assess their practices and therefore contribute to developing the organisation, as an institution, including practice. Research questionnaires and interview schedules are developed and adapted to reflect the working hypotheses that staff articulate, what actually happens in practice, and measure factors or mechanisms that account for outcomes. Since 2009 staff at FFP have reviewed annual self-completion questionnaires and whilst a core set of questions remain, others have been adapted to reflect emerging issues and improved understandings of how change occurs. Similarly, youth council members have been involved in designing the research.

Examples of the interactions between practice and research include the following: staff identified that changes in young people's position from 'self-hatred/dislike' to self-acceptance is a key factor that explains changes in attitudes, thinking, and behaviour. Through discussions over the last two years an increasing number of factors have been identified that contributing to these concepts. In 2009 questions related to self-acceptance included '*feeling better about myself*' and '*feeling calmer*', and, subsequently, new sessions on gender and sexual identity were incorporated into personal development classes, and a question was added to the self-completion questionnaires about how young people feel about themselves as a young woman or a young man, because acceptance of gender and sexuality were identified as component parts of self-acceptance.

This reflective and adaptive practice with the involvement of staff and young people gives added confidence that the research design is robust; that is, it is more likely to identify and 'test' evolving causal relationships that arise from improved problem identification and problem-solving, and gives more certainty that the data are reliably measuring what is happening. One example of this process is from Rio; a few young people began questioning and challenging the '*front lines*' marked out by the drug factions and in 2012 a question was added to the self-completion questionnaire to test this hypothesis: '*Do you feel safer visiting other communities since you began attending Luta Pela Paz?*' and it was found to be a more general pattern of change. Thus, an additional effect or outcome of FFP was identified and incorporated into the research.

A further indicator of robustness is the use of the research findings by staff. If staff trust research findings and they are relevant to their everyday work then they will use them to identify problems and opportunities, and to develop stronger theories or working hypotheses that better predict how to

work effectively. Thus, research findings contribute to FFP continuously and actively shaping its own life course.<sup>23</sup>

## 2.3 Research activities

The following outlines the information sources upon which the research in Rio and London drew:

The research activities included:

- Review of the academic literature on youth transitions, the effects of sports, youth work, education and employment, and personal development on the lives of young people, and evaluations
- Monitoring data from FFP/LPP Academies
- Young people's self-completion questionnaires (London 2011; Open Access n=118; Intensive group (pathways and twilight programmes) n=70: Rio 2012; Open Access n=86; Intensive new pathways education programme n=83)
- Youth Council self-completion questionnaires (Rio n=11; London n=11)
- Staff self-completion questionnaires (Rio n= 37; London n=16)
- Face-to-face interviews with young people (21 in Rio and 37 in London)
- Face-to-face interviews with partner agencies (13 in Rio and 11 in London)
- Interviews with staff (4 in Rio and 3 in London)
- Observations of sports sessions in both Academies

The study has ethical approval from the Ethics Committee at the University of East London, and follows equal opportunities principles.

More details about the data collection can be found in appendix A.

## 2.4 Assessing the findings

Making judgements about the success, or otherwise of a project is integral to an evaluation study. In this report judgements include;

- *Considering what would have happened to young people if FFP/LPP did not exist.* In neither location do other projects exist that provide boxing and martial arts as a 'hook' with a holistic model of support that includes personal development, education, access to employment with youth work support. As other studies have found, those who participate in boxing often live on the margins of society; a coach commented in a boxing gym in Chicago, USA: *'if you want to know who's at d'bottom of society, all you gotta do is look at who's boxin''*<sup>24</sup>, and these people typically are most likely to be ill, to draw on welfare, and to be homeless and over their

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<sup>23</sup> Like many organisations FFP also uses findings from research for staff inductions and training, as evidence to funders that they are meeting their targets, and in the preparation of applications for further funds. The requirements of funders and pressures to use 'off-the-shelf' questionnaires tends to sideline monitoring and evaluation into administrative tasks and management responsibilities, and the use of findings for problem-solving and organisational development by all staff, and in the case of FFP, youth council members, sidelined. FFP is, in this sense, an exception to the norm and its integration of monitoring and evaluation to improve and develop and is a distinctive characteristic of FFP.

<sup>24</sup> Wacquant, L. (2004), *Body and soul: notes of an apprentice boxer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, page 42.

life time are costly to the state.<sup>25</sup> Thus FFP has an existence value against which success can be measured. It is reasonable to assume that many young people would be unable to continue with their education, be unemployed, continue to traffick drugs or be drawn into the world of trading drugs and use violence for economic gain and status, and be incarcerated, for example.

- *The rate of change and 'direction of travel'*; sometimes numbers of young people who have attended an activity or who have found employment or who have re-offended are small, but where a clear majority have gained qualifications or stopped offending, for example, then this is considered as an indicator of success even if few have met these aims.
- *The context or economic environment*; the proportion of young people obtaining work or an apprenticeship may appear low but within the economic context of high unemployment amongst young people, few jobs, stigmatisation of an area by employers, the low numbers may actually be higher than might be reasonably expected, given the economic constraints.
- *Taking into account harm and adverse effects*; this is a significant aspect of any evaluation research, particularly in projects like FFP where young people can be vulnerable and have mental health issues; an intervention may work for the majority but a minority of participants may be attempting to commit suicide, for example, and such findings would make any benefits of an intervention questionable.

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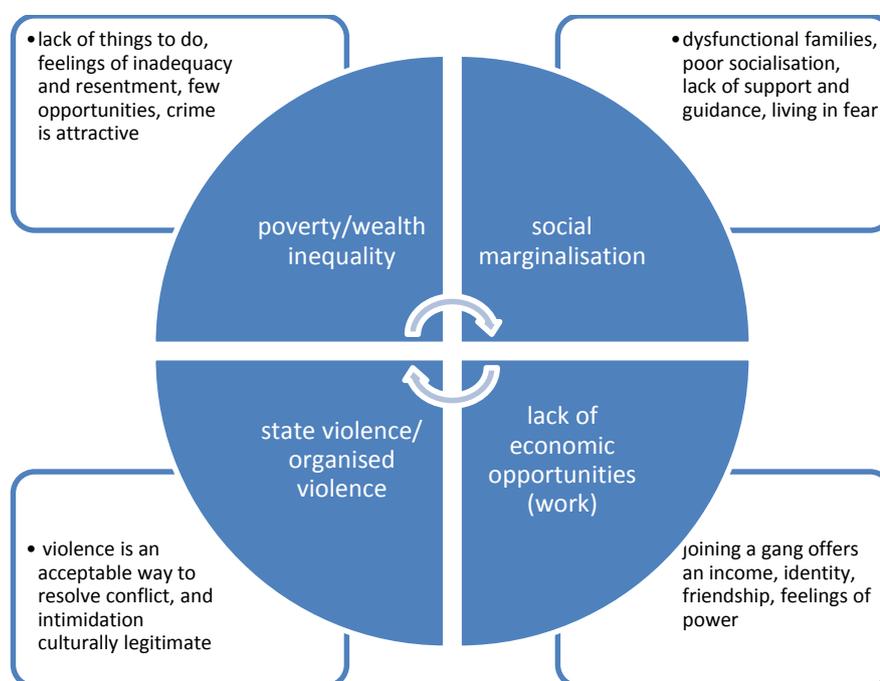
<sup>25</sup> See, for example; Wilkinson, R., and Pickett, K. (2009), *The spirit level: why equality is better for everyone*, London: Penguin. Marmot, M. (2009), *Fair society, healthy lives. Strategic review of health inequalities in England post 2010*. [www.ucl.ac.uk/marmotreview](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/marmotreview)

### 3. About Fight for Peace

Founded in 2000, FFP uses boxing and martial arts combined with education and personal development to realise the potential of young people living in communities that suffer from crime and violence. The first FFP Academy was founded by Luke Dowdney in Complexo da Maré, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The origins of FFP are based on research into the problem of youth involvement in violence, gangs and crime in Brazil and across four continents.<sup>26</sup> The diagram below summarises social and economic features of areas prone to violence, described by Dowdney, and identifies social, cultural, political and economic problems that arise from these circumstances:

**Figure 3.1 Dowdney's conceptualisation of violence prone areas**



The original approach of identifying issues in local communities that affect the lives of young people and being responsive to their circumstances is a particular feature of the work of FFP. Staff in Rio continue to spend time in the favelas talking to community leaders and local people, and staff who live locally keep the organisation in touch with emerging issues such as the increase in the use of crack cocaine, and these issues are then discussed during personal development and one-to-one youth work sessions, for example.

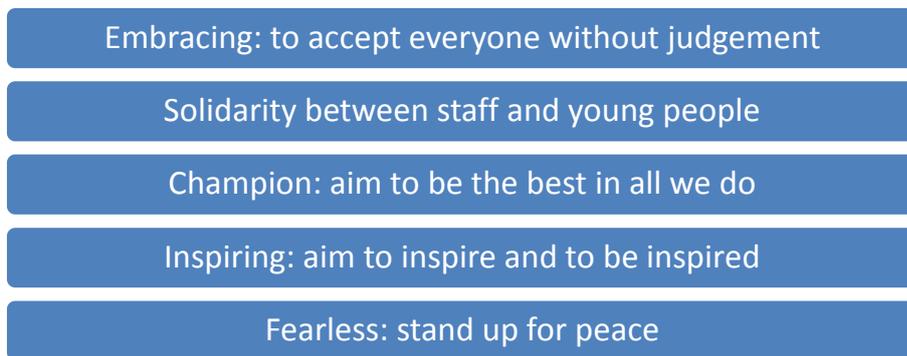
An awareness of and sensitivity to the challenges experienced by young people enables FFP to offer a meaningful alternative way of life to young people both emotionally and practically. Understanding

<sup>26</sup> Dowdney, L. (2003), *Children of the drug trade*, Rio de Janeiro: 7 Letras. Dowdney, L. (2005), *Neither war nor peace*, Rio de Janeiro: 7 Letras.

young people’s problems, concerns and perspectives, and appreciating their abilities are central to how FFP works.

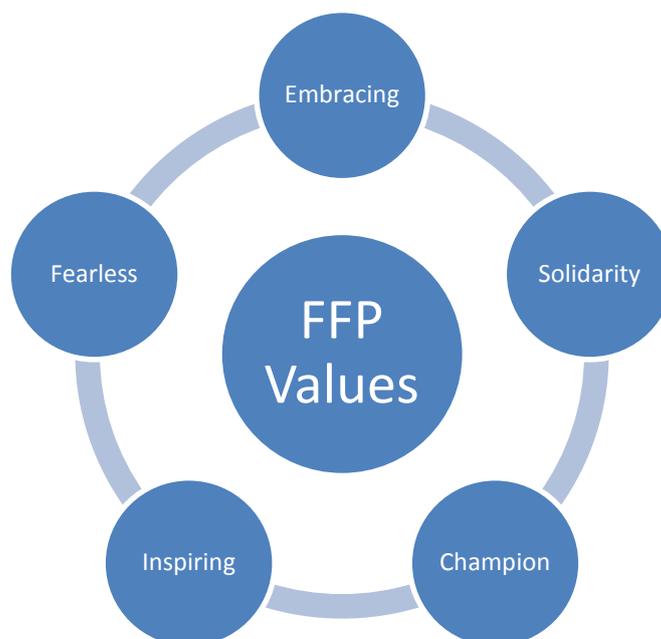
At the heart of FFP are five values which express the organisation’s commitment to young people. They are well-publicised within the organisation, integral to the delivery of services and incorporated into youth participation. These values offer an alternative *modus operandi* to violence, conflict and crime as a way of life, encourages young people to participate in education, training and employment, and promotes an ethos of striving to do one’s best.

**Figure 3.2 Fight for Peace values**



These values are central to understanding how FFP works and lie at the heart of the organisation:

**Figure 3.3 Values at the heart of Fight for Peace**



These values inform how FFP delivers services and they are integrated into each of the Five Pillars that provides young people with opportunities to influence their life course by participating in: boxing and martial arts, education, access to work, support services, and youth leadership. These activities offer a set of solutions to problems that are typically experienced by young people living in areas of poverty and conflict. They offer emotional and practical solutions within a framework of striving for excellence.

FFP is inclusive. It engages with young people who are committed to becoming professional boxers or Muay Thai experts, those who would like to lead a better life-style and to be fit and healthy, those who have become de-motivated, withdrawn and are NEET (not in education, employment or training), and those with a criminal record. FFP welcomes, and works with all these young people.

The FFP model is intended to be internationally relevant. The programme is therefore designed to take into account working with young people across cultures and living in different societies.

**Figure 3.4 Five Pillars model**



**Description of Five Pillars**

Boxing and martial arts: attracts young people, provides role models, channels aggression, builds confidence and self-discipline, responsibility and identity

Education: numeracy and literacy classes, qualifications for those who left school without qualifications, personal development and life-skills classes

Employability: access to formal employment opportunities through job skills training, partnerships with companies providing internships & employment, careers advice

Youth support services: mentoring, case work, targeted support, home visits and community outreach

Youth leadership: accredited courses, youth council participation in programme strategy and development

## 4. Delivering the FFP model

### 4.1 Robust implementation of FFP model

FFP has a strong and robust delivery structure in place in London and Rio. As a result of the following practical actions the implementation of the FFP model is rigorous: the articulation of the Five Pillar model in all annual reports, on the website and on large posters displayed in the Academies; the use of videos describing the history of FFP for the induction of young people and at personal development sessions; discussions of the FFP model during the induction of new youth council members, staff induction and training sessions, and at meetings within each Academy and across the Academies. The routine analysis of monitoring data for performance purposes by a member of staff located in each Academy responsible for monitoring and evaluation, annual self-evaluations, and during staff supervisions. These are all activities which ensure the delivery of the FFP model.

Findings from staff self-completion surveys show that staff are very supportive of the Five Pillars model:

- 100% of the staff in London are committed to the Five Pillars model
- 92% of the staff in Rio are committed to the Five Pillars model

Staff are confident in their work (87% in Newham feel confident all the time, and 86% in Rio) and often feel valued (75% in Newham and 65% in Rio).

Staff are also clear about what changes in young people FFP aims to achieve; 100% in London and 97% in Rio. It is notable that there is a low staff turnover which gives continuity to young people, builds an in-depth knowledge of local areas, and indicates high levels of satisfaction.

The youth councils in London and Rio have a key role to play in the implementation of the FFP model. All the council members say that they are clear on their roles and responsibilities (100%). In Rio all youth council members say that they can influence how FFP is managed and 90% in London feel that they can influence the direction of FFP. In Rio and London all council members say that issues raised by young people at meetings are taken seriously all or some of the time.

The successful implementation of the FFP model means that:

- Young people are offered the activities and support that they are promised
- Partners including community organisations, schools, social services, youth offending teams, can expect the young people they refer to receive the services they are promised by FFP, and for the activities to be delivered to a high standard
- Funders can be certain that their investments will be spent as specified in funding applications and young people will receive a high quality service
- There is greater certainty that the FFP programme is a cause that has an effect, and the FFP model can be rigorously 'tested' by evaluation research.

## 4.2 Putting FFP values into practice

The research findings show how the FFP values are connected to practice and the experiences of young people that arise from these practices linked to emotional and behavioural changes in their everyday lives.

The following illustrates some of these processes and their impact on young people:

*Embracing and solidarity* give rise to practices that welcome young people whoever they are and adheres to the principle of equal treatment. The friendliness and warmth that young people experience makes them feel accepted and respected, and better about themselves. This is of great importance to young people, particularly as many have bad experiences from other institutions such as schools, the criminal justice agencies, and family, and feelings of rejection.

This young man lives in a hostel, suffers from depression and has experienced high levels of conflict and violence in his life. FFP is a place where he feels accepted and where he can have fun. The cooperative environment is of particular significance to him as it contrasts to his previous life experiences:

*'I love it, it's really fun, you get to form relationships, everyone's always happy and helping each other. I always look forward to that! <laughs>.'* (Male, 17)

For young people who feel rejected by other social institutions and marginalised by society, FFP is a special place. This young man explains:

*'When I come to FFP, for me, I feel like I'm home because everybody you speak to, they have a smile on their face, you don't feel rejected coming to a place like that. I mean having experienced racism outside FFP and in secondary school, it is completely different.'* (Male, 20)

*Solidarity and champion values* reinforce each other to change the perspectives of many young people who tend to quit if activities become difficult and/or resort to abusive and violent behaviour to gain status amongst their peers. The experience of gaining respect by training hard and learning to give respect are integral to the discipline of muay thai, and changes young people's understandings of how to form positive social relationships:

*'Everyone gives and gains respect in a way, ... your brain says 'look, you train hard, gain the respect.' You learn to give respect.'* (Male, 17)

*Champion and inspiring values* are motivational for young people. The personal development (PD) sessions resonate most with young people where successful boxing and martial arts competitors have had similar experiences of hardship and rejection and have overcome their adversities.

Typical of others, this young man explains how some PD sessions inspire him to make an effort and to achieve:

*'they're [PD sessions] real good especially when they bring famous fighters and stuff like that, they say their whole life stories ... especially last PD a UFC fighter came ... now he's had a couple of fights, won some, lost some but he's still up there. And he said how he got kicked*

*out of school, his mum had schizophrenia, his dad wasn't really there, yeah it was inspirational definitely.... it's like nothing's impossible if you just put your mind to it.'* (Male, 17)

This young man explains how PD sessions motivate him to study hard and to help others:

*'PD yeah, I would say that's more about motivation, boosting up your motivation because I personally met a lot of successful people, ... a former British Heavyweight Champion, and a lot of other people. ... I try to attend every PD, it's just like the motivation boost up, it goes up and that motivates me to work harder, not just in boxing but in every... whether it's studying, whether it's helping my friends, whether it's boxing or outside helping someone.'* (Male, 20)

*Embracing and champion values* give importance to trying hard and doing one's best and appreciating effort and hard work. Praise is regularly given to those who win competitions and the effort of young people is recognised at Award Ceremonies. One distinctive practice at FFP that keeps young people trying and, probably, enables them to succeed in the future, is that praise and recognition comes from young people as well as staff, whatever the young person has achieved. The effect of giving public recognition is described by a young man who lost his first fight:

*'... And when I came back the coach said that he represented FFP and this is what his name is, it was his first bout and he lost unfortunately but the praise I got from the other FFP members, from the colleagues and then also the FFP members was just a great feeling and I was recognised straightaway ... it was just one of the most great experience I ever had in FFP because every colleague comes up to you and greets you with a smile and you know they respect you. Yeah it was a great feeling.'* (Male, 20)

### **4.3 The significance and role of an excellent reputation**

The research found that partners have a high opinion of FFP and its staff and in Rio other local voluntary organisations look to FFP for local leadership, and seek their opinion. A dynamic interaction exists between cause and effect which gives FFP its excellent reputation and maintains it. For example, partners go the *'extra mile'* for young people who are referred from FFP, they are therefore likely to receive a better service and this maintains partners' high opinion of them. This is maintained by inviting high profile public figures to the Academies, for example members of the royal family, leading politicians as well as sporting stars, including Olympiads.

In Rio local organisations find out about community issues from staff at FFP, and exchange information about what is happening locally. This means that FFP is well-informed about the local area. At the same time, FFP maintains its reputation by investing in those activities which inter-face with local communities and other organisations. These include:

- Ensuring that its young leadership training and practices are ongoing and embedded in the organisational delivery structure
- Holding competitions in the community which 'brings everyone together' and gives FFP a high profile
- Maintaining good relations with diverse groups, and factions who maybe 'at war' with each other
- Keeping well-informed about ever shifting community relations by spending time 'in the community', listening and learning.

#### **4.4 The monetary contribution of FFP to society**

A research project co-funded by the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation and the Ecorys Research Programme on the value on the return on investment offered by sports projects included FFP at Newham in their study.<sup>27</sup> The value of the return on investment is calculated by comparing project outcome data with national cost benchmarks.

In July 2012 Ecorys administered a young people's self-completion questionnaire (n=58) that asked about attendance, offending behaviour, and changes in attitudes and behaviour. They found that FFP impacted favourably on crime, with 175 being prevented, that 33 young people had been supported into further education, and 82 into employment. A small amount of impact on truancy and school exclusions was identified, and an increase in life expectancy estimated, based on the amount of exercise the young people were taking.

This information was collated and benchmarked against national costs, and an additional social benefit in one year estimated to be £2,504,457. The annual costs of running FFP were then taken into account and a benefit to cost ratio of £4.32 for every £1 invested in FFP was calculated.

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<sup>27</sup> Ecorys and Laureus Sport for Good Foundation (2012), *Sport scores: the costs and benefits of sport for crime reduction*, Summary report, London: Laureus Sport for Good Foundation.

## 5. Rio

### Key summary findings

LPP Academy is situated in Complexo de Maré, a favela in Rio de Janeiro that is dominated by three drug factions and marked by areas of extreme poverty and disadvantage.

The armed drugs trade, armed police, and tensions in the home all contribute to children and young people routinely experiencing and witnessing killings and serious violence that badly affects their emotional development and ability to learn. Young people have a strong desire to live '*free from violence.*'

LPP has activities structured in response to the drugs factions that divide communities and compensate for failing state institutions, by offering a safe and caring place, flexible and holistic services, and activities to broaden young people's horizons.

LPP has a leadership role within Maré, and has an excellent reputation amongst other community-based organisations.

During 2012, 1,725 young people attended LPP of whom 67% were young men and 33% young women, mostly aged between 15 and 17 years, but also included a wide age range; some were under 10 years old and some young adults who were over 20 years.

The overwhelming majority of young people were very positive about attending LPP and identified many improvements to their lives including: greater tolerance, more respectful behaviour, being fitter, and feeling better about themselves.

In 2012 and 2011 most young people were not in education, employment or training at the start of the New Pathways education programme (175 young people), and at the end of the courses 64% were in education, employment or training. A pass rate of 70% was achieved by students.

In 2012, 334 young people attended the education New Pathways programme, 131 attended literacy classes of whom 62% were young women.

In 2011, 50 young people found work; in 2012, 130 young people received career guidance, and 11 young people joined an apprenticeship scheme.

Young people particularly value talking to staff and a team of professionals offer psychological support, counselling, mentoring, and receive support from social workers and youth workers. The overwhelming majority have positive and trusting relationships with staff.

In 2012, 622 home visits were made, 334 young people were mentored and 97 young people received intensive support.

As part of its youth leadership programme young people are elected for two years to the youth council. These young people make public presentations about LPP, host visitors, participate in staff recruitment processes, and provide key communications between staff and young people to ensure that LPP remains sensitive and responsive to young people. However, just under half of those on the Open Access programme talked to youth council members.

Research findings show that LPP enables young people involved in drug trafficking to make different choices about their lives and facilitates and supports changing community values that supports education, fosters tolerance and questions community divisions arising from the activities of drug factions

## 5.1 Complexo da Maré

Situated between two busy highways with marshland in one corner and a main road at the other edge, Complexo da Maré is a *favela*<sup>28</sup> close to the international airport at Rio de Janeiro. Maré is composed of several communities, the official governmental statistics institute (IBGE) considers Maré as 9 communities, while local NGOs work with 17 communities,<sup>29</sup> each with a distinctive character and atmosphere, and their differences mainly marked by differential signs of material wealth. Official statistics from IBGE (considering 9 agglomerates) report that the population of Maré is over 74,000, although it probably reaches 120,000 if the other localities are counted.

## 5.2 Violence and divisions

### 5.2.1 Coercion and control by drug traffickers

Three drug factions dominate the favela (Comando Vermelho - CV, Amigos dos Amigos - ADA and Terceiro Comando - TC), and at the time of research two were armed and one had sold many of its guns to pay debts it had incurred. These factions fiercely protect and defend 'their' territory with somewhat military-style planning, patrols, guards who are 'watchers', with a clear hierarchy and a system of patronage and favours.<sup>30</sup> AK47s and handguns are used during the day as well as at night to protect territory and drugs on sale. Drugs, usually cocaine, marijuana and more recently crack cocaine, are typically laid out on tables at crossroads, and are on sale from early in the morning until late at night and always protected by guards who are frequently armed. Thus, the armed drugs trade is highly visible – for those who know how to read these signs - and part of the everyday street life in the favela.

Trafficking is attractive to young boys and their identity becomes inextricably linked with the social organisation of drugs. Regular meals, money, and status within a male society, results in them defining themselves as a drug trafficker. As soon as this happens the movement of these children is restricted to the territory of their faction.

Community justice is administered by drug traffickers and is integral to maintaining their business. Severe and sometimes brutal punishments – referred to as '*medieval*' by one of our interviewees - are used against those who violate the rules of the trafficking faction, and their bodies left in public places to act as a warning and deterrent to others. Yet rape is a 'taboo' crime and street robbery severely punished, making it feel safe to walk around the favela, unless there is cross-fire between the factions.

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<sup>28</sup> Although generally considered to be a favela, Complexo da Maré holds many different social-economic profiles. Favela dwellers are considered to be low-income families, in so-called irregular occupations in the city, with very restricted access to social services.

<sup>29</sup> See local map made by Redes da Mare ([http://redesdamare.org.br/wpcontent/uploads/2012/10/GuiaMare\\_Encarte\\_Web.pdf](http://redesdamare.org.br/wpcontent/uploads/2012/10/GuiaMare_Encarte_Web.pdf))

<sup>30</sup> Dowdney, L. (2003), *Children of the drug trade*, Rio de Janeiro: 7 Letras. Dowdney, L. (2005), *Neither war nor peace*, Rio de Janeiro: 7 Letras.

People who live in communities dominated by one group cannot easily visit communities of other factions and risk of being caught and punished; one young person talked about how this state of affairs is described in street language as *'neurosis'* to portray a deep sense of fear and preoccupation. Indeed, during the research a 13 year old boy was threatened and tortured by a faction, and taken to social services by a neighbour for protection.

Partly in response to a small and punitive welfare state, a system of protection began in the 1960s when many political prisoners were jailed under the dictatorship. These activists paid for their families to be cared for by local communities whilst they were imprisoned. This community support system continued for several decades but has now begun to weaken, and these strong community values of 'looking out' for each other are dissipating. Those who are 'desperate' now ask drug traffickers for financial support and this practice leaves them 'indebted' to the traffickers. In their position of comparative wealth, the chief traffickers have a socio-political role in the community. Thus, they can be both hospitable and compassionate yet recruit children into trafficking and be brutal killers.

One consequence of the weakening of community 'caring' systems is the rise of extreme poverty, and the creation of an 'under-class'. The different ways young adults dress and their contrasting demeanours portray 'class' differences; living side-by-side are the 'haves' and 'have nots'. The latter group of young adults can be seen 'hanging around'; in certain places young drug users can be found and young women prostituting themselves, whilst some use crack houses to take drugs, others smoke marijuana watching children play football. Yet, these same young people remain young-at-heart and can be seen playing with ping-pong balls on strings and, in the autumn, flying kites with children.

Some interviewees said, however, that some drug traffickers would like to *'find a way out'*, and in particular they would like their children to *'occupy a different social world'*. These desires suggest that there are opportunities to reduce drug trafficking and the involvement of children in its social organisation.

### **5.2.2 Killings by the police**

The police are also responsible for homicides in Maré and during our research they killed two teenagers, one of whom had attended LPP. Their previous victim was a three year old girl. During an interview one young woman summed up the views of others when she asked: *'if policemen and criminals kill and steal alike, what is the difference between them?'* (Female, 13) The police are hated, and fireworks are let off at street corners to warn people of their presence on the favela. When they are on the favela, armed and riding around in trucks, the tension in the community is palpable and the usually vibrant streets empty.

### **5.2.3 Violence at home**

Mothers live in fear that their children, from 11 years old, will become part of the social organisation of drug trafficking (*"entrar pra vida"*) which leads to a life of violence, and experiencing intimidation and coercion. Stories of mothers' locking children in rooms, tying them to furniture, and having fierce arguments with their children abound.

Another trigger for violence and aggression within the home is school attendance. When children do not attend school and when parents do not attend school meetings then their welfare payments are withdrawn. In communities defined by fear of violence, and violence itself, the withdrawal of

payments creates an under-class. Poor mental and physical health, coping with several young children, and being a single parent or having a husband in jail, all contribute to a stressful family life and make it difficult to comply with strict and inflexible state regulations. Thus, the most vulnerable and those most in need of support are those who typically lose their welfare benefits.<sup>31</sup>

The position of women is however contested. Some interviewees commented that traditionally women have occupied a powerful place in communities and that this traditional influence remains. Others voiced the opinion that the position of mothers can be filled with uncertainty and contradictions alienating her from her own community, particularly when she is a perpetrator of violence and aggression against her sons and daughters, as well as a survivor of domestic violence. Young women and men talked about the negative effects of living with domestic violence on their own lives:

*'Domestic violence... Having faced many fights between my mom, my father-in-law and my father, due to my family background revolt I did think about entering the life of crime because I used to think that it would be a ways of solving things. But the project, and not only the project itself, but the people here, helped me think differently about all of this... this was not the best way to solve things at home. Violence is never good.'* (Male, 18)

#### **5.2.4 Effects of violence on education**

The following are examples of the effects of violence associated with drug trafficking:

- Interrupted schooling: when there are shootings during the day children are led into corridors and their concentration is poor, when there are shootings at night children come to school tired and uneasy, and when there are police operations in the area schools do not open.
- A presumption that young children under 12 years living in Maré are difficult, and poor learners, and teachers expressed the view that if they can change one child out of a class of 30 children they are 'pleased.'
- Young children 'act out' violence as well as fighting for real. They are exposed to the brutality of some community punishments with the arrival of the internet and 3G mobiles. There are many stories of children taking gruesome photographs of murdered bodies and showing them to classmates.
- When playing cops and thieves, children in one of the visited schools play roles as Comando Vermelho and Terceiro Comando, two drug factions, instead.
- At secondary school: young men are traumatised by their experience of being the 'son of a trafficker' and typically have neurological problems, short attention spans, and often mental health difficulties.
- A second rate education for the sons of traffickers because of 'who they are', which traps them in a life of drug trafficking.

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<sup>31</sup> Families have to apply for welfare payments and the applications of many families are unsuccessful. In these cases attendance at school is not connected to household income.

### 5.2.5 Young people's views about living in Maré

Almost all of the young people who were interviewed said that the only aspect that they do not enjoy about life in Maré is the violence. Only four out of the 21 interviewed young people said that they would like to leave Maré. Young people wish to bring up families in Maré *'free from violence.'*

### 5.3 State institutions: the care and protection of children and young people

The main challenge for state organizations providing child protection and support services for children and their families is that they do not have the capacity to respond to the high levels of demand due to inadequate resources and inappropriate spaces to deliver services. Social workers and psychologists said that many of those requiring services, but not receiving them, live in Maré.

Even though the Brazilian system is 'rights based', various factors explain why state institutions find it difficult to fulfill their duties to prevent violence against children and young people, and enable them to grow and develop. These include:

- Brazilian laws make it difficult to work with traffickers, young adult 'watchers', and children who have been recruited into *'the business'*. It is illegal to associate with a trafficker and this criminalisation by association prevents the allocation of additional resources to work intensively with young people to leave the drugs trade, and preventing children from joining. Providing activities for young people to leave the drugs trade is however a 'grey' area that lacks clarity.<sup>32</sup> Children can be engaged as students willing to take education classes and traffickers can be talked to as parents in schools but the core problem, stopping trafficking, cannot legally be directly addressed.
- State institutions providing social assistance and child protection are typically located in poorly maintained buildings with insufficient space to offer confidential and quality services. Locally, three improvised, tiny and non-ventilated rooms are used to talk to the children and their families, and the only place for filing cabinets is in the middle of a corridor. Social workers and psychologists spend their time responding to immediate and daily crises. Limited resources and high demand for their services means that they do not have time to work with other agencies to offer young people services in response to their needs.
- Services for those living in poverty are 'overwhelmed' with demand; a Street Dwellers' unit receives almost 80 homeless people a day, for example.
- The nearest youth court is also extremely busy. During our visit to the court mothers waited anxiously to hear what sentences their sons received, but there was a lack of communication with families and they had already waited for over six hours without receiving any information. When sentencing young people their socio-economic position is taken into account, but officers have never visited Maré, nor heard of LPP. Thus, giving young people to a community sentence in their local area is not considered as a sentencing option.
- The police said that they were unable to talk to us, but interviews with other agencies and community organizations, and the stories of their brutality means that many are unwilling to liaise with the police. The research findings strongly suggest that the police are neither offering young people the protection of the law nor justice.

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<sup>32</sup> Personal communication with Luke Dowdney.

- Whilst many agency representatives we interviewed are in regular contact with those living in Maré we were struck by their lack of knowledge about favelas and their social and cultural organization, local community organizations, the pockets of extreme poverty, and deep psychological effects on those associated with drug trafficking, for example. We also noted that the use of strong negative stereotyping for young people, and its potential to cause harm to their lives.

As a result of these factors, non-government organizations respond to the many unmet needs, and fill a vacuum left by state agencies. At the time of the research, there was very little communication between voluntary sector organizations and state agencies such as social services, youth criminal justice and the police.

## **5.4 Luta Pela Paz**

### ***5.4.1 Luta Pela Paz; the significance of its excellent reputation***

Located between a church and the police department, Luta Pela Paz's façade differentiates itself for two reasons: on the one hand, it's brand new and bright blue distinguishes it from the old, greyish and brownish colours of the surrounding buildings; on the other hand, while most of the external walls in the favela are covered with graffiti, Luta Pela Paz's remains clean. Or, as one of our interviewees explained: Luta Pela Paz is respected for its *'unites faith and justice'*.

This physical appearance reflects the community's esteem for Luta Pela Paz, confirmed by the interviews with representatives of community associations, NGOs staff and informal conversations with Youth Council members. LPP is recognized for the impact it has on the lives of young people who attend their activities, their family members and acquaintances. According to one interviewee, LPP is respected both by the people who have no associations with drug trafficking and by those who have direct involvement with drug trafficking. Some drug faction members themselves would rather see their children attend LPP than adopt a 'life of crime', because they want a better future for their heirs.

LPP is frequently contacted by community organizations regarding the state of conflict in Maré, when there is a police intervention or a dispute between factions, for instance. This kind of knowledge is attributed to the accessibility of LPP, how staff embrace the community, staff who are out on the streets and participate in community life, and because some live locally. These factors result in a deep rooted understanding of the culture of Maré and knowledge of what is happening in the favela. There are 58 staff at LPP; 33 are male and 25 female.

### ***5.4.2 Some community effects of LPP; bridging the gap between worlds within and outside Maré***

LPP is known locally within Maré's communities, rather than by the state agencies and this is typical of all community organisations situated in the favela. In interviews with community associations interviewees spoke highly of LPP, how it offers young people alternatives from staying on the streets or getting involved in crime, and how LPP welcomes young people and offers them the possibility of a healthier lifestyle. Families are also appreciative of the contact they have with LPP staff.

Change, according to one interviewee, is seen on the faces of young people:

*'you can notice it on the expression of this kid; before he was only interested in riding his motorcycle everywhere, now his time is occupied, his head is occupied, in the morning he goes to the NGO to have meetings, he comes back to have classes here, he studies...'* (Female, community association)

Another interviewee explained how young people have changed their sense of belonging in Maré, from comments like *'I am from this or that faction,'* to *'I am from Luta.'* (Female, local NGO)

Children and young people who live in an area controlled by a drug faction are severely punished if they are caught *'on the other side.'* This *'line'* is agreed through an alliance between the drug factions, and punishment used to deter children from crossing the *'lines.'*

Interviewees emphasized the importance of LPP's ability to bridge the gap between the communities within Maré itself, which, for the local population, sometimes represent worlds apart due to different drug faction's control. Wearing a LPP t-shirt allows young people to move back and forth between favelas within the Complexo, and participating in training sessions and competitions enables them to visit other communities without running the risk of being punished. Wearing the project's t-shirt, is described as a *'free-pass'* and *'holy shirt'* which, according to one young person, *'serves as bullet-proof vest.'*

Crossing the drug faction *'lines'* wearing a LPP t-shirt results in young people reconsidering some deeply entrenched the community taboos that contribute to the violence; for example, making friends with people who live in different factions. One young people comments on the significance of LPP in the context of Maré:

*'You begin to realize that only because he lives in a place that has a different drug faction does not mean that you can't become friends.'* (Male, 15)

Other young people also reflect on how LPP is reducing divisions with Maré, but recognize that many young people still feel divided and that much more needs to be done to overcome the divisions imposed by drug factions:

*'[The communities are divided in factions] LPP tries to end, to break these barriers to unite. But it's more about being united in school, because in fact there are people who don't unite, don't accept. Some take this lesson outside school, but for others the division prevails.'* (Male, 17)

According to another interviewee, since LPP's arrival community social values have started to change. Young people value studying, they encourage their friends to attend LPP and there is a *'huge'* waiting list for education classes. The sport stimulates young people and attracts others and their families, and this brings the community together to participate in positive activities. The staging of competitions in public spaces in Maré, usually held on Saturdays, has particular symbolic importance and demonstrates how divided communities can unite and how they have shared interests in their children's achievements.

LPP broadens young people's horizons in other ways. Frequently, those who are born in Maré and other favelas in Rio de Janeiro consider it dangerous to leave the favelas; just as, those who are born

outside favelas find it dangerous to visit them, which results in a strong symbolic division between different parts of the city. According to one of our psychoanalyst interviewees, there is a closure and a *'fantasy of scission'* from the city which is very serious when considering the development of the young people's personalities. According to this perspective, it is important that young people know that they can move between places, and that they do not have to remain where they have lived all their lives.

LPP helps to enlarge the frontiers between the worlds of those who live in Maré and those who live in other parts of the city of Rio de Janeiro. As one of the youth counsellors said, *'LPP is a window to the world'*; and, building ties amongst young people and staff members, in Rio and in London, helps to bridge the geographic and social gap that exists both within the city and between Rio de Janeiro and the world beyond.

### **5.4.3 Networking**

Many interviewees commented on how partner institutions are unwilling to work together for the benefit of those living in Maré, and how this is a source of frustration, particularly when there is so much poverty and violence in the community.

LPP is, however, perceived as a strong partner and active member of a network of non-governmental organisations. Furthermore, LPP is seen to promote leadership amongst young people themselves, which inspires other institutions, for example, Observatório de Favelas.

LPP is seen as a good example of how to work collaboratively, and interviewees felt that other NGOs and local associations could follow their example and work more closely with the community to have a greater impact on the lives of its people.

## **5.5 The Five Pillars model**

The FFP model is adapted according to the social institutions and culture of the country in which it is located. In Rio the structure of the activities at LPP reflect the failure of state agencies to provide for many children and young people.

What differentiates LPP services from other services is its openness and flexibility. This contrasts starkly with state institutions which are typically closed and inflexible. The compartmentalized design of public social work services means that a young person has to go to the Municipal Secretary of Education for school, the Municipal Secretary of Social Service for social services, the local Health Centre for psychological support. Limited resources and lack of co-ordination between state agencies means that it is difficult for a young person to get an adequate response to his/her specific needs. By comparison, LPP offers a holistic approach that is responsive to young people's needs in the same place and at the same time.

Interviewees mentioned that when a student from LPP needs assistance, s/he receives special attention until the issue is resolved. The procedure of contacting and involving the families is also highly appreciated for its effectiveness. LPP staff work hard to maintain the involvement of young people, and in particular its most vulnerable members and for this reason partner NGO institutions such as Vila Olímpica da Maré, Digaf Maré and Observatório de Favelas recognize caring as one of LPP's main attributes.

Further, the voluntary attendance and flexibility of LPP contributes to its good reputation, and contrasts with the strict and mandatory programmes in schools and other institutions:

*'LPP is a place that allows for change. LPP always offers something new. Here people can chose. The young people come by their own will. No one is obliged to come. If they dropout, their registration can always be reactivated.'* (Female, 16)

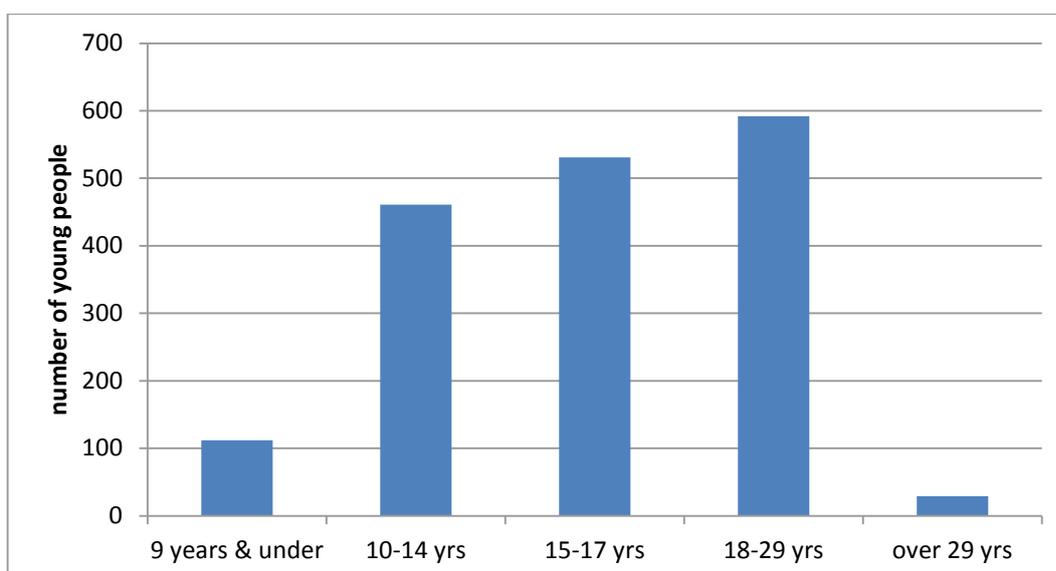
Young people also recognise that LPP offers them opportunities to change their lives, and this young man expresses the views of many others:

*'LPP produces athletes, produces education, gives people a second chance and enables young people to go to other places.'* (Male, 15)

### 5.5.1 Attendance and attendees

It is in this social and economic context that young people attend LPP. During 2012 a total of 1,725 attended LPP of whom 67% were boys and young men and 33% girls and young women. These young people attended the Open Access programme which is voluntary and sports focussed, the education New Pathways programme and Literacy classes. The classes are age sensitive, and whilst a third of the young people were 14 years and under, many were adolescents aged 15 to 17 years (30%) and at a stage of development when they are forming intimate relationships, finishing compulsory education, and making the transition into adulthood. Older age groups were also well represented with just over a third (34%) aged 18 years to 29 years, with a small number over 29 years, giving opportunities and a 'second chance' to young adults. The large number of young people and the wide age range is challenging for LPP staff, not just in terms of designing appropriate courses but also in terms of type of support.

**Figure 5.1: Age ranges of young people attending LPP in 2012 (n=1725)**



The following describes the programmes attended by these young people, and highlights some of their affects:

### **5.5.2 Personal development**

Integral to the Five Pillars model are compulsory personal development classes. Young people have to attend these classes in order to participate in other activities LPP offers. These citizenship classes include sessions on use of violence and its effects, meanings of citizenship, intimate relationships, sexuality, transgender, illicit drug-taking and criminal behaviour as well as learning about how to contribute to society. Young people explain how discussions during personal development classes have changed their attitudes and how they have become more understanding and tolerant of 'difference'. One young boy explains:

*'Before, I did not use to care for others, today I have become more of a humanist. The PD [personal development] classes are good for they stimulate conversation about drugs, about life, about homophobia. They help understand the differences and not have prejudice.'* (Male, 13)

The following comments from the young people below show how personal development is intertwined into all the activities through the LPP ethos and Five Pillars model. Thus, one young woman identifies a number of changes that have occurred during personal development classes which have made her more respectful towards others and more able to express herself, and through participating in sport she has lost weight, all of which makes her to feel better about herself:

*'Before joining LPP I used to be egoistic. Now I have become more respectful of differences. I am more confident, less shy, I have lost weight and feel better. I have also learned to express myself better, even in writing.'* (Female, 16)

The changes identified by the young woman quoted below includes improved self-expression, feeling less shy, and having a better understanding of others, and like many others emphasizes that the respectful attitudes of staff facilitates processes of change:

*'I feel that since I joined LPP, I have started to communicate better, have more friends and am less shy. I like the way that my teachers and colleagues treat me at LPP. PD classes [personal development] have helped me better understand the opinion of others.'* (Female, 22)

Young people value being able to talk freely to staff and appreciate how they listen and understand. These conversations and discussions occur in personal development classes, as well as informally:

*'You can talk to [name of youth worker] about anything, she is not only a teacher during class, but a friend who listens and helps whenever necessary. She comprehends.'* (Female, 16)

### **5.5.3 Boxing and martial arts**

The boxing and martial arts Open Access programme is voluntary and a total of 1,260 young people attended during 2012 of whom 76% were boys and young men and 24% girls and young women, and 44% dual/mixed heritage, 30% white Brazilian, and 26% black Brazilian. The age ranges are similar to those depicted in figure 5.1 above, with a slightly greater concentration of participants aged 15 to 17 years (32%). The younger children participate in sport until 6pm and young people attend later in the evening.

Of those who completed a questionnaire, 92% said that they were attracted by the boxing and martial arts, to get fit (55%), and to make friends (54%). LPP does not disappoint young people; indeed, 92% said that they were fitter, and 87% said that it was easier to make friends. Almost three quarters said that they were proud to belong (73%), and some young people achieve high standards their boxing and martial arts. Currently 60 young people compete in local, national and international amateur and professional competitions: 18 boxing; 10 wrestling; 9 taekwondo; and 23 in judo.

Findings from the self-completion questionnaire also show that participating in Open Access affects young people's self-perceptions; 86% feel better about themselves, and in interviews said that their increased fitness contributes to these feelings.

With increased fitness young people's body shape changes and the following comments by two young men reflect the experiences of young women and men who train regularly at LPP. This young man considered himself to be too thin before he joined and is proud of his improved image:

*'Before attending LPP I used to be like a stick, very skinny, I didn't have half the body that I have today.'* (Male, 13)

By contrast the young man below felt that he was too fat, but now feels comfortable with his leaner body image, and feels better about himself. He is also pleased that others recognise how his body shape has changed:

*'The way that I feel towards myself ... of loving myself. I used to be fat back then, I'm fit right now. And it is not only me who notices the difference. Many people say that I used to be fat like a ball, and today I am different, skinnier.'* (Male, 18)

#### **5.5.4 Education**

The state regulations are very strict and a young person who is 15 years old and has failed their examinations is told to leave school and is unable to attend further formal education until they are 17 years old and then they can only attend evening classes, unless they can win a very competitive scholarship to attend a private school.

The education classes at LPP are designed to give additional assistance to young people who find their school work difficult to enable them to continue at school, and to give free education to those who have been forced to leave school and have no qualifications. The intensive support classes have a maximum duration of one year. Not surprisingly, those who attend FFP frequently are those who enrol on educational programmes (95%), and over half of these young people also attend to make friends (53%).

During 2012 a total of 334 young people attended the education New Pathways programme. All those who attended were aged 16 years and over and 37% were dual /mixed heritage, 16% black Brazilian and 14% white Brazilian (33% of the ethnicities are missing) and just over half were young women (54%), and of the 131 young people who attended literacy classes, 62% were young women.

Although more young women than young men sign up for these classes, the positive and encouraging attitude of the LPP staff makes it possible for those who have been rejected by the school system and young men who command status on the streets to attend education classes, even though many are

illiterate and embarrassed about their illiteracy. Staff comment on how they watch these young people broaden their perspective and how reading and writing *'opens a whole new world'* to them.

Young people acknowledge that the New Pathways programme offers them a valuable opportunity to study again and they recognise that they can achieve, if they desist from criminal activity. Young people attribute their changes in behaviour to their attendance at LPP as this young man describes:

*'LPP contributed enormously to the fact that I went back to school and stopped using drugs. Today I feel more like a citizen.'* (Male, 17)

Some young women have responsibilities within the home, and care for their children, making attending education classes more challenging. This young woman recognises that the supportive role of staff played a key role in her continued attendance:

*'It was thanks to the insistence and support of staff members of LPP that I resumed school. My main challenge was to combine work, study and taking care of house and child.'* (Female, 25)

In 2010 and 2011 the overwhelming majority of the young people who started the new pathways programme (175 young people) were not in education, employment or training and by the end of their modules 64% were in education, training or employment, with 29 young people continuing in education. Furthermore, even though many young people were illiterate and had been reluctant learners at school, a pass rate of 70% was achieved by the students.

Information on criminal activity (not including drug trafficking) is not possible to obtain from criminal justice agencies, and 15 young people admitted to being criminally active at the beginning of the programme and seven said that they desisted whilst attending FFP.

#### **5.5.5 Job training & work access**

The education courses include vocational training and courses such as learning about administration, telemarketing, reception duties and leadership. All FFP members who are over 13 years old may attend these vocational courses, if they are interested. Of those who attended vocational courses, 130 received career guidance during 2012 and these courses and this advice enables young people to be better informed about what types of employment are possible, and introduces them to new possibilities. At LPP young people are able to learn what it means to work and to study. This young man explains:

*'What contributes most to change are the people who serve as examples and show that there are opportunities to work and study.'* (Male, 22)

One of the consequences of living in a male dominated and traditional family structure is that young women have fewer opportunities than men to become independent, go to college, and find work. In certain communities the number of young mothers and young pregnant women is notable, and child care responsibilities influence the life choices of these young women. At LPP, with the provision of a crèche, young women are given the same opportunities to attend training and work access courses. The story of the young woman's experiences described below illustrates how the provision of the course and the informal support she receives from the youth workers that enabled her to complete her course:

*'It had been a while since I had stopped studying. People had told me about LPP, but I was doubtful whether or not to come because I had a baby, my daughter was very little. But I came anyways, registered and started to study. I used to come and bring [her daughter] along, they had a small room here where I would leave her with [the person who took care of the children]. Many times I thought about quitting because sometimes it was raining, other times there were shootings and I had to bring her along, but the staff were always supportive of me and emphasized how important it was that I attended, that I could not give up, that the fight was long but that victory would come. What makes me not give up were the conversations that I had with the staff members and the citizenship classes.'* (Female, 25)

LPP staff emphasised how finding work placements and enabling young people to access work is particularly difficult and due to a number of factors including:

- A shortage of suitable and local work placements and employment opportunities
- A prejudice by employers against those who live in favelas
- A resistance by young people to seek work – either they are ashamed, or do not feel prepared, and they are reluctant to pursue more secure and professional careers.

Nevertheless, in 2011 a total of 50 young people on the pathways programme started work (41%).

During 2012 an apprenticeship partnership between a company and LPP benefited 11 young people who worked at the company and attended weekly classes at LPP, introducing them to the 'world of work' and offering them some real opportunities to gain practical experience.

#### **5.5.6 Youth support services**

LPP has a psychologist, counsellor, social workers, and youth workers, as well as a lawyer who comes in once a week to give young people advice. Thus, at the heart of youth support services is a multi-agency team that consists of different professionals each with their own expertise who, as a team, are able to give support and advice to a multitude of issues affecting young people. Some of these issues were serious and arise from experiencing and witnessing serious violence and intimidation which causes acute social and psychological damage. The murder of a family member or neighbour is not uncommon and responding to bereavement, and anger arising from this loss, are particularly challenging for the professional inter-disciplinary team. Young people emphasize the importance of having staff to talk to, and this includes young adults as the comments by this 22 year old illustrate:

*'It is with the staff that we talk about our issues. They are our pivot.'* (Male, 22)

When young people join LPP they are classified according to three levels, based on their needs. The most vulnerable young people have intensive support and weekly meetings are held to discuss any young people who are a '*cause for concern*'. Seven members of staff made 622 home visits to make contact with parents/carers and to understand more about a young person's circumstances, an average of almost 89 visits per member of staff during 2012. As a result of these visits 97 young people received intensive casework.

Six mentors, who are youth workers, are available to talk to young people confidentially in one-to-one sessions. A total of 334 young people were mentored during 2012. The mentoring programme is illustrative of the caring approach at LPP, for which it has an excellent reputation. One young man

conveys the strong levels of trust that can exist between young people and mentors by suggesting that young people feel able to discuss intimate issues:

*'The mentors and the social staff is what the young people need the most: someone to talk to, to check if everything is alright. The staff here does what mothers and fathers cannot.'*  
(Male, 18)

Findings from the self-completed questionnaires indicate that these relationships are common; the overwhelming majority of young people with problems (89% of respondents) on the Open Access programme felt able to talk to staff about their problems all or some of the time (80%), with the remaining young people either unsure or felt unable to talk to staff. Of those on the New Pathways programme, 82% felt supported by staff. Through the youth support pillar staff are able to establish positive relationships with young people. It is only when young people are prepared to talk about their problems and issues that concern them that staff can respond and work with young people to improve their lives and to discuss their aspirations and future goals.

### **5.5.7 Youth Leadership**

The youth leadership pillar of the Five Pillars model builds on the skills and many attributes of young people who live in Complexo da Maré.<sup>33</sup> LPP has a youth council and young people are elected onto the Council for two years. During this time they are trained and in 2012/13 their programme includes project management, community organization, public speech and conflict mediation. They are the public face of LPP and host visitors who include internationally acclaimed boxers and martial arts specialists, ambassadors and dignitaries, and funders.

Youth council members have a key link role between young people and staff, and staff and young people. At staff meetings they are able to represent the views of their peers as this young person explains:

*'The role of the youth council is to help the young people and make sure that our opinions are also heard'*<sup>34</sup>

Of those who completed a questionnaire (11 young people), six young people felt that all the issues raised by young people were taken seriously and the remaining five young people thought that staff sometimes took them seriously. This young person explains that their position gives them a sense of responsibility and engenders trust between staff and council members:

*'Being part of the youth council makes me feel more responsible. Knowing that the you can trust me and that I can pass on to the staff members what they say and that they are going to be taken seriously'*

All the youth councillors who completed a questionnaire felt that the youth council can make a real difference to LPP, and felt that their training was helpful (10 young people), and they felt able to carry out the tasks expected of them, either all the time (6) or sometimes (5). Council members said that,

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<sup>33</sup> See Pearlman, J. (2010), *Favela*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>34</sup> The youth council interviews were conducted as a focus group and it was not possible to identify clearly from the tape which young person was speaking. The group were all young women.

as young people, they are able to identify any difficulties and find solutions, as this young person observes:

*'We see what is going wrong in LPP and see a solution as a group'*

The communication is a two-way process and youth council members inform young people about events and activities and pass on news and information about changes in procedures. Of those who completed an Open Access questionnaire, 46% said that they talked to youth council members, whilst 37% said that they did not and a further 14% did not know who they were, suggesting that members were communicating with just under half of those who attended the Open Access programme. Council members said that their responsibilities enable them to chair meetings, take minutes of meetings, to feel confident approaching people they do not know well, to listen to others and understand the opinions of others.

Thus, not only do council members benefit personally from their responsibilities but they enable LPP to remain sensitive and responsive to young people when they develop their services. The youth leadership pillar is underpinned by the LPP values and emphasises that young people are capable and have potential to lead and inspire others. The responsibilities given to young people, and trust accorded to them by staff, contribute to the excellent reputation of LPP.

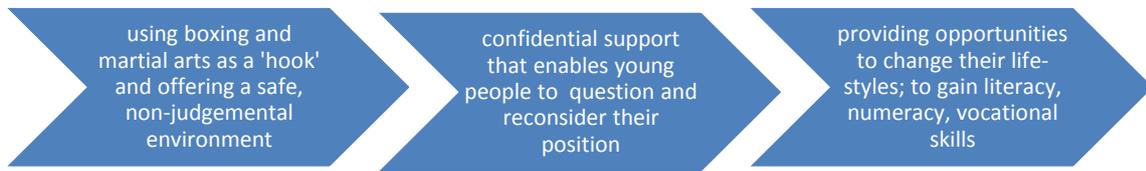
## **5.6 Key features of LPP**

Luta Pela Paz offers a holistic Five Pillars intervention model that is sensitive and responsive to young people living in Complexo da Maré, and promotes understanding, tolerance and ambition. The research has found that:

- LPP embraces young people as if they were family, offering them emotional and practical support to enable them to progress into adulthood and to lead fulfilled lives.
- LPP offers young people an opportunity to acquire status and recognition and an alternative way of life through drug trafficking and participation in organised illegal activities.
- At LPP young people learn to envision a better future, make friendships that have positive influences, and are able to meet other young women and men in a safe environment.

One of the key challenges for LPP is offering children and young people involved in drug trafficking an alternative way of life. The research has identified how LPP enables these young people to realise that they can become 'someone' by acquiring an identity as a boxer, learning the read and write, and by making 'real' friends; the activities and approach to working with young people contribute to these changes as follows:

**Figure 5.2: How LPP enables young people involved in drug trafficking to make different choices**



Another key challenge is achieving the aim to overcome division and violence and to promote the potential of young people. The research has found that these aims reflect the desires of those living in Complexo da Maré, and, in particular, children and young people wish to live free from violence by stopping:

- Killings and intimidation by drug traffickers and the police
- Violence in the home

There are indications that a process of change within the community has begun, and that the FFP model is enabling divisive community values imposed by drug factions to be questioned and challenged by young people who wish to live *'free from violence'*. Due to its excellent reputation and because it offers young people a safe place and an alternative way of life, drug traffickers are tolerant of young people wearing LPP t-shirts walking across drug faction 'lines'. This tolerance, dependent on the reputation of LPP, explains how changes are coming about. These processes are summarised below:

**Figure 5.3: How LPP facilitates and supports changing community values**



How the Five Pillars model works both in Rio and in London is discussed further in chapter seven.

## 6. London

### Key summary findings

FFP Academy is situated in one of the poorest areas of Britain with a predominantly young and ethnically diverse population, and a high but falling crime rate. A significant proportion of the violent crimes, including 'gang' activities are attributed to young people.

The majority of those attending FFP live in the London Borough of Newham and increasingly experience housing, financial and work-related problems as well as family problems, depression and anger.

FFP has 28 members of staff with a very low staff turnover, and its partners have a very high opinion of FFP including the professionalism of the staff, their responsiveness to young people, the use of boxing and martial arts as the chosen sport, and the positive attitudes and competencies of young people who attend FFP.

In 2012 a total of 1,031 young people attended FFP of whom 82% were young men and 18% young women. Most of these young people were Black (42%), Asian (15%), white Other (14% - mostly Continental Europeans), white British (13%), and dual Heritage (9%).

Those who attended FFP in 2011 and 2012 were typically aged 17 – 25 years old. There was a notable attrition rate, as may be expected; between January 2011 and June 2012 there were 888 participants with a core group of 209 who participated for 6 months or more and 116 young people who participated for 12 months or more.

The high standard of coaching is attractive to young people; this encourages them to excel and 32 are amateur or semi-professional competitors.

For the education, job training and access programmes, between April 2010 and June 2012:

- the average pass rate for literacy was 76% and 73% for numeracy
- 73% reduction in NEETs ( those not in education, employment or training)
- 75% reduction in offenders known to the criminal justice system
- Six months after young people completed module 1, 32% were in employment (12 young people)
- Six months after completing module 2, 60% were in work (10 young people)

For youth support services in 2010, 2011 and 2012:

- Approximately 100 young people met a youth worker each quarter
- In 2011, 65 young people started intensive casework sessions, typically for three months
- 78% reduction in offenders known to the criminal justice system at the end of a three month casework programme and who attended in 2010 & 2011 (21 young people)
- 64% reduction in affiliation to gangs (7 young people) and two became affiliated

Progressions within each pillar and the integration of activities and support across the Five Pillars, offers young people ongoing support, and opportunities to learn a range of social and practical skills that meet their multiple needs.

## 6.1 London Borough of Newham

FFP Academy is situated in the south of the London Borough of Newham. Newham is the third most disadvantaged borough in London and amongst the poorest areas of the country with an unemployment rate that has been increasing since 2007.

In 2011 Newham had the highest unemployment rate in London. Unemployment amongst young adults (16 – 24 years) is at its highest level since 1993, and one in four in London are out of work.<sup>35</sup> Newham also has the greatest proportion of low income households in London, with almost a quarter (22%) of children living in workless households, and a quarter (25%) living in poverty.<sup>36</sup>

Clear health inequalities have been documented by the Marmot Review, and those living in disadvantaged areas are more likely to smoke, drink heavily, take little exercise and have higher obesity rates, including young people.<sup>37</sup> Participation in sport is below the national average and has remained at about 16% for several years.<sup>38</sup>

Newham has a high proportion of young people – over 50,000 aged 10-24 years old - and an ethnically diverse population that is predominantly Asian (43%), with a third who are white British (33%), and 20% who are black African and black Caribbean, and a presence of minority ethnic groups such as Polish, Romanian, Lithuanian, and refugee groups.

## 6.2 Violence and divisions

In the last year (September 2011 – 2012) crime has fallen in London by an average of 2.6%, and in Newham it has fallen by 2%.<sup>39</sup> The crime rate was 10.96 (per 1,000 residents), the second highest in East London, and the ward within which FFP Academy is situated had one of the highest rates in Newham (11.80). Newham has one of the highest crime rates in London.

In the last year in Newham there were 4 homicides; 98 gun crimes; 400 rapes and sexual offences; 257 racist and religious hate crimes; and, 6,509 violent incidents against the person (total) of which 2,351 were domestic violence incidents.

In 2011, gangs linked to criminal activity have been identified as a problem in the borough. The Metropolitan Police established a Newham Gangs Unit and the Home Office allocated £277,000 to tackle gangs and serious youth violence. A youth violence and gangs forum has been set up under the auspices of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to co-ordinate a multi-agency response. An analysis of the problem concluded that there are five 'primary' gangs in Newham, a significant proportion of young people are responsible for violence against the person offences, and since 2007 gangs have become more prevalent with over 500 young people affiliated to gangs. Post code conflicts

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<sup>35</sup> See London Poverty profile, [www.londonspovetryprofile.org.uk/indicators/boroughs/newham](http://www.londonspovetryprofile.org.uk/indicators/boroughs/newham)

<sup>36</sup> See London Poverty profile, [www.londonspovetryprofile.org.uk/indicators/boroughs/newham](http://www.londonspovetryprofile.org.uk/indicators/boroughs/newham); [www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/london/child-poverty-in-london-the-facts/newham-38/](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/london/child-poverty-in-london-the-facts/newham-38/)

<sup>37</sup> Marmot, M. (2009), *Fair society, healthy live. Strategic review of health inequalities in England post 2010*, [www.ucl.ac.uk/marmotreview](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/marmotreview)

<sup>38</sup> Sport England (2007), *Action People's Survey*, London: Sport England: [http://www.sportengland.org/index/get\\_resources/research/active\\_people.htm](http://www.sportengland.org/index/get_resources/research/active_people.htm).

<sup>39</sup> All crime statistics: [www.met.police.uk/crimefigures/datatable.php?borough=kf&period=year](http://www.met.police.uk/crimefigures/datatable.php?borough=kf&period=year)

and increasing tensions amongst all young people, and gang hotspots are also identified as characteristics of the problem.<sup>40</sup>

### 6.3 Young people’s experiences and views about living in Newham

It was in this context of increased concern about violent criminality by young people, an increase in affiliations to gangs, and the identification of rising tensions amongst young people, that the research took place.

The majority of those who attend FFP live in Newham and most live in the E16 postcode which is south Newham, as indicated in the diagram below which uses available data; information on 535 young people in 2011 and 495 young people in 2012. One striking finding is that young people do not seem attached to Newham as a place to live or to go to school. Several young people talked about the area being socially fragmented, and until they joined FFP not really knowing anyone in their area unless they were at school with them. FFP offers young people a safe place where they feel they ‘belong’ and can make friends.

**Figure 6.1 Where most young people live**

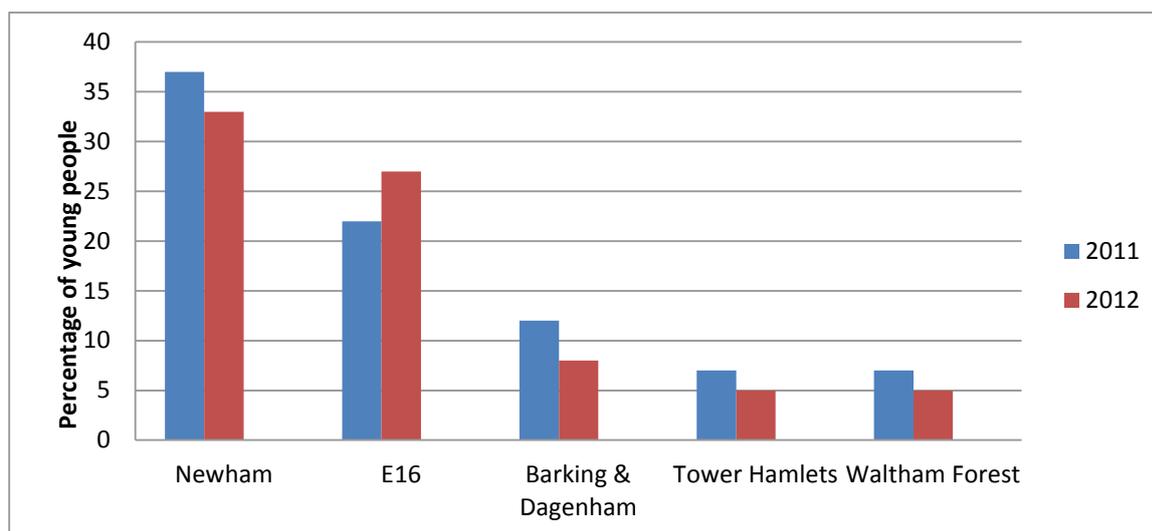


Figure 6.1 shows that many young people travel across postcodes to attend FFP, and some come from other East London boroughs, whilst others travel even further from west London.

Those who were interviewed and live locally were able name local gangs such as CH, to talk about young people with ‘reputations’ who came from several different areas of Newham who attend FFP, including those who live in the area adjacent to the FFP Academy.

Young people make clear distinctions about what they mean by ‘gangs’, and their categorisation is similar to that found by Kintrea and colleagues.<sup>41</sup> Young people talked about groups of young people who ‘hang about in the streets’ and often do not cause trouble. They explained that there is ‘nothing

<sup>40</sup> [www.mgov.newham.gov.uk/.../12-09-13%20Childrens%20Trust%20Gangs%20Update%20](http://www.mgov.newham.gov.uk/.../12-09-13%20Childrens%20Trust%20Gangs%20Update%20)

<sup>41</sup> Kintrea, K., Bannister, J., and Pickering, J. (2011), ‘It’s just an area – everybody represents it’: exploring young people’s territorial behaviour in British cities’, in B. Goldson (ed) *Youth Crisis? ‘Gangs’, territoriality and violence*, London: Routledge, pages 55-71.

to do' locally, in an area they describe as 'grey' and 'boring'. Many are quick to dismiss the view that Newham has a particular problem with gangs; they say that there have always been territorial groups, that they sometimes fight to maintain their area, but it is just part of growing up in East London. Sometimes there is a 'flare up', but those involved in territorial 'gangs' thought that personal grudges and revenge were part of the problem. Similar to research in Tower Hamlets, young people did not talk about serious organised crime which is more likely to involve adults.<sup>42</sup>

For those who are, or have been involved in gangs and criminal activities, they say that trying to leave a gang and stop offending is difficult, particularly when they are without money, have status on the streets, and are under police surveillance. Other issues such as bereavement and experiencing violence at home or being a victim of street violence explain some of their on going anxieties and anger. Others continue to offend to obtain food and clothing, and shoplifting is also associated with drug use.

The effect of the policy on young people living in an area with a reputation for gangs was not the focus of this study, but young people talked about how they are affected as individuals. Research from other studies has identified, however, that young people living in areas with a reputation for 'gang' activity experience stigmatisation by police gang units, an experience not just confined to the UK but also world wide, and it has been found that a law enforcement approach to reducing gang activity has the reverse effect than intended and gang activity increases.<sup>43</sup>

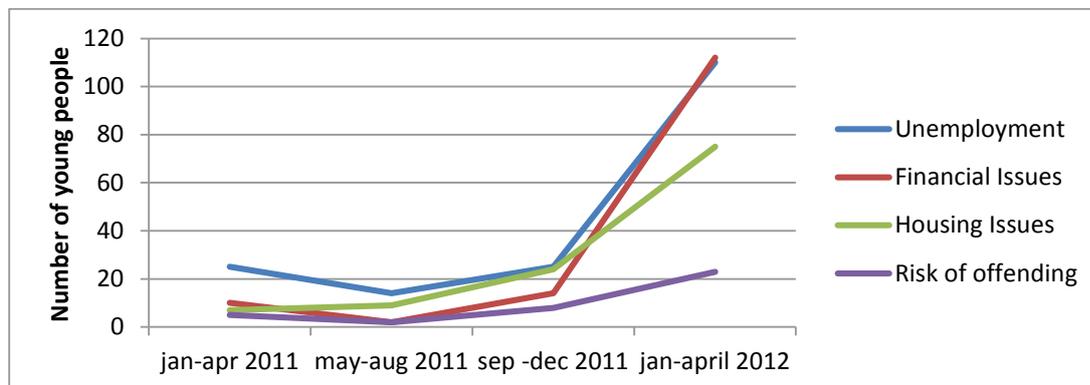
It is also notable that the effects of the economic recession and reduction in benefits for young people are having a real impact on young people's lives. Those young people who attend the training that is open to everyone, Open Access, and who have a one-to-one session with a youth worker have significantly more economic-related problems than previously, increases in housing problems, and an increased risk of offending is also evident.

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<sup>42</sup> Kintrea, K., Bannister, J., and Pickering, J. (2011), "It's just an area – everybody represents it': exploring young people's territorial behaviour in British cities', in B. Goldson (ed) *Youth Crisis? 'Gangs', territoriality and violence*, London: Routledge. See also, Pitts, J. (2008), *Reluctant gangsters: the changing face of youth crime*, Cullompton: Wilan.

<sup>43</sup> See for example, Youth Justice Board (2007), *Groups, gangs and weapons*, London: Youth Justice Board. Squires, P. (2011), 'Young people and 'weaponisation'', in B. Goldson (ed) *Youth Crisis? 'Gangs', territoriality and violence*, London: Routledge, pages 144-160. Smithson, H., Ralphs, R., and P. Williams (2013), 'Used and abused: the problematic usage of gang terminology in the United Kingdom and its implications for ethnic minority youth', *British Journal of Criminology*, 53,1: 113-128.

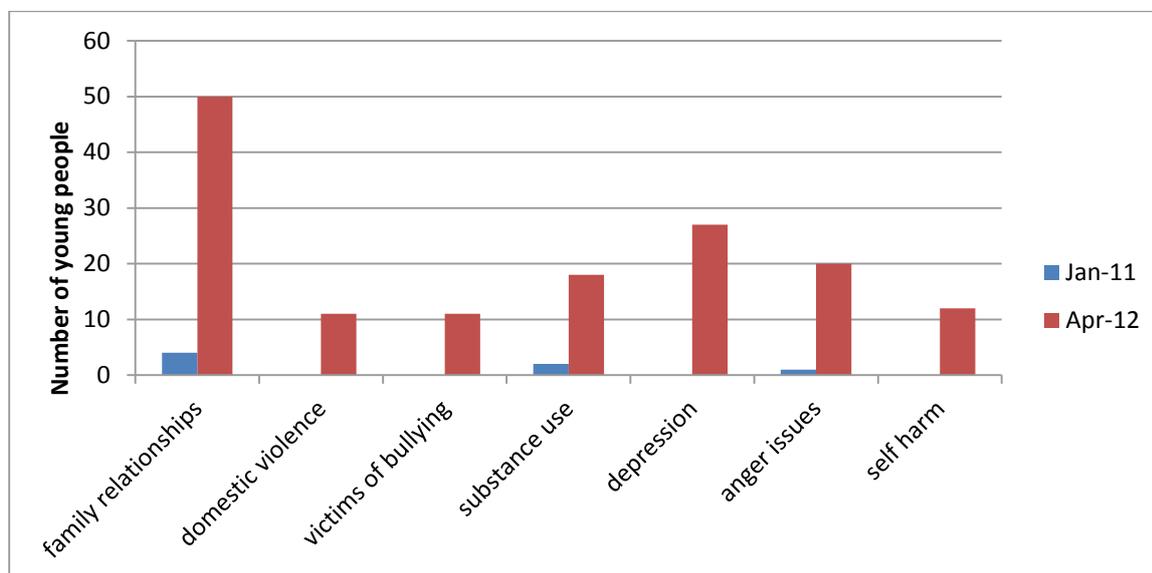
**Figure 6.2 Presenting problems, Open Access**



Note: FFP was closed for most of August 2011 and this explains a dip in presenting problems during the May – August 2011 quarter.

The emotional affects of these added pressures on young people are apparent from the increase in anger, inter-personal conflicts as well as self-abuse, suggesting a rise in mental health problems. These young people attending voluntarily to learn to box or take up martial arts are experiencing problems in April 2012 which were not apparent in January 2011; for example, domestic violence, bullying, depression, and self harm. The rise in problematic family relationships, substance misuse and anger issues are all notable, as the diagram 6.3 below illustrates.

**Figure 6.3 Presenting emotional and relationship problems, Open Access**



These problems are responded to within FFP or referrals are made to other services which include housing, mental health, and employment agencies. FFP has 28 members of staff that includes a manager, youth workers, education and training staff, and coaching staff, 9 of whom are women and 19 men. The stability of the staff, with low staff turnover, means that staff often have long standing relationships with partner agencies. FFP also invites partners to their premises to meet the staff and see the boxing ring and gym, and to their regular events when celebrity boxers and martial arts

specialists talk to young people. This continuity of staff also assists the development of positive relationships with partners.

## **6.4 Fight for Peace: the significance of its good reputation**

### **6.4.1 Partners**

The views and experiences of those who made referrals to FFP and those who FFP made referrals to were sought for this study. The willingness of partners to participate in the research, even though they are very busy, was the first indication of the high opinion they have of FFP, described by one partner as *'one of its kind in LBN'* (London Borough of Newham).

The high opinion of FFP is rooted in:

- Staff professionalism; their ability to act as male role models, the quality of the relationships with young people, their high expectations of young people, and the useful feedback they give about young people. Staff are well-organised, return telephone calls, and efficient.
- The flexibility of being able to have impromptu one-to-one sessions with a young person if they are having a *'bad day'*.
- Young people who attend job interviews are well-prepared, polite, realistic about their chances of a job offer and positive, and this gives a very good impression about FFP as a well-run organisation.
- A belief in the value of young people participating in boxing and martial arts, and an appreciation that young people are trained to a high standard, and given opportunities to compete. Coaches are able to inspire and motivate young people through their passion for boxing and martial arts.
- The sport and youth leadership enable agencies to positively *'sell'* FFP to parents, without having to explain the need to improve their child's bad behaviour and attitude.
- Regularly receiving a newsletter about the achievements of young people in Newham and Rio, and its international dimension.

As a consequence, partners are very keen that FFP succeeds, and those that receive referrals say that they *'go the extra mile for young people from FFP.'*

With respect to the impact of FFP on the lives of young people opinions vary; some school teachers attribute improvements in school grades and behaviour, as well as young people turning away from a gang culture and being good role models to younger school students, to their attendance at FFP. Others thought that FFP works well for some groups but for others their behaviour is no different outside FFP. Some thought that the training is too serious and difficult, and that there is not enough work done with young men about their attitudes towards women. In all these cases, however, these agencies continue to refer young people to FFP.

Agencies working with young offenders and those affiliated to gangs thought that FFP staff are excellent role models for young people, and that they are able to relate to them. In interviews young people confirmed this; they are positive about their relationships with FFP staff, and value having someone they feel able to talk to.

## 6.5 The Five Pillars model

### 6.5.1 Attendees and attendance

In 2012 a total of 1031 young people attended FFP of whom 82% were young men and 18% young women. Most of these young people were Black (42%), Asian (15%), white Other (14%)(mostly Continental Europeans), white British (13%), and dual Heritage (9%).

The majority of young people were aged between 17 and 25 years old (see figure 6.4 showing Open Access ages), an age group who are often difficult to engage with as they are post compulsory education, who feel 'too old' for youth clubs, and are described as a neglected group.<sup>44</sup>

The literature suggests that the longer young people are engaged in a sports programme and the more frequently they attend, the more likely the intervention will impact upon their lives.<sup>45</sup> With a rolling programme there is a clear start date but the end date can be less obvious as young people may take 'time out' for a few months to prepare for school examinations or to attend short college courses, for example. The diagram below gives a snap shot of attendance between January 2011 and June 2012. During this time 888 young people attended the Open Access programme of whom 82% were male, and 18% female, and the overwhelming majority (87%) 17 years and over. The largest ethnic groups were black (41%) and Asian (16%).

Attendance is entirely voluntary and 389 young people did not stay after one month. For at least six months 209 young people continued to participate, and 116 continued for a year or more. Of these young people, 82% are active participants, that is, they have attended 24 times or more. FFP therefore has a core group of active participants who are 87% male, almost all are 17 years and over (97%), and the most common ethnic groups are; 51% black, 9% Asian, and 9% dual heritage.

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<sup>44</sup> The Barrow Cadbury Foundation set up an enquiry into the lives of those 16 -25 years and found that they received fewer services than younger age groups. Jones, G. (2005), *'The thinking and behaviour of young adults (aged 16-25)'* Literature review for the Social Exclusion Unit, London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

<sup>45</sup> See for example; Coalter, F. (2007), *A wider social role for sport*. London: Routledge.

**Figure 6.5 Participation rates: January 2011 to June 2012**



**Note:** some young people will have registered less than a year ago and less than six months ago and therefore are not taken into account. Thus, there will be more young people attending FFP than this diagram suggests.

### **6.5.2 Personal development**

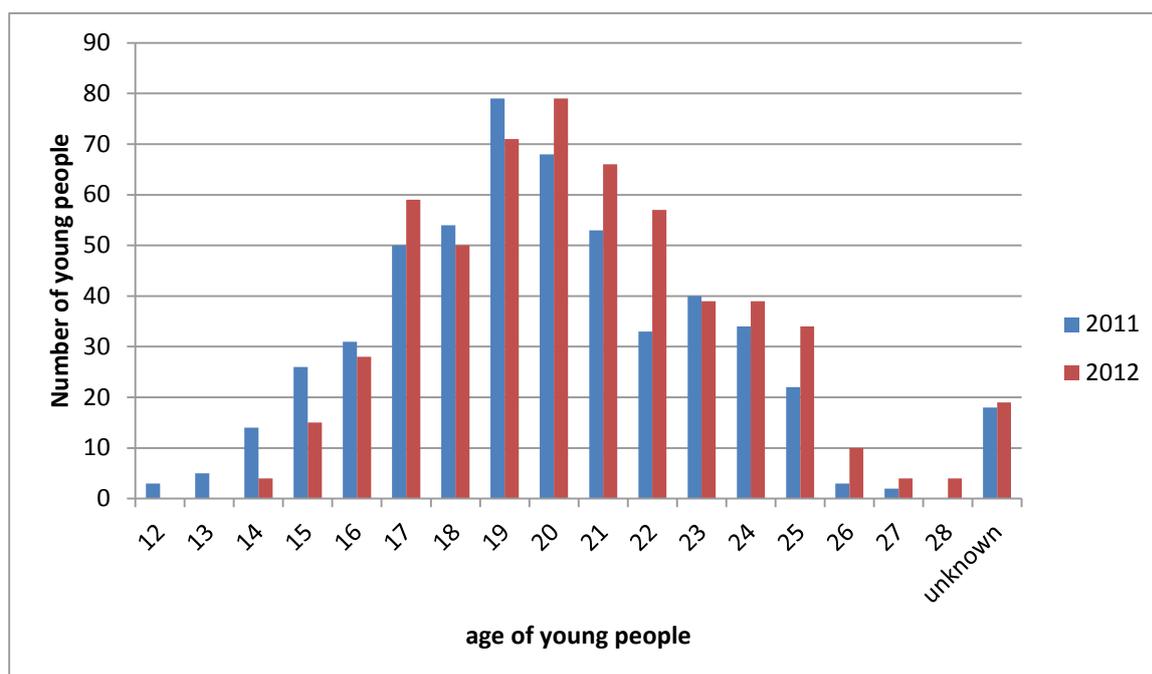
Young people who attend boxing, martial arts, and gym sessions have to attend monthly personal development sessions. These sessions cover a variety of topics relevant to their lives and include visits by well-known sports personalities, and presentations about their rights, about 'stop and search' by the police, sexual health and intimate relationships, for example. These sessions enable young people to make better informed decisions about their lives and also to be inspired and motivated to achieve. In interviews young people said that those who are most motivational are successful athletes who have grown up in similar disadvantaged conditions as themselves, experienced similar problems and had overcome them. One young man explains:

*'they're real good especially when they bring famous fighters and stuff like that, they say their whole life stories and then it gets everyone hyped up like 'yeah that guy is sick' stuff like that. Yeah it's cool... especially last PD a UFC fighter came... and he's from where I'm from ... he's had a couple of fights, won some, lost some but he's still up there. And he said how he got kicked out of school, his mum had schizophrenia, his dad wasn't really there, yeah it was inspirational definitely.... Yeah, and he's from the same part, it's like nothing's impossible if you just put your mind to it.'* (Male, 17)

### **6.5.3 Boxing and martial arts**

The chart below (figure 6.4) provides a profile of 539 young people who attended the Open Access programme in 2011 and 575 young people who attended in 2012. Overall, there is a shift towards more young people in their 20s attending in 2012, and fewer aged 16 years and under.

**Figure 6.4 Age profile of Open Access attendees in 2011 & 2012**



Note: data are missing for approximately 11% of participants.

The self-completion questionnaires analysed for this report were conducted in 2011 and the 2011 monitoring data is analysed in more depth.

All young people participate in boxing, martial arts and/or take the 'Fighting Fit' programme in the gym and sport is integral to how FFP makes a difference to the lives of young people.

One defining characteristic of the FFP model is that young people are encouraged to '*aim to be the best in all we do*', and some young people chose to compete in boxing and martial arts. To realise this aim high quality coaches are employed who are, or have been, champions themselves and this inspires young people, and makes them feel valued.

The high standard of coaching influences: the reputation of FFP, encourages young people to excel, and makes young people proud to be associated with an organisation that produces champions.

There are currently 16 amateur boxing competitors; 12 amateur and 3 semi-professional Muay Thai competitors; and, one mixed martial arts amateur competitor.

#### **6.5.4 Education**

The Pathways programmes, module 1 and module 2 are designed to enable young people to learn basic numeracy and literacy skills and are designed for those who have left school without any qualifications. They are typically a disaffected group and have 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) status.

Between April 2010 and June 2012 66 young people attended either module 1 (46 young people) or module 2 (20 young people) of the pathways programme. Of these young people 12 attended module 1 and progressed to module 2, and one person repeated module 1. A total of 53 young people

therefore attended the pathways programme during this period. Of these young people, 41 (77%) were male and 12 (23%) female, and the overwhelming majority 17 years and over (92%). Most were black (64%) or white British (15%). For 19 young people who recently completed a module 1 or 2 programme, progression data six months after the completion of the course were not available at the time of the research.

One of the biggest challenges for staff is motivating young people to become willing learners. This is achieved through the one-to-one sessions, participating in sport, and conversations staff have with young people about the importance of educational qualifications for their future. Encouraging young people to complete the course and sit the examination at the end is difficult, but the average pass rate for literacy between April 2010 and June 2012 was 76%, and 73% for numeracy. Young people are often delighted with the certificates they receive, and for many it is the first time that they have a formal qualification.

Some young people decide to progress with their education:

- 9 young people signed up for the module 2 pathway s programme
- 6 young people had a college place six months after completing their module 1
- 4 young people attended college after they completed their module 2.

Another indicator of how young people changed during their attendance on the pathways courses are the significant reductions in those who were NEET, offended, and took illegal drugs.

**Table 6.1 Young people attending Pathways Education programmes: April 2010 to June 2012 (n= 66)**

	Start of module (Number of yp)	End of module (Number of yp)	Reductions % (Number of yp)
NEET status	48	13	73% (35)
Offending (known to criminal justice system)	16	4	75% (12)
Taking illegal drugs	12	6	50% (6)

A young person who used and dealt in drugs prior to attending FFP explains the significance of attending the pathways programme, together with the one-to-one sessions for getting him back into education:

*'like I said, it built up my confidence and helped prepare me for going back into college, so it didn't seem so foreign to me despite the fact I wasn't in education for two whole years. ... I would probably say FFP has probably been one of the most solid foundations I had to start back off from, 'cause it all did start from FFP from the one-to-one sessions to getting back into college, it all did start from right here at this building.'* (Male, 18)

Of the 16 young people known to the Youth Offending Team (YOT), one offended for the first time whilst on the pathways programme and three young people previously known to the YOT re-offended during or after attending pathways. Two of the three repeat offenders were involved in the August 2011 riots in London, and one was convicted of a robbery. The first time offender was charged with possession of a firearm.

#### **6.5.5 Job training & work access**

The staff who run the pathways programmes are also heavily involved in finding work placements and enabling young people to apply for work. Young people are able to get work experience at FFP by volunteering as assistant support staff and coaches. At the end of their module 1, 10 young people volunteered at FFP, and seven young people at the end of module 2. These opportunities provide valuable continuity for young people.

Although it is increasingly difficult to find work, young people who attended the pathways courses have an impressive track record in obtaining employment:

- 21 (46%) who attended module 1 found employment at the end of the programme.
- For those who had finished the programme more than six months previously (37 young people), 12 (32%) were in work.
- For module 2, of the 20 young people on the programme, five young people found employment and of the 10 young people who had graduated six months previously six young people (60%) were in employment.

A popular course is run by an international bank in Canary Wharf. Young people from the pathways courses and those who have one-to-one sessions can participate. In 2011, 67 young people attended, and in the first six months of 2012, 71 young people attended. The courses are held at the bank and young people learn how to write CVs, interview skills and about the working culture. In interviews young people said that they found the whole experience *'out of this world'*. Indeed, young people visit a large and splendid high-rise building situated in a modern and wealthy area and staff, who give their time voluntarily, are obviously from a 'different world' to the young people, yet they treat them with respect. Young people are appreciative of being well-treated and gain new insights into 'what's possible' to achieve.

Local employers such as the airport also work closely with FFP staff to give young people opportunities to apply for work, and a local employment brokerage agency is a useful and active partner.

FFP pay close attention to the needs of young people. This is an important aspect of their impact upon the lives of young people; for example, young people often have few clothes, and none appropriate for attending job interviews. Bags of clothes are kept in the corner of a room for those who are preparing for interviews, and these types of practices avoid young people feeling embarrassed or inadequate.

#### **6.5.6 Youth support services**

FFP provides a non-threatening opportunity for young people who are attracted by the boxing and martial arts to receive support to increase their potential. Young people register when they first arrive and are asked to give information about any concerns they have (Level One profiling). Using this

information some young people are invited to attend one-to-one sessions which occur three times a year (Level Two profiling), whilst others are identified for more intensive casework.

In 2011 of those attending during a profiling period, the overwhelming majority had a one-to-one session; for example, in one period in 2011, 68% (100 young people) met with a youth worker, and in one period in 2012, 74% (111 young people).

In 2010, 21 young people who registered for the Open Access programme started intensive casework and in 2011 this more than doubled to 49 young people. These young people may be using illegal drugs, offenders, be affiliated to gangs or depressed and self-harming. Other young people who attend the pathway sessions also receive more intensive one-to-one sessions or casework, and a total of 41 young people in 2010 and 65 young people in 2011 started casework sessions. The intensive work typically lasts 3 months, but this time period is extended for those with persistent problems.

**Table 6.2 Casework 2010 and 2011: young people who are offending and affiliated to gangs**

	Start of casework (Number of yp)	End of casework (Number of yp)	Reduction % (number)
Offending and known to Youth Offending team	27	6	78% (21)
Affiliated to gangs	11	4	64% (7)
Joined gangs during casework period		2	

Note: some of these young people who are active offenders and affiliated to gangs are still in contact with FFP staff; some are in prison, for example.

Although the numbers are small, a number of observations can be made about those with an offending history. Firstly, that their offences were predominantly violent, and a significant number used weapons. Secondly, those who continued to offend were less likely to be attending the evening Open Access programme where the main training sessions occur. Of the seven who ceased to be affiliated to a gang, four voluntarily attended the Open Access sessions, one started an education course, and there is no information on the other two young people. Thirdly, the two young people who joined a gang during their time at FFP are difficult to engage with and have recently joined FFP. Their casework at the time of the research was ongoing.

Youth workers are clear that it takes time to engage with some young people, particularly if they have a history of offending and troubled relationships with adults. The youth workers use the gym with a young person and work with them on their fitness and strength as a way to encourage them to 'open up', before they address their problematic behaviour.

Although the numbers are small, the findings suggest that participating in boxing and martial arts and/or the gym have a key role in affecting young people's offending behaviour, particularly if they attend Open Access.

### **6.5.7 Youth Leadership**

The youth leadership pillar is embedded into all aspects of the FFP programme and young people elected to the Youth Council for a two year period take their responsibilities seriously. They are trained to run meetings, to make presentations, and to talk to the media, for example. They liaise with other young people to find out if they have any issues they would like raised at youth council meetings. Half of those who attended Open Access, and completed a questionnaire, said that they talk to youth council members. A quarter (25%) said that they do not talk to youth council members, and 21% said they did not know who they were. These findings suggest that youth council members are not communicating with just under half of those who attend Open Access.

Youth council members host visitors who come to FFP, give presentations at public events, and act as representatives of FFP when requested by staff. They said that their training was helpful (90%, 11 young people) and they felt able to carry out these tasks always (6 young people) or sometimes (5 young people). Many said that they personally benefitted from having these responsibilities and were more confident approaching people that they did not know, and understanding other's point of view.

The overwhelming majority of youth council members felt that they could make a real difference to FFP (90%), and at meetings staff took issues raised by young people seriously all (55%) or some (45%) of the time.

Young people also have a high profile as coaches and support workers and in 2012 eight were working as assistants. Their progression is a positive signal to newer members, and they act as role models because they are seen as having a similar background and experiences.

## **6.6 Positive outcomes: progression within a pillar and inter-connections between the Five Pillars**

Within each pillar there are opportunities for young people to progress. A pattern noted by staff and young people is that young people start by attending the gym and when they are fitter and more confident they train as a boxer or try Muay Thai. Muay Thai is considered to be the most difficult contact sport and some young people try boxing first and then join the Muay Thai classes. Young people can then choose to progress to be assistant coaches and take fitness and coaching qualifications, and some progress further and become FFP staff.

Similarly, 12 young people have progressed from module 1 to module 2 in the education pathways. These young people can then volunteer as support staff.

One of the advantages of the Five Pillars model is that it offers an holistic approach to young people to meet their multiple needs. In 2012, between February and June, 170 young people on the Open Access programme attended one-to-one sessions, and if they required more intensive support internal referrals were made, as shown below:

**Figure 6.6 Internal referrals from Open Access programme: February - June 2012**



The internal referrals work both ways. Young people who join the Open Access programme can move to more intensive programmes, as shown in the diagram above, and young people who are referred to the pathways programme by agencies such as schools and youth offending team (YOTs), can attend the Open Access programme. In 2011, over two thirds (68%) attending intensive programmes said that they would either definitely keep attending FFP or might keep attending once their course had finished. Attendance data shows that in 2012, 63 young people who attend Open Access started on the pathways or casework programmes. As described earlier, the findings suggest that this option is highly significant for supporting those wishing to stop offending and who wish to leave gangs. This suggests that an inclusive provision is more effective for achieving sustained results than a ‘gangs’ or ‘offending’ focused intervention alone.

It seems that the movement of young people between pillars is a particularly effective practice. At the end of education, employability or casework sessions young people are not just cut adrift but rather their attendance can continue and the support they receive ongoing, by participating on the Open Access programme. These young people also have the opportunity to become youth council members and take on a youth leadership role. Young people who join voluntarily for their ‘love’ of boxing and martial arts may have a host of ‘hidden’ problems and the FFP approach can respond to these young people too.

## 7. Assessing the FFP model

The FFP vision has two aims:

1. To overcome division and violence
2. To promote the potential of young people

The FFP model incorporates the values, organisational structure and practices to achieve these goals and the research tests the assumptions upon which they rest.

The research findings from London and Rio are consistent and are sometimes used inter-changeably to discuss how the FFP model works, with what effect, and for whom. Many of the quotes from young people are from London. This is simply because we were able to have these interviews transcribed.

The first section discusses boxing and martial arts as an attractive sport for young people; the second section describes the principles and practices of the FFP model and explains the theories and mechanisms that account for how the activities make a difference to the lives of young people; and, a third section discusses where the programme does not appear to have made a difference to a young person and any harm that may arise from attending FFP.

### 7.1 Attracting young people

A key assumption of the FFP model is that boxing and martial arts are attractive to young people. The research has found that boxing and martial arts, as well as use of a gym, are powerful 'hooks':

For the sessions which are open to all young people:

- Over 90% in Rio and 85% in London said that they joined FFP for the boxing and martial arts
- Over half the young people in Rio and over three quarters of those in London joined to get fit

Young people also find the values that inform how FFP staff work attractive and factors related to FFP as an organisation, including:

- The symbolic significance of FFP buildings as safe places
- Free training and education classes makes it possible for young people to attend
- The friendliness, warmth, and approachability of staff; and,
- Use of professional coaches and high standard of training, are all part of the attraction of FFP.

Indeed, the overwhelming majority of young people interviewed in London were recommended FFP by a friend or sibling. The reputation of FFP amongst young people as a friendly place that provides high quality fitness, boxing and martial arts training for free, extends across London.

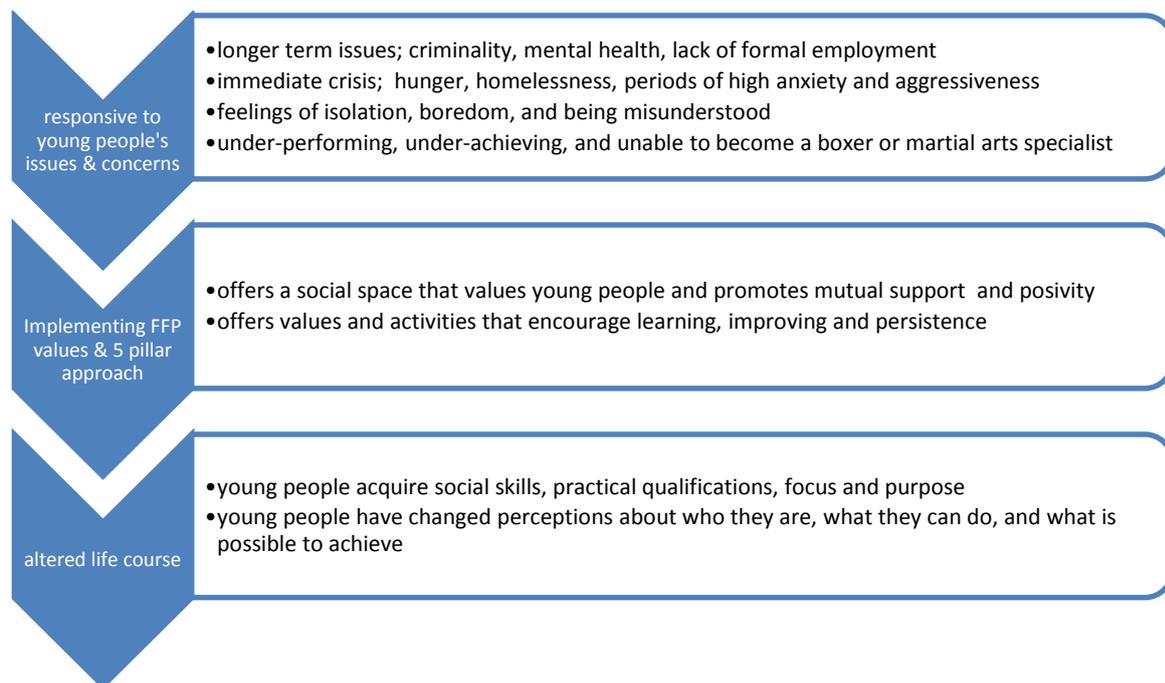
The educational opportunities are very appealing to some. In Rio, the education programmes are attractive to young people and, for those eligible to attend, it is for education (over 90%), rather than sport (less than 20%) that they join FFP. This finding reflects the Brazilian education system which makes it difficult for students to return to school and gain educational qualifications when they are older than 16 years. It demonstrates the ability of FFP to engage with older learners, and their responsiveness to the situation of young people who require formal qualifications. The friendly and supportive 'can do' atmosphere creates a positive learning environment for these young people.

Making friends is another reason for joining FFP. In London a third said that they joined to make friends and in Rio a half of those who signed up to the Open Access programme.

## 7.2 Principles and practices of the FFP model

The FFP model is holistic, yet individually tailored to meet the needs of different types of young people. The FFP approach can be summarised as:

**Figure 7.1 Fight for Peace approach**



### 7.2.1 How do young people progress?

Young people who attend FFP talked about how they have decided to make changes to their lives. Some are motivated to change prior to joining FFP and others find that the experience of attending has made them question their existing life-style and their future goals.

One reason why young people attend and then almost immediately 'quit' is because they are not really motivated to make the effort required to make changes to their lives. One young man explains:

*'I came here through my friend... But that time I wasn't really into sports, I was like smoking and so I came in first, I came in for a few months and I found it too difficult so I quit <chuckles>. After a year I thought I need to do something about my life so I came back and I joined it permanently.'* (Male, 22)

Young people also explained how support from staff motivated them to continue when they found it difficult to attend due to their home responsibilities and violence in the area. One mother explains:

*'Many times I thought about quitting because sometimes it was raining, other times there were shootings and I had to bring her [baby] along, but the staff was always supportive of me and emphasized how important it was that I attended, that I could not give up, that the fight was*

*long but that victory would come. What make me not give up were the conversations that I had with the staff members and the citizenship classes.’ (Female, 25)*

### **7.2.2 Working with active members**

This research, like previous studies, has also found that young people typically strive towards conventionality and wish to be integrated into their society. Young people generally wish to conform and aspire to have secure paid employment, a house and family.<sup>46</sup>

The success of FFP rests on being able to support and guide young people towards achieving their desire to conform to mainstream values and lifestyles. For many young people this means providing them with opportunities to learn appropriate social skills, to acquire formal educational qualifications and work experience, and choosing a value-base that is an alternative to one which involves law-breaking and participating in an informal and illegal economy.

Young people describe how they ‘drift’ into criminality at an early age, and find themselves attracted to the economic and social benefits of drug trafficking, prostitution, and other illegal activities. These young people typically find these life styles difficult to sustain, yet difficult to leave.<sup>47</sup>

One young man describes how his criminality started and then escalated before he began to doubt the tenability of his ongoing offending behaviour;

*‘... because I didn’t have no support it made me start doing criminal activities to be able to support myself ... I’ve found myself in silly predicaments, getting in trouble with the law, and when I realised that it’s actually come to a stage where I need to change...’ (Male, 20)*

A common related theme, reflected by this young man’s comments, is that having decided that they need to do things differently, young people do not know ‘how to’;

*I would say when I was in jail, that’s when I went to know that I wanted to change. But then I was thinking how, I didn’t know how to... (Male, 17)*

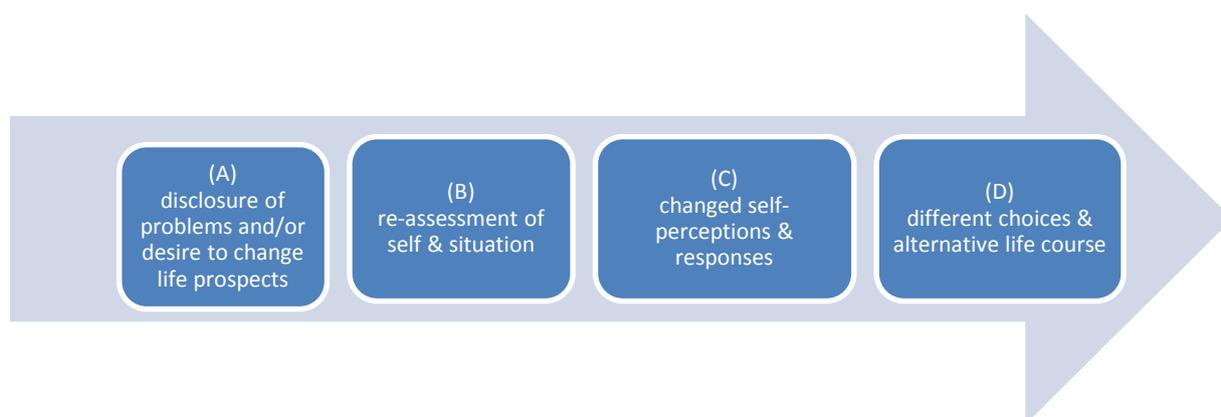
Research findings from interviews with staff and young people show how FFP supports young people both emotionally and practically through these two key processes, surfacing and articulating doubts about their current life style and by giving young people opportunities to learn how to make changes to their lives. This ‘core’ process can be summarised as:

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<sup>46</sup> Bottoms, A., Shapland, J., Costello, A., et al., (2004), ‘Towards desistance: theoretical underpinnings for an empirical study’, *Howard Journal*, 43,:368-389. Haigh, Y. (2009), ‘Desistance from crime: reflections on the transitional experiences of young people with a history of offending’, *Journal of Youth Studies*,12,3: 307-322.

<sup>47</sup> Barry, M. (2012), ‘Youth transitions: from offending to desistance’, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 13,1: 121-136.

**Figure 7.2 Core theory of change: how FFP makes a difference to the lives of young people**



This core ‘theory of change’ is evident across each of the Five Pillars. Staff and young people work together through each of the stages, A, B, C & D. This is an ongoing process; new concerns emerge and young people adapt and modify their self-perceptions leading to a different ‘mindset’ and behaviours. One of the strengths of the FFP model is that it allows for staff and young people work together *‘for as long as it takes’*. Moving away from a life style that involves crime or drug trafficking or prostitution creates new problems, and this flexibility and patience is a key reason for the success of FFP. For many young people this can involve revisiting A, B, and C several times, and some revise their goals (D).

The activities in each of the pillars and personal development interact and reiterate this process of change. Thus, coaches do not simply train young people to box, educational workers do not just deliver a curriculum or course. Youth workers train with young people and coaches respond to young people’s personal ‘crises’, for example. All staff are involved in reinforcing the values of FFP and contribute to different pillars. In London some of the youth workers use the gym and their *‘body definition’* earns them respect, as well as their ability to understand young people, and as a consequence, young people listen to them. One young man’s comments are typical of others:

*‘Well you can just tell with [name of youth worker], because he’s big and muscly and that, you can just tell that he’s really fit and that, and I want the body and that, so you can tell he’s been through it all before, and I think he knows what he’s doing, so you sort of... learn off of him. ... Yeah, so you listen to someone like him... he knows how to help us.’ (Male, 16)*

Many causal chains are identified in the research which account for the different ways in which young people move through this core process of change and achieve positive outcomes. The following findings explain how the FFP model is used to effectively perform these tasks:

### **7.2.1 Disclosure of problems and/or desire to change life prospects (A)**

In Rio and London almost three quarters of the Open Access young people feel able to talk to staff either all of the time or sometimes (73% in both Academies), with about 10% saying that they did not have problems. The rest said that they are unsure about talking to staff about their problems until they had attended for longer.

Thus, 90% of those who attend Open Access admit to having some problems and the overwhelming majority feel able to talk to the staff.

One strong theme, repeated by many young people during interviews, is the importance of the confidentiality of their conversations with their caseworker. This encourages them to talk more freely as one young man explains:

*'it's just good just to talk to someone about your problems because you know he's not going to tell anyone else, so it's just great.'* (Male, 16)

When young people talk about their problems with staff these conversations enable young people to reconsider their situation and to *'see things in a different way'*. This young man has a criminal history and complex problems and he describes how talking to his youth worker has helped him think about his position and how he could change it:

*'[name of youth worker] was my one-to-one mentor, a great guy... So you just put it all on the table and you sift through it a piece at a time. I remember we were talking about friends ... seriously made me think about all the people I knew around me, we talked about the future, the goals, where I saw myself... My main prerogative was to stay away from certain people ... I thought the only way I could do that was to lock myself in a hole for those three months in the summer. But [name of youth worker] has talked to me, he pointed me in different directions, he reflected, he empathised with me...'* (Male, 18)

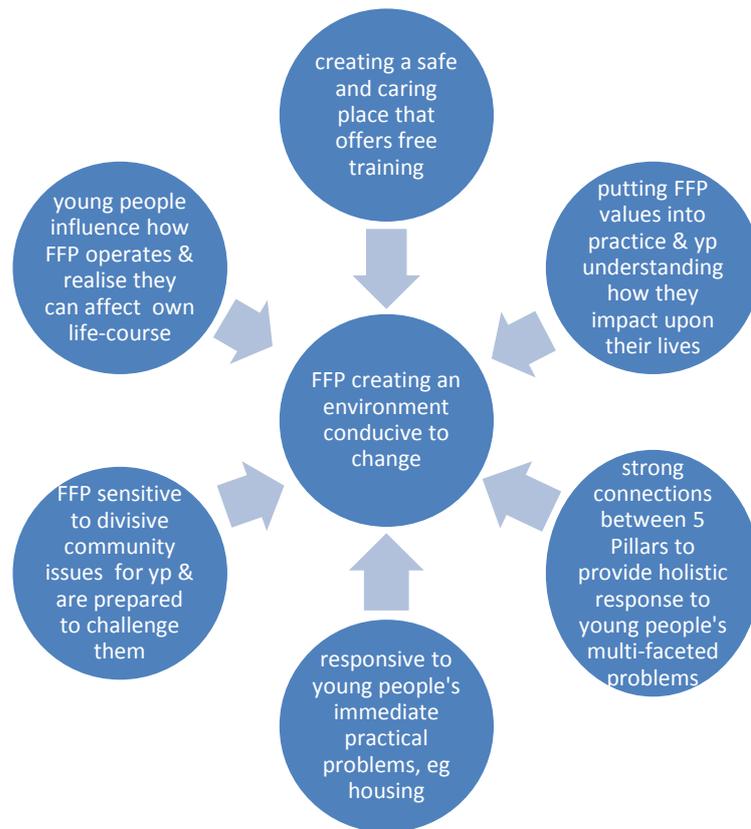
Another common theme is that young people join FFP for a specific reason and then find that there are other activities that they can join. This young woman came to FFP to alleviate her boredom and is now training to improve her body shape, and has started education courses:

*'I'm going to say I like FFP because it's changed my life. Because three months ago, I'm just at home, boring, doing nothing, and yeah my friend is training here, she told me to come here to do something, training... I do Muay Thai as well, boxing, fitness, sometimes <pause> I'm training Muay Thai and fitness the same day. I'm doing that because I need to change my body. I'm doing the Pathway programme...'* (Female, 25)

Staff commented on how young people often do not take responsibility for their own actions. In their experience young people are inclined to blame others or the 'system' for their illegal 'predicaments', aggressive behaviour, and their 'not in education, employment, or training' (NEET) status. Part of the reinterpretation of a young person's situation therefore includes 'taking responsibility' for their situation.

The research has identified a number of causal mechanisms that explain the conditions conducive to young people making changes to their lives. In the diagram below critical organisational features of FFP that provide an environment conducive to making changes are summarised.

**Figure 7.3** Creating an environment conducive to making changes; critical FFP organisational features



Particular practices and responses by young people arise from the organisational characteristics of FFP described in the above diagram. These factors outline in the diagram below facilitate young people's willingness to disclosure their concerns and uncertainties and express their hopes for the future, and desires to improve their life chances.

**Figure 7.4** Factors conducive to disclosure of problems and desire to make change



Thus, when young people are responsive to these FFP organisational features and practices, the research has found that young people are motivated to alter their life-course and reassess ‘who they are’ and their situation.

### **7.2.2. Reassessment of self and situation (B)**

Young people explained that since attending FFP they have re-interpreted their lives and re-considered their position. This process of young people shifting their self-awareness, and understanding that they can affect their own lives, have been found to be significant milestones in young people’s desistance from illegal activities.<sup>48</sup>

To reconstruct their ‘life’ young people need in the first instance, to problematise things that were previously unproblematic, reassess their position and then to make different choices from the ‘logic’ of their newly interpreted situation.<sup>49</sup>

The following accounts by young people show how the ‘discipline’ of boxing and martial arts, as well as conversations, encourage young people to consider alternative possibilities. They also show that FFP staff encourage and motivate young people to believe that change is possible.

<sup>48</sup> Bottoms, A., Shapland, J., Costello, A., et al., (2004), ‘Towards desistance: theoretical underpinnings for an empirical study’, *Howard Journal*, 43,4: 368-389. Barry, M. (2010), ‘Youth transitions: from offending to desistance’, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 13,1: 121-136.

<sup>49</sup> Haigh, Y. (2009), ‘Desistance from crime: reflections on the transitional experiences of young people with a history of offending’, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 12,3: 307-322. Sampson, A., and Themelis, S., (2009) ‘Working in the community with young people who offend’, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 12,2: 121-137.

This young man explains how the discipline of boxing and martial arts assists people to reflect on their life and this helps them to find out who they are:

*'It would just make people more aware of themselves, and obviously it would give people the confidence to question things more, that's what I would do, what discipline does. If you know yourself, and discipline makes you know yourself well...'* (Male, 24)

The discipline of boxing and martial arts shows young people how they can learn through making mistakes and this gives them more confidence to admit that they are wrong which enables young people to rectify their errors and this leads to making improvements to their lives:

*'FFP has given me more confidence to say, 'OK I'm wrong but show me how to do it right' sort of thing'* (Female, 17)

Young people talk about how the sport and one-to-one sessions together enable them to change their self-perceptions and reassess their situation:

*'I used to get angry easily but by doing Muay Thai and speaking with [name of youth worker] who is one of the mentors, it made me grow up and change my mind, and see things in a different way.'* (Male, 20)

Some identified the friendliness and kindness of staff and young people at FFP as a motivator to change their situation. One young man explains:

*'The friends outside that I used to have, they used to be on smoke and stuff like that, as with the friends in here, they're not like that... now it's different because I'm trying to make a change in myself, and in FFP they're just friendly, very friendly, they're kind people and I like them...'* (Male, 15)

One of the reasons why many young people are able to make these changes is because FFP offers them a friendly and safe space during a time when they are questioning and re-examining their lives.<sup>50</sup> These considerations add uncertainty to their difficult lives and the secure and caring environment assists young people make these changes, and offers them opportunities to learn new skills. When young people have a sense of 'self efficacy' – a belief that they have skills to execute new skills<sup>51</sup> – they try new activities and this broadens their horizons and beliefs about 'what is possible'. Learning and realisation are two critical factors that link a young person's progress from doubting their situation and wanting to improve by re-evaluating themselves and their circumstances.

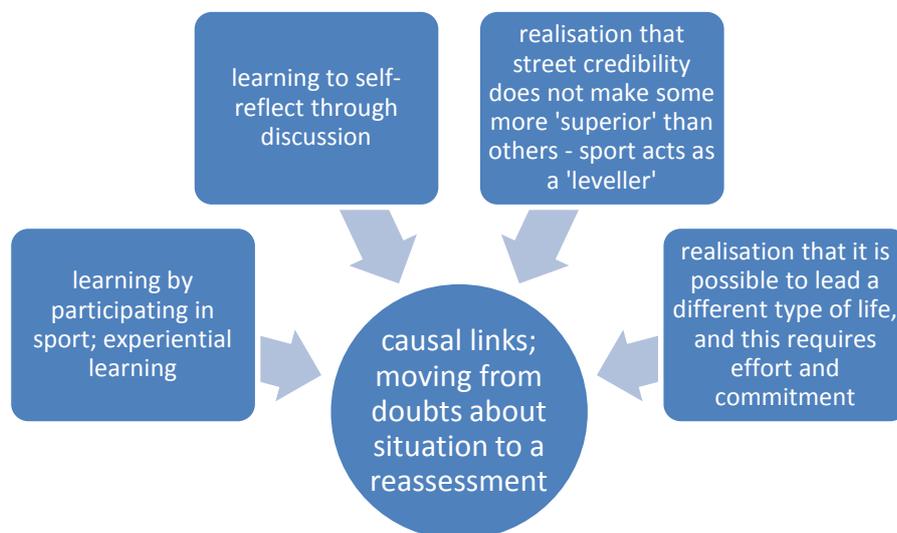
The diagram below summarises the practices identified in the research that give young people the awareness and skills to reassess their situation.

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<sup>50</sup> There is a large literature on 'youth transitions' documenting how adolescence is a time of uncertainty and self-examination, see for example, Furlong, A. and Cartmel, F. (1997), *Young People and Social Change*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

<sup>51</sup> Fox, K. (2000), 'The effects of exercise on self-perceptions and self-esteem' in eds. S. Biddle, K. Fox, S. Boutcher, *Physical activity and psychological well-being*, London: Routledge, pages 88-117.

**Figure 7.5 Critical factors that enable young people to assess and re-evaluate their situation**



This reassessment process by young people includes re-evaluating themselves, their relationships with significant others, as well as their future and how to attain their goals. These processes are described in the following section.

### **7.2.3 Different self-perceptions and responses (C)**

The research has found that since joining FFP many young people have reinterpreted their lives and take different actions leading to a reduction in division and violence and an increase in their potential, the two overarching aims of FFP.

Young people attending Open Access programmes said that they thought differently about their:

- health (67%), themselves (59%), their future (50%) what they want from life (49%) in London
- future (62%), health (56%), what they want from life (50%), and themselves (42%) in Rio

These changes are associated with an increased likelihood of preventing gang affiliation, committing crime and disrespecting someone. In London, where a young person felt differently about their future, what they wanted from life and themselves (33 young people):

- 85% said that they were less likely to be a member of a gang (compared to an average of 62%),
- 79% said that they were less likely to commit a crime (compared to a 62% average), and
- 70% said that they were less likely to disrespect someone (compared to a 62% average).

For those who said that they had stopped getting into trouble at school 70% felt differently about their future (compared to a 50% average).

For those who said that they had stopped getting into trouble on the streets 67% said that they felt differently about themselves (compared to a 59% average), and what they wanted out of life (59% compared to a 49% average).

For seven young people who said that they still got into trouble (at home, at school or the streets), only two felt differently about their future, three felt differently what they wanted out of life. However, four young people did feel differently about themselves - an indication that changes in their lives were taking place.

In addition, the overwhelming majority of young people attending Open Access programmes feel more positive about themselves since joining FFP, which may be necessary, although not sufficient conditions, for young people to make alternative life choices and achieve their potential. Young people who feel better about themselves typically feel more confident and motivated and these attributes can contribute to young people's willingness to learn new skills and try new activities:

- 87% in London, and 86% in Rio felt better about themselves

For young people attending intensive programmes:

- In Rio, the overwhelming majority feel better about themselves (92%), more confident (94%) and more motivated (84%)
- In London, two thirds feel better about themselves (66%), more confident (66%), and more motivated (66%)

One indicator of successfully reducing divisions is improvements in relationships. Almost three quarters (71%) of the young people in Rio who attended the Intensive group and completed the questionnaire (83 young people) said that they have improved relationships with their family, 28% said that they have not changed, and for one young person they have got worse.

In London less work is done with families; for example, in Rio there are routine home visits, whereas there are few such visits in London. However, the Intensive group in London were also asked about changes in their relationships with:

- their family; just under half said that they have improved family relationships (46%), that there is no difference since attending FFP for 43%, and family relationships are worse for four young people.
- The majority of young people (59%) said that they enjoyed better relationships with adults

Young people in London were also asked if they felt better about being a young woman or a young man, as the literature on young people's transitions has found that this is a source of anxiety and tension for young people, and one that inhibits change.<sup>52</sup> The majority of young people (62%) said that they feel better about being a young woman or man, and a third (33%) feel no different. In Rio young people attend courses which discuss gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, and disabilities. This knowledge is likely to give young people greater social awareness and assist young people better understand 'who they are'.

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<sup>52</sup> See for example, Archer, L., Hollingworth, S., and Halsall, A. (2007), "University's not for me - I'm a Nike person': urban, working-class young people's negotiations of 'style', identity and educational engagement', *Sociology*, 41:2, 219-237.

The contribution FFP has made to how young people think differently about themselves, and their subsequent actions can be attributed to the following:

- equal treatment, fairness and integration into the FFP 'family'
- discipline and skills of boxing and martial arts
- discussion, debate and articulating feelings
- increased realisation about 'what is possible'
- conflict resolution and peace-making skills
- learning to make new and positive friendships
- feeling safer on the streets

Each of these factors, which interact and are mutually reinforcing, are described in turn.

#### *7.2.3.1 Equal treatment, fairness and integration into the FFP 'family'*

A strong theme in the interviews is how young people, and in particular, those who feel unfairly treated at school and who experience racism and discrimination due to their ethnicity, feel treated equally and fairly at FFP. This is highly valued by young people.

Like many young people, this young man feels, and appreciates the harmony at FFP, and the absence of racism:

*'Yeah there's no racial prejudices in the club as well, as you can see there's a wide variety of pupils from different backgrounds so there is no racism, I can say myself there is no racism. It's like one big whole family.'* (Male, 17)

Young people feel respected and well-treated and therefore able to comply with the rules at FFP. They praised the non-authoritarian approach of staff and felt that this taught them to have positive relationships, learn how to 'talk openly', and how to respect others. One young man explains how he values the inclusive ethos at FFP and how young people respond by behaving respectfully:

*'the way they talk to you, the way they treat you, the way they coach you and then it's just the environment, I mean whatever you are outside, you come to FFP you are just a part of your family, you know? Nobody bullies, nobody tell, 'Oh you are good, oh you are bad' nobody tells, there are no racial comments, nobody tells, 'Oh what are you doing?' There are rules and you accept the rules.'* (Male, 20)

For young people one fairness issue is their integration into an ongoing training programme. New members appreciate working with established members. They find this motivational and easier for them to re-assess their situation, and become more involved:

*'They will show you how to do more things and if you come, they'll make you work with some of those that's been here for a long time, so you learn more... It makes you train, to put in effort in Muay Thai, to pay more attention to Muay Thai, than being outside with no good. .. Muay Thai takes out your anger.'* (Male, 17)

For cultural reasons boxing and martial arts are male dominated, and unsurprisingly a minority of women attend FFP. In both Academies specialist support is given to young women and staff offering this support commented on how they started by identifying with young women, their attributes and

competencies, to give them the confidence to participate. The experiences of young women are, positive despite their minority status, as these accounts illustrate:

This young woman values the non-judgemental approach:

*'I thought it was only for boys, but then when I came here, they changed my mind... when I came here, I learnt to listen to people a little more, I learnt to respect their opinions and their point of view, it's just like people treated me equally, they didn't care how old I am, they didn't care how I look, where I'm from, and that made me feel very good.'* (Female, 14)

Another young woman commented on how she feels well treated and respected:

*'I actually had a doubt of coming here because of the male environment but then I've been here and they're all nice and they're all protective... If you feel like men will come and talk to you disrespectful, they don't do that here, they're very respectful and everything.'* (Female, 15)

And this young woman explained how boxers are selected for training routines according to their fitness and ability, not gender:

*'They don't treat girls any differently to boys, because when we're doing pads and everything they do the same kind of combinations with us as they do with the boys. And it's more about ability than anything because if a bunch of girls are new coming into the gym, the coaches, one coach or two, take them through the basic steps of boxing and the same thing with boys, it's more about ability, how they treat them. So basically they will treat you for your level of fitness, so once you've progressed through your level of fitness they start to maybe push you harder I'd say.'* (Female, 17)

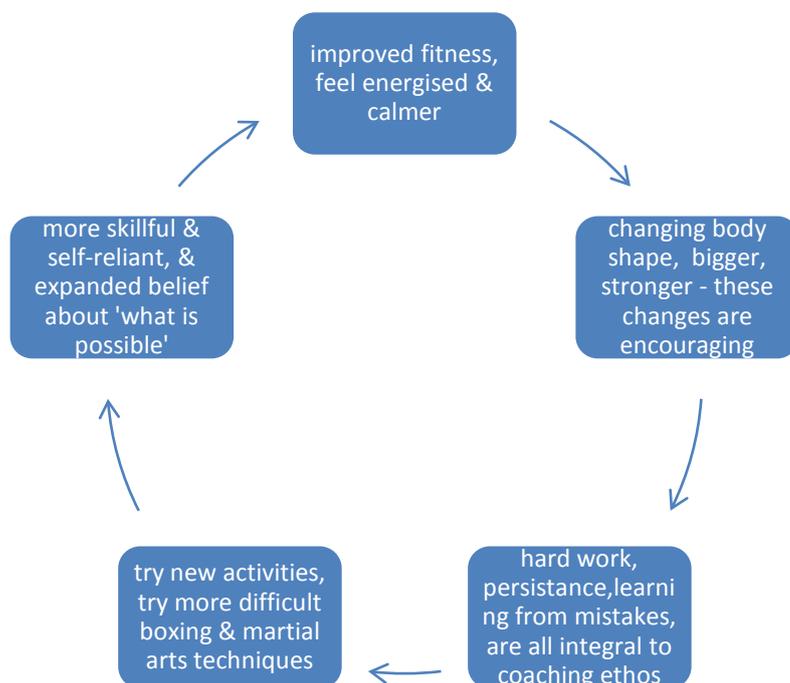
Another theme reflected in the interviews with young women is that FFP broadens their perspective about 'what is possible' for them as a young woman, and they realise that women can participate in a 'male' sport, and it benefits them too. This young woman is learning Muay Thai:

*'Yes, normally we girls in East London, we just care about beauty and clothes and go out, and for us, exercise is just for men, but they show it's different, not just for men. Because exercise is not just for being a nice body, I think inside is the most important, and the exercise can help the inside to feel better.'* (Female, 25)

### 7.2.3.2 *The 'discipline' and skills of boxing and martial arts*

The boxing and martial arts 'discipline' has a key role in explaining how young people alter their self-perceptions and reinterpret their situation which, in turn, motivates them to make changes to their lives. The following diagram summarises how the 'discipline' brings about changes.

**Figure 7.6 Boxing and martial arts driven virtuous circle**



The following accounts by young people describe these processes which enable a young person to learn a set of attributes and skills within a purposeful context of learning the ‘discipline’ of boxing and martial arts:

*‘I do gym and sometimes Muay Thai... it makes me better physically, like mentally as well innit? I’ve been more motivated instead of feeling lazy and that.’ (Male, 17)*

Through training young people learn how hard work and persistence enables them to improve at a greater rate. This young person describes how these experiences and values have made her mentally stronger and have impacted positively on her school work:

*‘the coaches try and push everyone to their limit, ... at first I didn’t like it because I was so knackered, but now if I can push past this I can get ... if people are pushing me I can get past it basically and it’s just made me feel like I’ve improved a lot more being pushed to my limits... now I try harder, especially when I don’t like things because before if I didn’t like anything I would just give up, .. but now I feel like I can do more.. Yeah I’d say it has especially when it comes to exams, ‘cause exams there’s a lot of stress ... I feel like I’m a lot calmer and I focus more on my studies’. (Female, 17)*

This young man gives a graphic explanation of how boxing requires self-reliance, a common theme in interviews:

*‘Boxing I just love it too much, I don’t have time to mess about because boxing is a sport where you can’t play, you’ve got to work, if you want to play at sport, you can’t play boxing. You can*

*play football, you can play cricket; boxing you can't play, because once you're in the ring, it's only you and that guy who wants to punch your head off your body, and that's it.'* (Male, 15)

When young people say that they feel better about themselves and more confident, these feelings are rooted in self-reliance and self-worth. This young woman emphasises how the discipline of boxing teaches self-reliance:

*'... whereas boxing, the only person you can rely on is yourself which I think is really important.'* (Female, 17)

By becoming more self-reliant and having a sense of self-belief, young people's accounts show how they are learning to take more responsibility for themselves and their actions. They describe how this self-belief is quite different to a 'cocky confidence' typical of many young people. One young man's comments are typical of others:

*'I think kids come in with like a vulgar, raging attitude, walking in, thinking they're all pompous and big-headed ... the first thing that you would learn is that you don't need to prove to anyone else that you can fight. As soon as you learn the skill or the art, you within yourself, you will believe within yourself. ... And I think that's the kind of ideology and a way of thinking that you get when you begin to do Muay Thai or boxing.'* (Male, 20)

Some young people link the self-motivation and persistence they learn from the 'discipline' to other aspects of their life including doing homework, and staying on at college and not dropping out:

*'Yeah, the Muay Thai has a big effect 'cause it teaches you that discipline, motivation to push on, the coaches and the staff members help you to push on and reach a goal not only in the sport but in your life ... discipline to stick with my studies, not to drop out and stuff like that...'* (Male, 21)

This young woman describes how she has learnt to be more focussed and how this skill enables her to prioritise her activities:

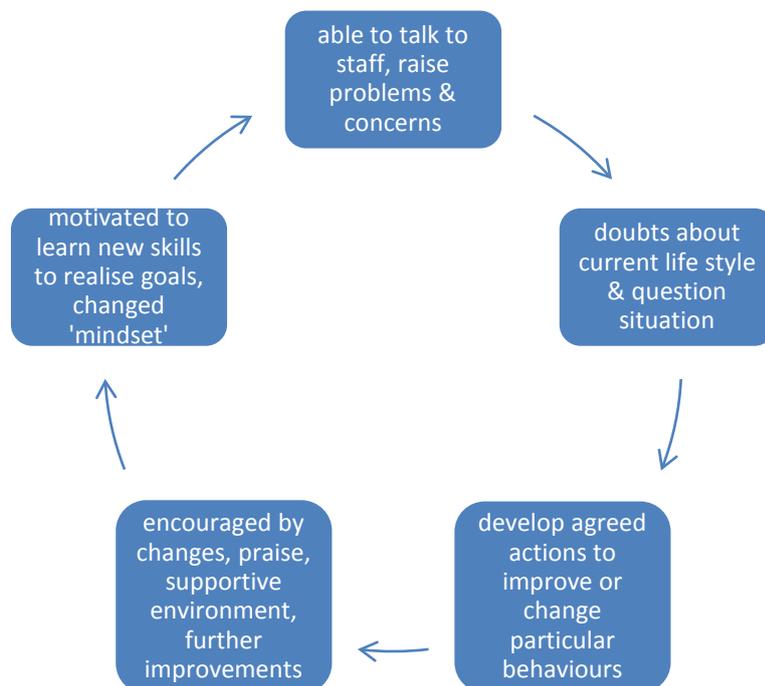
*'because boxing ... it's more about discipline, it's more about your skill more than anything... it gives you more discipline in your life so basically ... you sort of restrain yourself from doing maybe something bad or something like that, it just restrains yourself and it helps you prioritise.'* (Female, 17)

### 7.2.3.3 Discussion, debate and articulating feelings

The young people's accounts above also illustrate an overlap with the discussion virtuous circle which is described below. For some young people the discussion virtuous circle is as influential as sports, but a key finding is that the interaction of the two virtuous circles often produces the best results. The interaction provides more opportunities for young people to alter their self-perceptions and to occupy a social space that gives them a new 'logic' that gives rise to different decision-making and life courses.

The following describes the processes of change for the discussion virtuous circle:

**Figure 7.7 Discussion driven virtuous circle**



The following accounts by young people illustrate these processes.

Young people talk about how their shyness makes them feel isolated. This young man who is a promising boxer explained the benefit of conversations with a youth worker:

*'It's helpful, yeah, because it shows me from previous sheets, where I've improved, what I need to change or do... Meeting new people, I've learned to open up more to new people because I used to be like, myself, not really in contact much with other people.'* (Male, 17)

For those with complex needs, who are often offenders, weekly meetings are particularly helpful as this young man explains:

*'... we just basically go through the week, 'What have you done this week; what are your targets for next week?' Set little targets, that's what has been helping me as well, tick off targets what I will do during the week...'* (Male, 20)

Another young man explained, like others, how he tended to quit easily and the goal setting, as well as support from new friends, keeps him attending and helps other improvements, including stopping smoking:

*'I've got goals and I'm not intending to quit, just follow and they helped me really a lot, really inspired me and I found really good friends... I love this place, they really helped me, they changed me a lot, thanks to them I quit smoking, thanks to them I got a proper job and 'cause I came here my mind has improved a lot.'* (Male, 22)

#### 7.2.3.4 Increased realisation about 'what is possible'

For many young people the friendliness and equality of treatment affects them positively and contributes to an improvement in the quality of their life. This young woman typifies the powerful effect that FFP can have:

*'My life is just working, house, working, house, sleep. Go to work again. But now I have another thing to do, it's coming here... we are like a family, so we are always happy. If we have a problem when you come here, you don't feel it, you don't feel the problem.'* If you have any pain when you come here, you laugh a lot. These guys, they are crazy! <laughs>' (Female, 25)

The enjoyment, fun, and friendships show young people that they can improve their everyday lives. Typical of other young people in a similar situation, the young woman quoted above has been encouraged to reflect on her boring life and unchallenging work. As a result she started a FFP education programme to get qualifications so she can go to college to get A levels, and perhaps go to University.

Another young woman talked about how her horizons have been expanded, after she began to think differently about her life. This reassessment is typical of others:

*'I'm 17. I think that FFP is good for me, it makes me think of life differently, it makes me think that there's more choices after just secondary school and it feels like it's given me more confidence to do different things'* (Female,17)

Other young people made connections with training to a high standard and motivating them to achieve more in their life. They also comment on how the ethos at FFP is to strive to achieve more and this affects them:

*'Yeah, the Muay Thai has a big effect 'cause it teaches you that discipline, motivation to push on, the coaches and the staff members help you to push on and reach a goal not only in the sport but in your life, so it's quite <pause> without Muay Thai my life wouldn't be what it is right now.'* (Male, 21)

#### 7.2.3.5 Conflict resolution and peace making skills

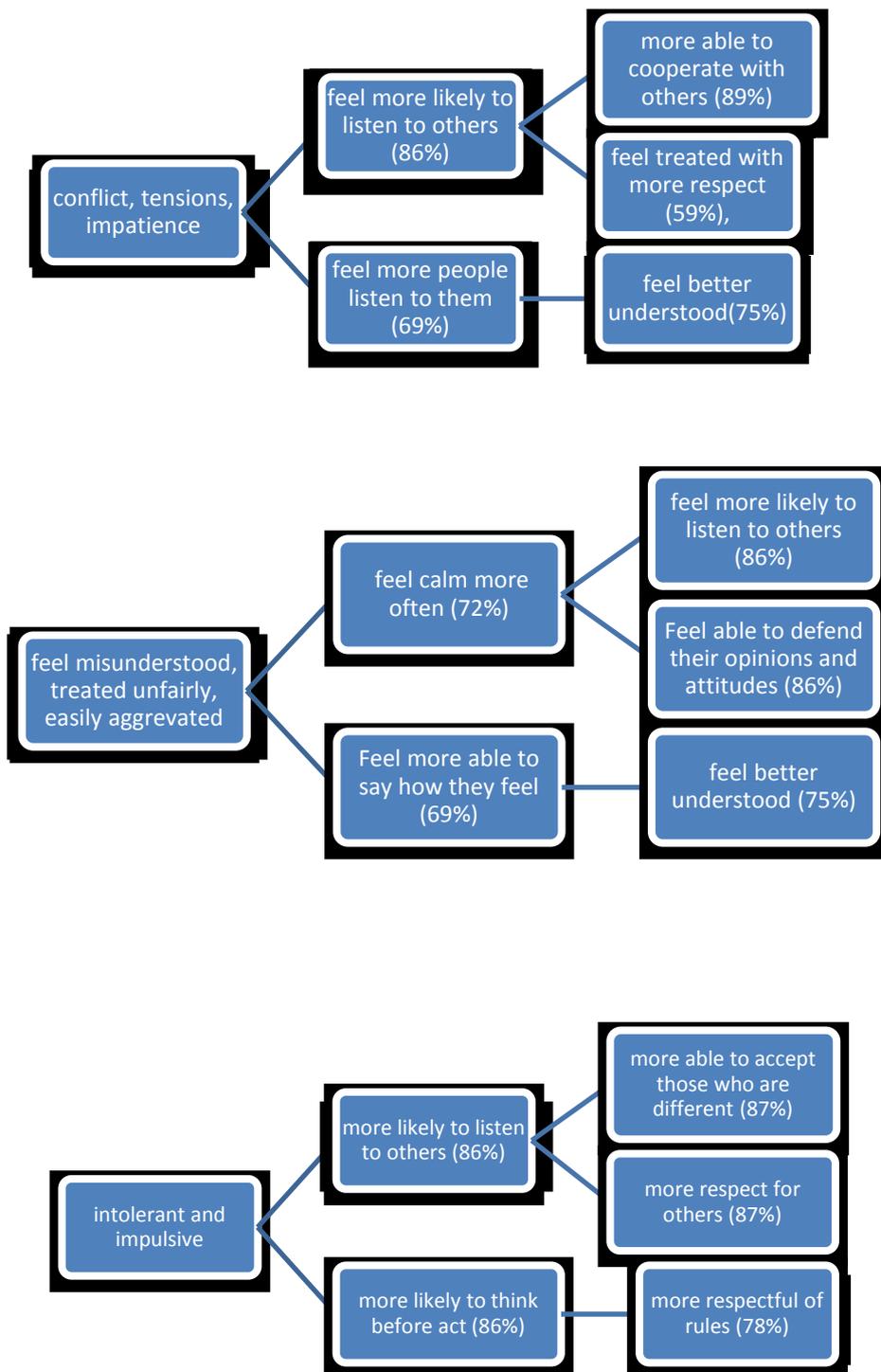
Factors which are specific to overcoming division, reducing conflict and increasing young people's potential by improving their communication and negotiation skills are highlighted in this section.

Several causal strands explain how conflict avoidance and conflict resolution is achieved. They interact and can share mechanisms that account for changes in attitudes and behaviour; sometimes factors are causal and sometimes effects. To illustrate these processes the findings from questionnaires completed by the Intensive group in Rio are used (n=83). Key mechanisms are:

- listening and being heard
- being able to express oneself and feeling understood
- being calmer
- thinking before taking action

Each of the three diagrams below illustrates different types of conflict situations and how they may be averted or diffused, given the changes in young peoples' attitudes and understandings. The percentages given for each factor are the proportion of young people who say that they have made the changes:

**Figure 7.8 Conflict resolution and peace making skills**



### 7.2.3.6 Learning to make new and positive friendships

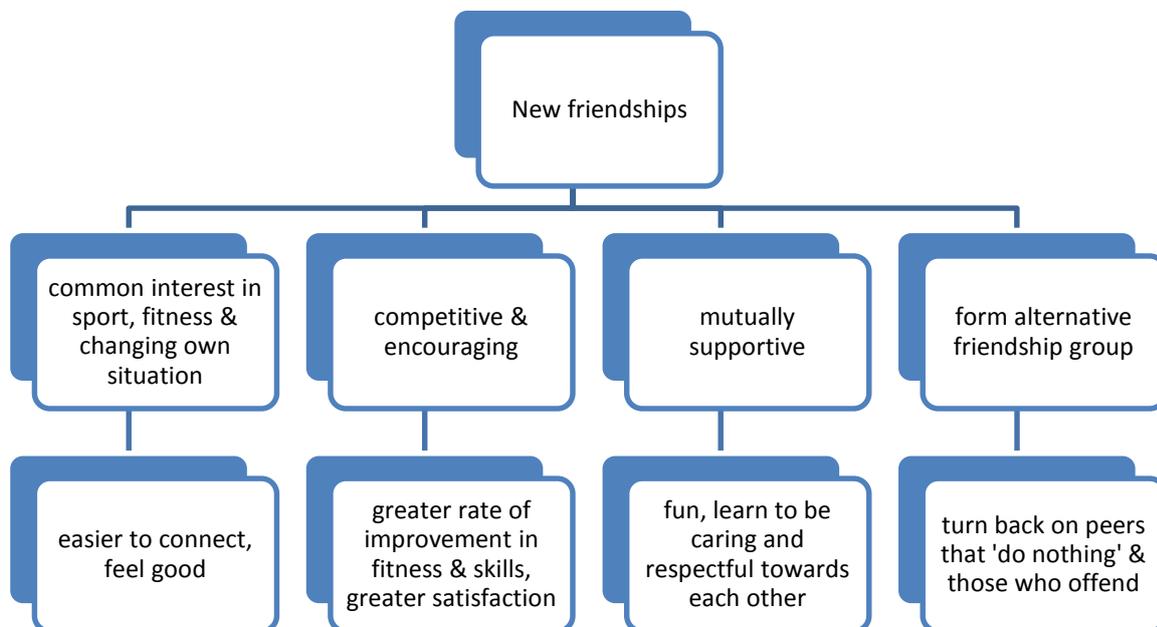
Young people talked about their new friends, and how they have made a significant contribution to improving their lives.

The overwhelming majority of young people who attend the Open Access programmes said that they find it easier to make friends since joining FFP:

- 86% in London and 87% in Rio

Friendships at FFP affect young people's self-perceptions, motivations to achieve, and enable them to have positive relationships. As the diagram below illustrates, these friendships are emotionally supportive, foster mutually respectful behaviour, and enable young people to make better judgements about who to make friends with. Thus, they are an important aspect of making alternative life choices:

**Figure 7.9 Friendships**



The following accounts illustrate how these friendships influence the life course of young people. Strong and positive friendships offer young people a sense of security, as well as a source of fun and affirmation. Young people often described friendships at FFP as different to others:

*'Over here it's more connectivity, like very strong friends, close friends like strong, you have a good relationship, but in school yeah I have friends there but they're not like <pause> it's different, I don't know how to explain this.'* (Male, 18)

During training these friendships provide support and encouragement to train harder:

*'Yeah good relationships, we're friendly with everyone, especially when it comes to training everyone wants to push you further, your friend sees you slacking behind he'll tell you, 'Push harder, you can do it.'* (Male, 21)

Young people described how their friendships are fun and a 'good laugh' and many are particularly appreciative of their caring element, a value that is integral to the FFP ethos. One young man, who has lived alone since he was 16 years old, typifies the feelings of others:

YP: *'People see me more grown up, and they respect me, because they know me from the gym, and they know I work hard, so when they see me, they say, 'Hi [name of young person], are you all right?'*

I: And how does that make you feel?

YP: *Good.'* (Male, 20)

Young people also learn to care about people outside FFP. One young woman explains:

*'At home for example, before I listened to my mum but I couldn't really hear, but then when I started coming here, I started caring, I helped with her problems, if she needs any paperwork or something... I think it's because people care about each other, in here they take care of each other, it's how people act around you, or that's what I think, that's how it happened for me.'* (Female, 14)

For some young people turning away from old friends and making new ones is a key part of the reconstruction of their 'life'. One young man explains:

*'Because I've got kicked out of college, so I made up my mind I was going to stop, and then when I started coming here, training, I decided that I'm going to take training seriously, stop messing around the road... I think it's coming to FFP, to be around a different type of people, so I think that's what made the change...'* (Male, 17)

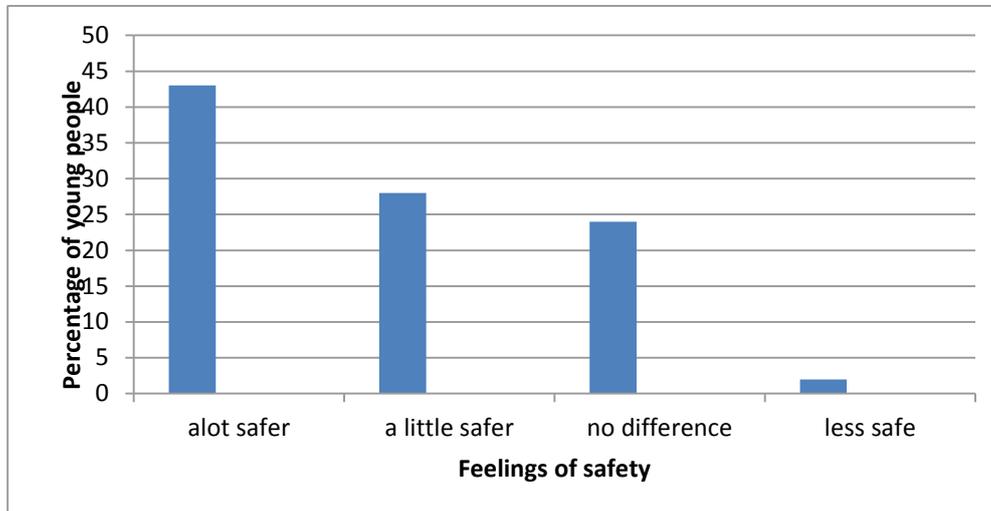
#### 7.2.3.7 *Feeling safer on the streets*

Another consequence of changed self-perceptions and re-evaluation of their situation is young people's different response to being on the streets.

An association between participating in boxing and martial arts, getting fitter and feelings of safety can be identified from the self-completion questionnaires in Rio and London. The reasons these findings are causally linked can be traced to the 'discipline' of boxing and martial arts and to the one-to-one sessions (the two virtuous circles discussed earlier).

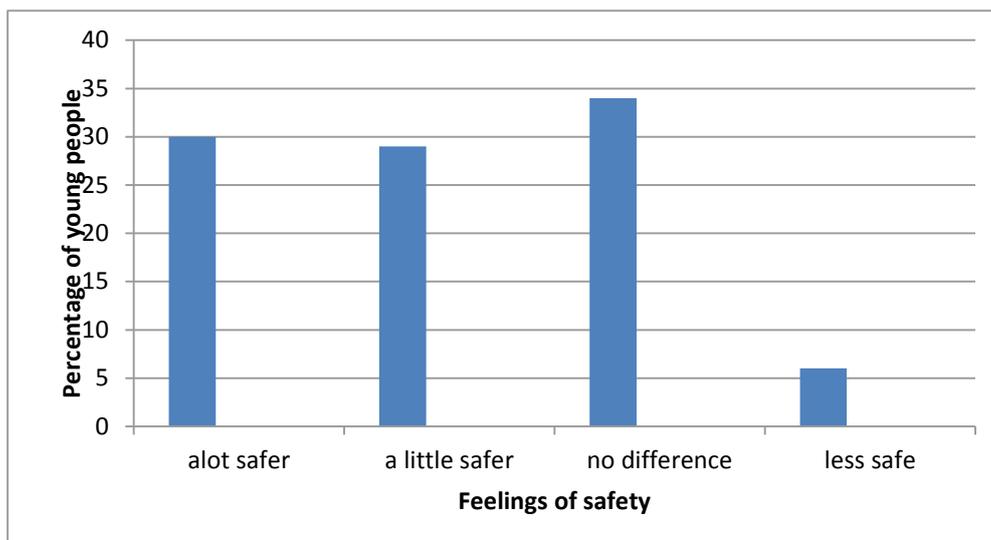
In Rio over 90% of the Open Access young people said that they joined FFP to participate in sport and 55% said that they joined to get fitter, and 92% said that they were fitter since joining FFP, with almost two-thirds saying that they were 'a lot fitter'. Almost three quarters (71%) of these young people said that they felt a lot or a little safer in their own community almost a quarter said that they felt no different (24%), and 2% felt less safe. Significantly, 43% said that they felt a lot safer.

**Figure 7.10 Open Access young people, Rio: feelings of safety in own community**



By comparison, the reason the young people participating in the intensive programmes joined FFP was to gain educational qualifications (95%), rather than sport (19%), or to get fit (19%). The fitness levels amongst this group were much lower with 62% saying that they felt fitter and 20% who said that they were not fitter or less fit. These young people were less likely to say that they felt 'a lot safer' in their own community (30% compared to 43%), and a greater proportion said that they felt no difference since joining FFP (34%) and felt less safe (6%).

**Figure 7.11 Intensive group, Rio: feelings of safety in own community**



Young women and men talked about how they have the skills to defend themselves and how this makes them feel safer. These young people explain:

*'Yeah I do feel safer because being a female if you're going walking down a road by yourself... you will feel more comfortable because you know all these moves that you can actually do and that you can actually, not hurt them, but make sure they won't do anything to you.'* (Female, 15)

*'I think it makes me a bit more relaxed to feel like I know that I can defend myself if I had to.'* (Female, 17)

*'Yeah it makes me handle the situation better, ... if two people came and confronted me, I'm not saying I would attack them but at least I feel more confident knowing that I can defend myself.'* (Male, 21)

Young people also talked about how their training enables them to keep calm. This young man explains that this means he is less likely to get into trouble on the streets:

*'Yes, I think you're less likely to get in trouble.... Because we can keep more calm outside. If someone approaches and tries to harm you, you can keep more calm because you know you have been trained, so you're more prepared for it...'* (Male, 22)

Those with high levels of skill talked about being confident on the streets. This young man is a successful competitor:

*'I feel a lot safer because I have so much confidence that when I walk on the streets people kind of see it and they don't wanna mess with me, 'cause when you are confident you've just got a different eye look.'* (Male, 22)

The critical features of moving from changed self-perceptions to making different choices leading to an alternative life course are mechanisms which increase a young person's 'agency'; young people become 'active citizens' taking responsibility for their decisions and actions. The different behaviours arise from the 'logic' of their new situation.

#### **7.2.4 Different choices & alternative life courses (D)**

In this section the key outcomes are summarised and mechanisms that explain the choices made by young people identified. The different behaviours arise from the 'logic' of their new situation.

Six indicators represent alternative life courses chosen by young people:

- ❖ *Sports-related: to compete, work towards becoming a professional sports person, and/or a coach*
- ❖ *Health-related: become healthier through improved fitness and making healthy life-style choices*
- ❖ *Education and employment-related: an appreciation of the value of education and employment and motivated to gain qualifications and to find work*

- ❖ *Peace making and conflict resolution skills, reducing aggressive behaviour and preventing crime*
- ❖ *Overcoming divisions and creating positive relationships in local communities*
- ❖ *Reducing and preventing criminality*

The information relevant to each outcome is summarised and, as far as possible, data on how many young people are affected provided. Mechanisms that link young people's decisions to the outcomes are also identified.

Whilst young people may be able to make different choices and to choose alternative life-styles these will not be 'unfettered' choices. The structural, economic, social and cultural constraints experienced by young people will remain, and the extent to which a voluntary organisation can 'break down' these barriers, many of which will be due to national and international policies is limited. Where youth unemployment is high it will be much harder for FFP staff to support young people into work, for example.

Public policies and the work of state institutions can also make it difficult for voluntary organisations like FFP to enable young people to choose alternative life courses. Young people labelled as 'troublemakers' or as a 'gang leader', the criminalisation of young people 'hanging around on the streets', all make more challenging to work successfully with young people. Thus, changes typically occur within the same or similar structural constraints.

#### **7.2.4.1 Sports-related: to compete, work towards becoming a professional sports person, and/or a coach**

One defining characteristic of the FFP model is that young people are encouraged to '*aim to be the best in all we do*', and some young people chose to compete in boxing and martial arts. To realise this aim high quality coaches are employed who are, or have been, champions themselves and this inspires young people, and makes them feel valued.

The high standard of coaching affects: the reputation of FFP, encourages young people to excel, and makes young people proud to be associated with an organisation that produces champions. Young competitors show other FFP members what can be achieved through hard work and commitment.

In Rio, 90 young people take part in competitions; one participates at international level and four at national (Brasileiro) level and the others at state and local tournaments.

In London there are 16 amateur boxing competitors; 12 amateur and 3 semi-professional Muay Thai competitors; and, one mixed martial arts amateur competitor.

One young person enthused about how attending FFP has given him a career in boxing, and emphasises how it is an enjoyable experience:

*It's a good place but it's just put another career in my life, it's really changed my life, I enjoy life more 'cause of boxing, 'cause I come here, I meet friends. Yeah I enjoy life, trust me <chuckles> 'cause of boxing, I really enjoy it here. (Male, 18)*

For those who enter competitions, the sports-driven group, the causal links between participating at FFP and positive outcomes are amongst the strongest. For these young people, who may be talented sports people, the supportive environment with high standard of coaching, continuously learning new skills and refining old ones are tangible signs of progressing, the sense of achievement and recognition given to their achievements, has both physical and social benefits.

Physically these young people work hard to become fitter, are proud of their body image, and have a belief that they can put new skills into practice to become better fighters. Being in an environment that supports 'trying your best' enables young people to develop constructive relationships with FFP staff and a cooperative and professional rapport with their coach, and the public recognition given to these young people provides opportunities for increased social interaction with other FFP young people. As a result of these experiences, young people increase their social skills and their social acceptance within FFP. For the young people who travel to competitions this experience broadens their horizons as many, particularly in Rio, have never previously left their local area.

Young people are also offered opportunities to take coaching qualifications and to assist the coaches in training sessions. In Newham three young men and two young women assist with training, two of whom have qualified as coaches. In Rio there are 8 young people working as assistants to the coaches: three in boxing, one in judo, one in capoeira, one in wrestling, one in tae kwon do, and one in jiu jitsu. Whilst this progression has obvious tangible benefits for a few young people the provision of coaching opportunities for young people has symbolic importance for all FFP members. It provides tangible evidence that young people are valued and are integral to the functioning of FFP.

#### ***7.2.4.2 Health-related: become healthier through improved fitness and making healthy life-style choices***

Previous research has found connections between taking physical exercise, becoming healthier and preventing the onset of ill-health.<sup>53</sup> Open Access young people in London (96%), and Rio (82%) said that they are fitter; and, 56% of these young people in Rio and 67% in London feel differently about their health.

The dual approach of doing sport and promoting healthier life styles appears to be effective. Young people train hard and this relieves stress and anger and the adrenaline rush from exercising makes them feel better. One young woman explains how boxing relieves her stress and anger:

*'if you have a lot of stress or if you have a lot of anger, boxing is a great way to get rid of that excess stress and anger.'* (Female, 17)

Young people also commented on how boxing and Muay Thai not just relieves stress but also makes them feel good about themselves. This young man explains how Muay Thai makes him stronger and this gives him confidence. This self-assurance means that he tries to do more things. He feels better about himself and this improves his mental health:

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<sup>53</sup> See the review of the literature on the strong links between exercise and better health by Cox, S. (2012), *Game of life*, London: Sport and Recreation Alliance.

*'... when you get stronger, you feel more confident, like you can do more things. It helps your moods, if you're feeling depressed, it just makes you feel great really. ... No, no, I don't fight out in the street or anything, it's not about being strong enough to actually have fights or anything, it's just about feeling good about yourself in general.'* (Male, 17)

Through conversations and personal development sessions young people learn about the importance of a healthy diet for their fitness and performance. This information is relevant to their sporting aspirations and is therefore meaningful and relevant to them.

In interviews young people talked about giving up coca cola, cutting down on sweets, stopping smoking cigarettes and taking illegal drugs, and eating regularly. They make these choices to change their life-styles not so much because their habits are 'unhealthy' or 'wrong' but rather because they want to get fit and to be good at what they do. It is possible that choosing healthy options for positive reasons is likely to have a longer lasting effect?

#### **7.2.4.3 Education and employment-related: an appreciation of the value of education and employment and motivated to gain qualifications and to find work**

Two outcomes can be identified; the first, where young people's attitudes towards learning and finding work have improved and they become motivated and willing learners; and the second is obtaining qualifications, continuing with education, doing work placements and finding work.

As the previous sections show young people are motivated by a number of experiences:

- FFP values that are embracing, inspiring and unifying, for example
- An ethos of fairness, equal treatment, and integration
- The Five Pillars model and practical opportunities it offers

The research has found that the dynamic interaction between the values, ethos and activities of FFP accounts for the positive outcomes. A disaffected young man attributes his new-found motivation to the FFP model as a whole, as he explains:

*'It's to do with the family and it's to do with the whole organisation I would say. It's to do with the sports they provide, it's to do with their PD sessions, one-to-one sessions and coming here early and just having a chat with them, it's to do with everything.'* (Male, 20)

FFP's ability to engage those who often have no formal educational qualifications and a history of poor experiences at school and to support young people to complete a course and to pass examinations is impressive. The findings suggest that the FFP model creates the conditions that encourage young people to be willing learners and motivate them to improve themselves by obtaining formal qualifications.

Of the London 2011 Intensive group, who are 16 years and over (22 young people) a number of factors give an insight into the skills and attributes young people have acquired which are pertinent to achieving positive education and employment outcomes:

- 91% feel fitter and 86% more motivated
- 82% listen more to others, 91% feel treated with more respect
- 96% feel better about themselves, 91% more confident

- 77% say they are more ambitious

Between April 2010 and June 2012 66 young people attended the pathways educational courses. Of these, 73% had NEET status (48 young people). The majority of these young people were passed the age of compulsory education; 92% were 17 years and over, and predominantly male (77%) and black (64%) or white British (15%).

The pass rate for these young people attending the educational courses was:

- 76% for literacy
- 73% for numeracy

Progression:

- Six months after they had completed module 1 (37 young people), 86% were in education, training or employment
- At the end of module 2 (20 young people), 80% were in education, training or employment
- Of the 48 young people who had NEET status at the start of the courses, 73% (35 young people) progressed to education, training or employment at the end of the course

In Rio, in 2010 and 2011, 175 young people started the pathways education programme, and the overwhelming majority were NEET. The pass rate was:

- 70%

The majority of these students (62%) were young women, mostly aged 16-24 years (77%), and the rest over 25 and under 30 years old and predominantly black (41%).

Progression:

- At the end of their modules 64% were in education, training or employment

FFP also has a good record of finding employment for young people, and in both Academies this is particularly difficult with the economic recession in the UK where over a million young people are unemployment and in Brazil where employers stigmatise those who live in favelas and in a male dominated society young women find it more challenging to obtain employment.

London pathways group:

- At the end of module 1 almost half had found work (46%) and six months later 32% (12 young people) were employed
- At the end of module 2 a quarter had found work (25%), and for those who had graduated six months previously, 60% (6 young people) were employed

Rio pathways group:

- 41% found work (50 young people)

How can these findings be assessed? The following issues can be considered in making a judgement:

What would have happened to these young people if FFP did not exist? As a group of reluctant learners without qualifications, it seems likely that many would still be NEET. In London there are opportunities for NEETs to join education programmes to obtain level 1 qualifications, but there are very few programmes with boxing and martial arts as the 'hook' to attract them into an organisation that is driven by strong and well-articulated values that are put into practice.

In Rio, those who have failed school at 15 have to wait until they are 17 years, and then have to take evening classes. LPP is local and is run during the day so students can complete their studies to enable them to find work. LPP therefore provides an invaluable educational opportunity which is culturally sensitive and as the graduation statistics show, attractive to young women.

The pass rates of 70% and above are high. These students are living in poverty and with violence which is stressful and difficult. The 'presenting problems' and interviews reveal experiences of domestic violence, financial difficulties, and depression, for example. The expectation would be of a high 'drop out rate', few feeling able to take examinations, and a notable failure rate, but this does not happen.

FFP, as an organisation, offers young people further opportunities once they have completed their courses. Young people can volunteer as trainee coaches and support workers. Young people can also attend the Open Access programme and in 2011, of those attending the pathways education courses, 68% said that they would continue to attend. This continuity of provision is greatly valued by young people, and contrasts with other organisations where young people have to leave once they have taken their examination.

#### ***7.2.4.4 Peace making and conflict resolution skills, reducing aggressive behaviour and preventing crime***

Particularly impressive are changes in the characteristics of young people's relationships towards a more conciliatory and empathetic approach, and a reduction in the use of their anger. The overwhelming majority of young people say that they have improved their ability to negotiate, and diffuse tensions, in difficult situations. These changes imply a reduction in the use of violence by young people and an improvement in the quality of their social relationships.

In Rio key mechanisms that explain improvements in co-operation, peace making and conflict resolution skills are:

- More likely to listen to others: 86%
- More likely to think before act: 86%
- Feel calm more often: 72%
- Feel more able to say how they feel: 69%

The findings also indicate a changing set of values that inform young people's revised attitudes and behaviour that includes greater self-respect and 'taking responsibility', that can be traced to the FFP ethos and activities. Some of these findings are highlighted from the Intensive group in Rio:

- 89% feel more able to cooperate with others;
- 87% are more able to accept those who are different and have more respect for others;
- 86% are more likely to listen to others and defend their opinions and attitudes.

These findings demonstrate a greater willingness to listen and cooperate, a more tolerant and respectful attitude, and an improved ability to articulate their point of view which is often a source of frustration for young people.

Three quarters of these young people feel better understood and 59% feel treated with respect which indicates that they are successfully using their new social skills, with the consequence that they are less likely to resort to aggressive and confrontational behaviour.

Young people said that their relationships have improved:

- 71% in Rio, and 46% in London said that their relationship with their family had improved since joining FFP
- 59% in London said that they have better relationships with adults.

Integral to understanding these changes in attitudes and behaviour are the values of FFP, in particular 'embracing', 'solidarity' and 'fearless', and the youth leadership pillar of the Five Pillars model. These features explain the links between changes in attitudes and behaviour. For example, young people experience;

- A warm and friendly environment that is caring and supportive
- Being accepted, whoever they are and whatever their reputation, and the acceptance is non-judgemental
- Relationships with adults which are based on cooperation, good will, and respect
- Being able to make decisions, influence what happens at FFP, and being able to portray young people at FFP positively to adult visitors from prestigious organisations

In London younger people attend a Twilight programme for 12 weeks and they soon learn about 'the discipline' of boxing and martial arts. Coaches use these principles to work closely with these young people, who typically have conflicting and difficult relationships. Learning peace making and conflict resolution skills often starts with small, but significant, beginnings. For example, greeting people can be quite difficult for young people, but everyone is expected to say 'hello', look each other in the eye, and to be friendly. The use of praise by coaches is often mentioned by young people as encouraging and pleasing, and makes them try harder. The following shows how a boxing coach has used principles from the boxing 'discipline' to instil an understanding of the value of respectful behaviour. A young person explains what he has learnt:

*'I've got discipline, I know how to treat people now, I know how to do stuff now. I know where to come, what time to come, what to do, and what's bad, and what's wrong and then what's wrong is worked on... Like say for example I'm walking down there, I see someone that I don't know, but they say hello to me, I say hello back with respect, I'm disciplined.. Like if I come here, I see the coach, I say hello, and my discipline's perfect to the coach. And the coach really likes me with my discipline; he tells me I've got discipline and stuff like that.'* (Male, 12)

Young people talked about how they respond differently in situations where arguments arise, and said that they have learnt to diffuse conflict situations by improved self-control and by thinking through tense situations, and their possible consequences. This young man has learnt to take responsibility for his anger:

*'..for example, if you're in a situation where you're getting angry and you are about to explode, it's your choice to get angry, that's something I've learnt in the time I've been here... So whilst I'm in an argument I take time, that split second and I think, why are we arguing..? [I] know what it is that's wrong, if it's the fact that my head is too high and I need to humble myself down then I will click that into place right now, or if it's just the fact that I need to say sorry and make peace it needs to be.'* (Male, 21)

Young people also talked about diffusing conflict situations. This young boxer uses her self-control, and through boxing has learnt about her potential to harm others, and now avoids fights. Again, she takes responsibility for tense situations and takes actions to stop the escalation of conflict:

*'if someone does start fighting with me, not to actually use the stuff that I use here 'cause obviously I will damage them but I would control myself a little bit more as in not... like give myself, hang on I might hurt somebody badly, then you just move away from the situation so no one gets hurt. You know what I mean?'* (Female, 15)

Other young people gave examples of how they are now calmer as a result of learning boxing and martial arts, and this enables them to think, and to take conciliatory action. This young woman has learnt to acknowledge that she has made a mistake, and this diffuses arguments:

*'... but it's just made me feel more calm because usually when me and my sisters have a fight we're usually like shouting at each other, but now I'm more calmer and say 'OK', then if I'm actually in the wrong I admit it, whereas before I'd just keep shouting and saying 'I was right, you're wrong' stuff like that.'* (Female, 17)

This young man explains how he has more self-control in conflict situation in the street, and how, before he attended FFP, the situation would end in a fight:

*'I was the kind of person if you try to bully me or if you say a bad name or maybe shout at me, I could get angry easily... But I think the Muay Thai is important as well because it helps you to relax and think. I could stand my ground if someone in the street slapped me... Because in Muay Thai, we train, it's physical contact, so we get used to it.'*

He went on to describe how the situation was resolved without conflict:

*'I stayed calm, always being polite, and the situation resolved, they were looking at me and they thought, 'Wow, that's changed.' Because normal people, they can get angry or maybe scared and I didn't show any signs of it, I just kept it calm and talked to them.'* (Male, 20)

Coaches emphasise how the best form of defence is to avoid confrontation and young people explained how they are now able to 'walk away':

*'it makes me feel like I'm more disciplined and I've got more control over myself and I know what I'm doing when it comes to situations, such as, when there's someone .. being rude to me, they're either calling me names or whatever, I just feel like I've got control of it. So I just pick the wise choice, because I just walk away.'* (Male, 15)

Other young people feel that they have a responsibility to prevent crimes. Young people are most likely to witness street crimes<sup>54</sup> and several talked about how they have the confidence to stop fights they witness. One young person described how he had successfully intervened using his social and boxing skills to establish peace:

*'Yeah, I use my communication skills ... and also what I've learnt as a boxer here, to protect myself and others... There were two people fighting in an alleyway and there were people cheering, and I moved out, I separated the crowd, I barged through and I went to the two people fighting, and I pushed them away, I told them, 'This ain't right, what you're doing.' And I made them see sense, because they started a fight over something petty, something small... I had to time my entrance, so I didn't land a punch, didn't catch a punch... then I just told them to shake hands and leave it as that, and not to fight again... They agreed with each other and they walked away, and hopefully they didn't come back together again.'* (Male, 17)

Improved communication skills have an impact on other aspects of young people's lives which have not been fully explored in this study but which have surfaced as relevant. They include; more rewarding friendships, being able to access services such as housing or doctors more easily and to receive a better service, and improved parenting. Young people's conflict resolution and peace making skills are likely to have a longer term impacts and include reductions in domestic violence, bullying at school and the workplace, and violent incidents between different groups in communities.

#### **7.2.4.5 Overcoming divisions and creating positive relationships in local communities**

Some very courageous young people are identified in the research, particularly in Rio where young people are prepared to 'cross the line' into areas that are patrolled by different drug factions. Wearing a LPP t-shirt allows young people to move back and forth between favelas within the Complexo da Maré, and participating in training sessions and competitions enables them to visit other communities without running the risk of being punished. Wearing the project's t-shirt is described as a "free-pass" and "holy shirt" which, according to one young person, "serves as bullet-proof vest".

In Rio, of the Open Access young people:

- 79% say they feel safer in other communities

For the Intensive group:

- 39% feel safer in other communities

A FFP 'community effect'; that is, bridging divided communities, is much stronger in Rio, and more pertinent. The following comment by a young man gives some insight into how FFP provides opportunities to build positive relationships between young people living in areas divided by drug factions 'at war' with each other:

*"LPP enables me to meet people from different parts of the community that I would not meet if it weren't for the project, for it is dangerous to go to other areas"* (Male, 22).

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<sup>54</sup> See, for example, British Crime Survey findings, 2010/2011. London: Home Office.

There are indications that the FFP model has enabled divisive community values, imposed by drug factions to be questioned and challenged by young people who wish to live *'free from violence'*. Due to its excellent reputation and because it offers young people a safe place and an alternative way of life, drug traffickers are tolerant of young people who wear LPP t-shirts walk across drug faction 'lines'. This tolerance, dependent on the reputation of LPP, explains how changes in community norms are coming about:

*'you begin to realize that only because he lives in a place that has a different drug faction does not mean that you can't become friends.'* (Male, 15)

In London, 'crossing the line' between postal codes which are 'claimed' by different groups or 'gangs', is more contested. Some young people refer to limited mobility due to 'postal code' territorial conflicts whilst others contest this claim, and argue that conflict between gangs is 'talked up' and exaggerated. However, for those who live locally, an area which few seem attached to, the presence of FFP gives them a reason to say something positive about their neighbourhood. One young person typified these views:

*'...before all we had was a park and a library, now we have a national club, so it's more known now, people actually say, 'What's in your area?' 'Oh I've got a boxing club and we do this and we do that.' You can just talk about it, what you've done, for ages, which is great I think... Definitely, it's something you can be proud of, isn't it, you can actually be proud of the area.'* (Male, 16)

The circumstances in Newham, with its greater social fragmentation, young people attending from disparate places, and the FFP premise which are too small, all serve to mitigate the stronger community effects identified in Rio. The ability of young people to overcome barriers and to reconstruct more positive community norms is, however, illustrated by young people's growing resistance to the use of violence in Complexo da Maré.

#### **7.2.4.6 Reducing and preventing criminality**

Policy-makers and politicians are often particularly interested in the ability of young people's projects to reduce offending and re-offending, and FFP is no exception. FFP is an inclusive programme that welcomes all young people living in low income areas prone to violence and therefore not all young people are involved in criminal activities. Indeed, the overall emphasis is about recognising and enhancing young people's talents, skills and attributes, rather than dwelling on their weaknesses.

##### *Reducing criminality*

Desisting from offending is one indication of young people making different choices. Some young people attending FFP report committing one crime whilst others are prolific offenders, admitting to 10 or more serious offences, and some in Rio are heavily involved in drug trafficking. In London some young people are associated with 'gangs'; for some this involves committing crimes to defend a territory, whilst others 'hang' around on streets in groups for social reasons.

Self-report behaviour by young people in Rio and London, and recorded offending data from the Youth Offending Team in London consistently identify a reduction in criminality, as the following data illustrate.

The majority of those who attend the Open Access programme and who were in trouble at school, home or in the street said that they had stopped:

- at home – 57% in Rio and 89% in London
- at school – 74% in London and 77% in Rio
- in the streets – 82% in Rio and 93% in London

Information on offending histories is collected for those attending intensive programmes and those who are known to the criminal justice agencies. In Rio it is illegal to work with drug traffickers and no data are collected on drug faction associations.

The available figures are:

In London data were provided by the local Youth Offending Team and from FFP staff, and in 2010 and 2011, of those having intensive case work:

- 78% (21 out of 27 young people) desisted from offending
- 64% (7 out of 11 young people) stopped their gang affiliations
- Two young people joined a gang and continued their criminal activities whilst attending FFP AND
- 75% (12 young people) who attended the education pathways programme desisted from further offending

In Rio in 2010 and 2011 of those who attended the education pathways programmes, 15 young people were officially known offenders:

- 47% (7) desisted from offending

Additional data on self-declared offending by those who completed a questionnaire for the Ecorys research shows that of the 68 young people who completed the questionnaire, 35 have offending histories.<sup>55</sup> Of these: four young people said that they offended once; 9 offended 2-4 times; 9 offended 5-9 times; and, 13 young people said that they have offended 10 times or more.

When considering repeat offending, those who joined FFP four months prior to completing the questionnaire have been removed from the analysis - three young people.<sup>56</sup> Thus, 32 young people are included in the following analysis of repeat offending.

Of these young people (32), 10 admitted to reoffending since joining FFP (31%).

These 10 offenders are predominantly male (9 young people), aged 19 to 25 years,<sup>57</sup> and their ethnicity is black African (3), black British Caribbean (2), white British (1), Asian (1), and not specified (2). The young woman offender is white European. All except two have committed more than one

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<sup>55</sup> Ecorys (2012), *Sport Scores: the costs and benefits of sport for crime reduction, executive summary*, London: Laureus Sport for Good Foundation.

<sup>56</sup> Of these three young people two are heavily involved in serious crime and it is a fairer 'test' to assess any changes in criminal behaviour of young people who have attended FFP for over 4 months.

<sup>57</sup> Only six young people gave their age and of these six, one was 16 years old and the rest aged 19-25 years.

offence since joining FFP. The most common offences are shoplifting (9 young people), taking/supplying drugs (7), and violent crimes (6).

With respect to committing violent crimes, 23 of the 32 young offenders have a history of using violence and 16 also carried/used weapons. Six have re-offended whilst attending FFP, of whom four carried/ used weapons.

This gives a:

- 74% reduction in young people involved in violent crimes (17 out of 23 young people)
- 75% reduction in young people carrying/using weapons (12 out of 16 young people)

The majority of those with a criminal history reported that they have desisted offending since joining FFP (22 young people (69%)). As may be expected, those who offended least often were most likely to desist from offending once they joined FFP:

**Table 7.1 Offending histories and desistance from criminality since attending FFP**

Number of self-declared crimes committed prior to joining FFP	Number of young people admitting to number of offences prior to joining FFP	Number of young people (%) who said they had stopped committing crimes since joining FFP
One crime	4	4 (100%)
2 – 4 crimes	9	8 (89%)
5 -9 crimes	8	6 (75%)
10+ crimes	11	4 (36%)
<b>Total</b>	32	22 (69%)

Whilst the numbers are small, the consistency of the data from different sources suggests that the ‘direction of travel’ is promising. Furthermore, the Ecorys self-completion questionnaire also asked young people if ‘attending Fight for Peace has helped you to improve your behaviour?’ Of the 10 young people who have offended whilst attending FFP, seven (70%) said that attending FFP has definitely helped them with their behaviour, one young person said ‘yes, probably’, and only one who is involved in drugs and no other offences said ‘no, probably not’ (one young person did not respond to this question). This finding demonstrates that young people feel that attending FFP is impacting positively on their behaviour, and may in the longer term affect their offending behaviour.

A number of factors explain how attending FFP has contributed to a reduction in criminality. Particular factors are influential depending on a young person’s situation and their motives and reasons for offending. As the data on desistance from criminality suggest, many attend FFP and do not offend again, even those with long and serious criminal histories.

The research has found that where joining FFP changes a young person’s situational logic they readily stop offending. For example, young people who are able to realise their sporting ambitions and obtain a boxing licence are easily deterred from getting into further trouble. These young people explain

that they would lose their boxing licence if they continued to perpetrate violent crimes, and being able to compete is a *'dream come true'*.

For some young people their temper is the 'trigger' that sparks violent confrontations and they describe how learning boxing and martial arts skills has taught them to control their anger. This young man, who has been expelled from two schools, explains:

*'It makes you disciplined because it makes you control your anger when you're in the ring, ... you can't just lash out and be angry and then throw random punches because the fighter you're fighting, he could just move out of the way and just punch you, and that's you gone in the fight. So that helps you control your anger, the training, just how hard it is, it just makes you feel more disciplined like that and your anger just needs to get under control.'* (Male, 15)

The combination of sports-related skills and conflict resolution skills young people learn at FFP also enables them to end resorting to violence to resolve differences. Findings from the London Intensive group illustrate how young people have improved their peace-making skills:

- Feel calmer more often (62%)
- More likely to listen to others (74%)
- Respect others (73%), and tolerate difference (73%)
- Think before act more often (71%), and more respectful of rules (70%)
- Find it easier to do things on own (63%)
- Feel safer (67%)

Another reason why young people readily stop their violent behaviour is that they realise how strong they are and coaches emphasis how easily they can hurt someone badly. Young people talked about their previous fights and how they had not intended to hurt anyone seriously, and how they are less likely to fight since joining FFP. The comments by this young man are typical of others:

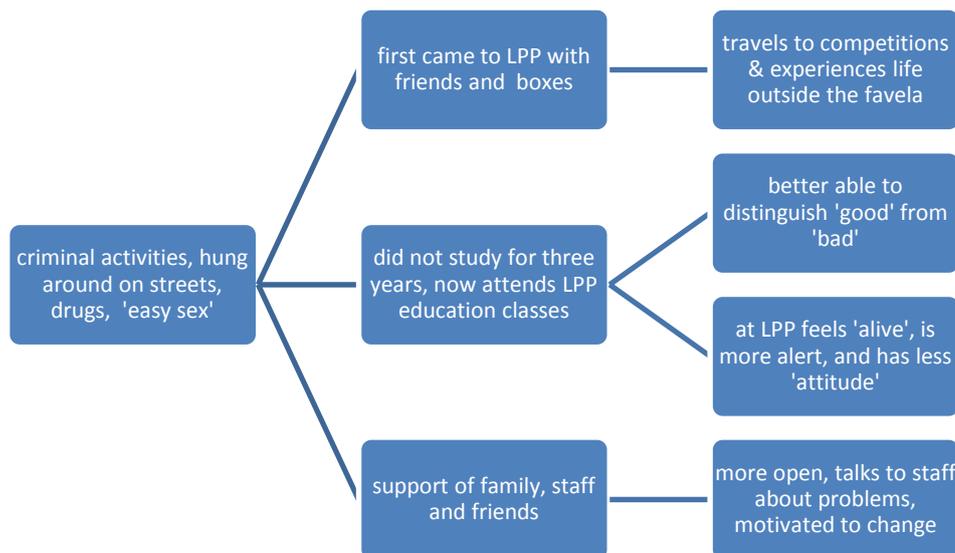
*'Well to be sincere and honest to you, before I did boxing I think I was a very aggressive person especially in terms of handling situations, like I know if I was on the street and someone came to confront me my first reaction is gonna be that I have to fight this person whether I like it or not, so that's what's gonna happen... But I think with boxing it makes me more disciplined and it makes me more aware of what I can actually do to someone so I try to avoid it, so that's how I think boxing has altered me now... I know I can probably do a lot of damage to that person... I know I can do something devastating to this person. So I think about that and think about the repercussions of doing it so I think that's the disciplinary part of it to.'* (Male, 21)

For other young people their reasons for offending are more complex and deeply embedded in their life-style. When a young person is committed to participating in boxing or martial arts to a high standard, then FFP offers them an alternative status. Young street fighters no longer feel the need to prove themselves on the streets, and talk about how they now 'prove' themselves in the ring. Others explain how their identity has changed from defining themselves as a drug trafficker by commenting that: *'I am LPP'*. For these young people participating in the different activities offered by the Five Pillars model provides them with emotional and practical support to choose an alternative life-style. A young woman in Rio observes how participating at FFP affects those leading criminal life-styles:

*'Criminals come to LPP and change, they go out of criminal life. LPP removes people from criminal life.'*(Female, 13)

The following diagram describes how the Five Pillars model brings about the changes identified above, and how support from family and friends as well as FFP staff contributes to young people leaving their life-style that is defined by illegal activities and is replaced by a different set of values, new attributes and experiences, as well as skills.

**Figure 7.12 Five Pillars model and routes out of criminal life-styles**



Young people who previously offended also talked about how they have made several life-style changes. The following account by George (not his real name) illustrates how choosing an alternative life-course involves stopping smoking and eating more healthily:

George joined FFP after spending time in a Young Offenders Institution. He is supported by his family and friends and coming to FFP has enabled him to stop offending for a year:

*'It makes a difference because before I used to do nothing, I used to just cause trouble down the roads and that... Yeah talking makes a difference... I've come here a couple of times angry but I take it out on the boxing bag. ... Yeah it makes me feel better than hitting someone and avoiding getting arrested for it...'*

He also talked about how using the gym has brought about improvements in his life and these changes motivate him to lead a healthier lifestyle:

*'I used to smoke as well and now I don't, ever since I came to the gym, I stopped smoking... I prefer it though now. I can run further, before I couldn't... I've cut down on sweets, sugary stuff, I've started eating more because before when you smoke, you forget to eat, but now I eat more. I eat vegetables now, before I didn't like vegetables, I'm starting to eat fruits again...'*

He went on to add, with a sense of achievement:

*'I've stopped [offending], I haven't done nothing for a year now'* (male, 17)

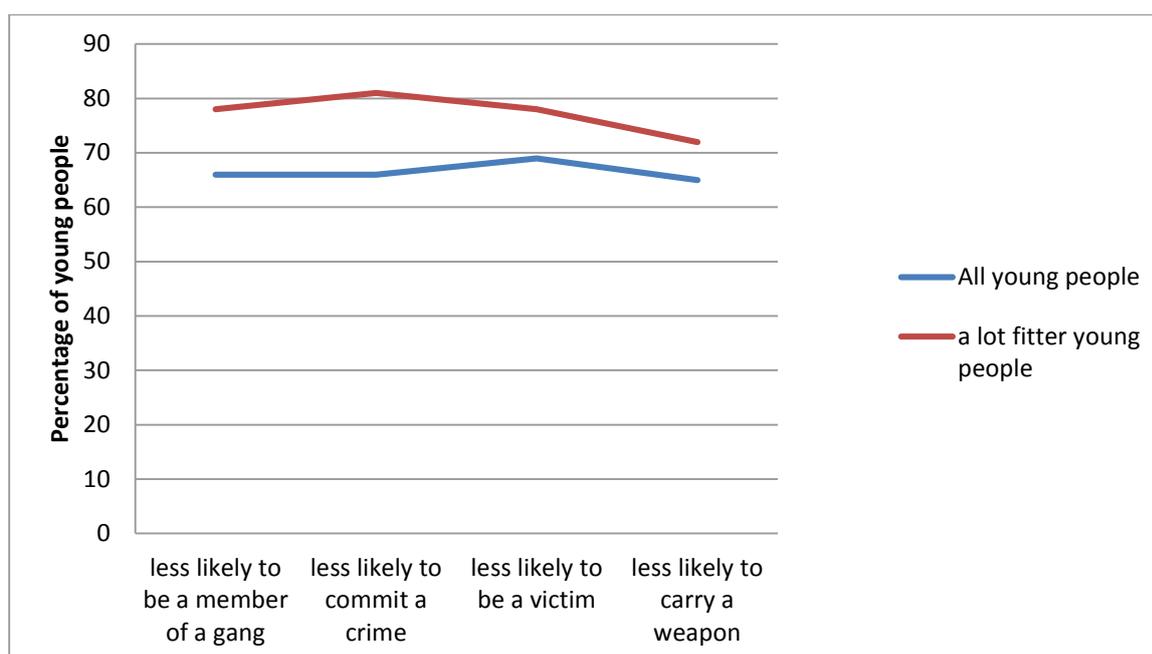
### Preventing offending

The research findings suggest that attending FFP not only deters offending but also can prevent the onset of offending. Information from the self-completion questionnaires suggests that the FFP programme has a strong preventive effect on young people who think that they may offend:

- In London, between 60% and 70% said that they were less likely to become a member of a gang, to commit crime, to become a victim of crime, or carry a weapon, or disrespect someone.

These rates are higher for those who feel differently about themselves, their future, and what they want from life. When the intentions of a group of young people who are very fit<sup>58</sup> and have changed self-perceptions are analysed, these young people are consistently more likely to say that they will be less involved in crimes than the average score for all young people who completed the questionnaire in Newham. These findings show that the FFP model is more effective in reducing young people's inclinations to commit crime when two related factors are present; changed self-perceptions and young people with a good level of boxing and martial arts skills.

**Figure 7.13** Boxing and martial arts skills, changed self-perceptions, and involvement in crime



These findings are consistent with young people's accounts of how their boxing and martial arts skills make them feel safer on the streets and more able to protect themselves. This reduces young people's perceived need to carry weapons to 'protect' themselves.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, if a young person is inclined to

<sup>58</sup> Levels of fitness are used as a proxy for standards of boxing and martial arts. Young people who say that they are 'a lot fitter' are considered to have a good level of boxing and martial arts skills.

<sup>59</sup> See for example, Youth Justice Board (2007), *Groups, gangs and weapons*, London: Youth Justice Board. Squires, P. (2011) 'Young people and 'weaponisation'', in B. Goldson (ed) *Youth Crisis? 'Gangs', territoriality and violence*, London: Routledge, pages 144-160. Smithson, H., Ralphs, R., and P. Williams (2013), 'Used and abused: the problematic usage of

become a member of a gang as a form of self-protection<sup>60</sup> then their martial arts skills will mitigate these reasons for joining. Changes in self-perceptions can further serve to prevent offending behaviour. A young man observes how altered perceptions enable young people to take 'a good path':

*'Most of the young people who joined LPP do not get involved in mess, have taken a good path and have another perception of life. Here I feel alive.'*(Male, 22)

In both London and Rio young people who attend FFP live with domestic violence, and sexual exploitation can be part of the everyday worries of young women living in the London Borough of Newham and is associated with drug trafficking in Rio. Whilst these issues have not been fully explored with young people in this study, there are several ways in which being a member of FFP may deter young people from being involved in these crimes:

- The good women fighters at FFP challenges gender norms for both men and women, and disrupts received notions about gender roles
- The promotion of equality, respect, and fair play as well as the mutually supportive environment has the potential to change understandings of intimate relationships, and how people treat each other
- An increase in personal responsibility is likely to include greater sexual responsibility
- An increase in personal responsibility enables young women to learn how to protect their own boundaries and personal space<sup>61</sup>

Relationships between young men and women are a common topic of conversation with youth workers. In interviews with social services in Rio, and with young people themselves, domestic violence was raised as a problem, not just as having a profoundly negative effect on social and psychological development of children, but also in a culture where domestic violence is not perceived or responded to as a crime. Young people described how they hated living with domestic violence and how FFP has helped them think differently about the use of violence:

*'Having faced many fights between my mom, my father-in-law and my father, due to my family background revolt I did think about entering the life of crime because I used to think that it would be a ways of solving things. But the project, and not only the project itself, but the people here, helped me think differently about all of this. That this was not the best way to solve things at home. Violence is never good.'*(Male, 18)

It is reasonable to anticipate, given the values of FFP, and the equal treatment of young women and men that one of the longer term achievements of FFP will be a reduction of domestic violence incidents.

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gang terminology in the United Kingdom and its implications for ethnic minority youth', *British Journal of Criminology*, 53,1: 113-128.

<sup>60</sup> Squires, P. (2011) 'Young people and 'weaponisation'', in B. Goldson (ed) *Youth Crisis? 'Gangs', territoriality and violence*, London: Routledge, pages 144-160.

<sup>61</sup> Kidd, B. ( 2008), 'A new social movement: sport for development and peace', *Sport in Society*, 11,4: 370 – 380.

#### **7.2.4.7 Summary**

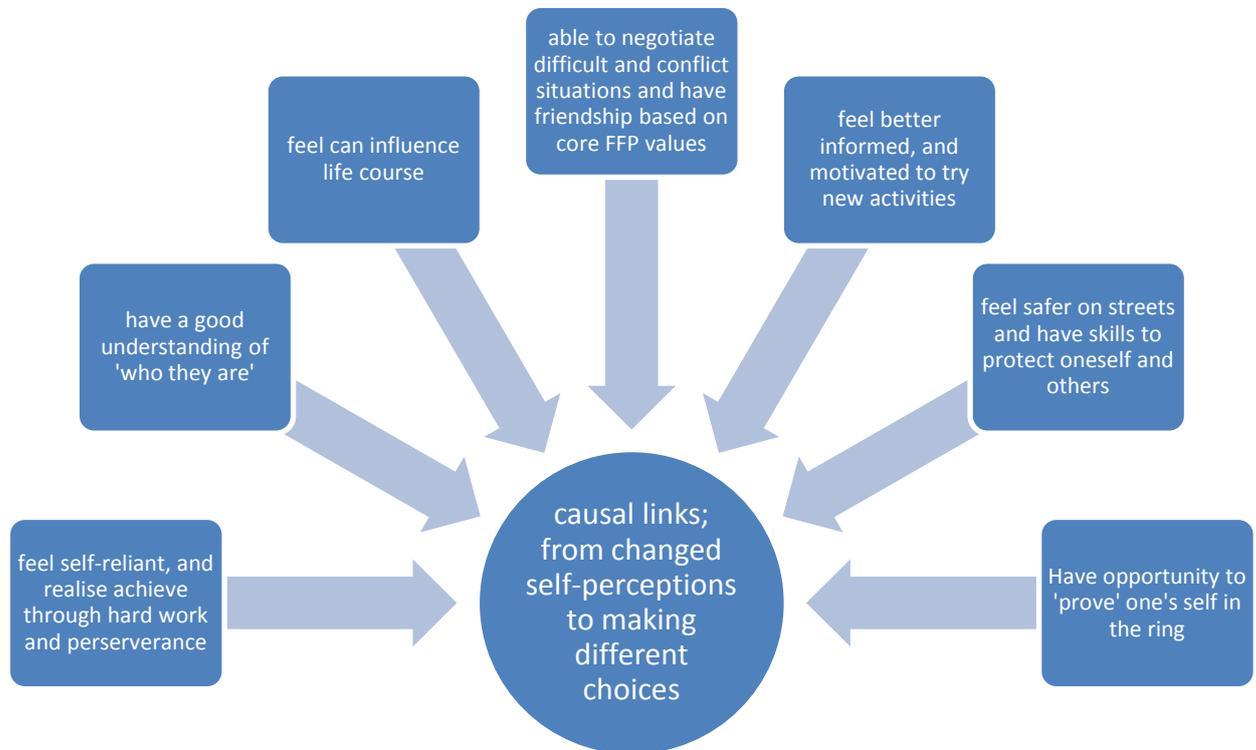
This study has found that a particular strength of the FFP model is not that young people just gain self-confidence, acquire educational qualifications or obtain work – all of which happens and which are typical indicators of success – that young people make different choices about their lives. That is, young people occupy a different social position which has a different logic. These changes occur ‘naturally’ when the ‘logic’ of their situation alters, and the reasons for taking some actions, rather than others, such as taking drugs or not participating in education, no longer apply.<sup>62</sup> For young women this includes ending prostitution and in Rio there is a view that those actively involved with LPP are less likely to become a teenage mother.

Most young people will continue to live in poverty even if they are employed and to live in violent prone areas, many out of choice. Thus, their economic and community circumstances may not significantly change, but the way in which the young people choose to live their lives does alter. Arguably, this is the greatest achievement of FFP; young people learn to listen, to respect the perspectives of others, they understand humility, learn how to make positive friendships and how to have respectful relationships, to take responsibility and to contribute by giving support and praise, and learn that achievement comes through trying and perseverance. These skills and attributes arise from the values that drive FFP and are integral to the new logic of a young person’s situation; they inform how a young person lives, their relationships with others and their community. These processes are summarised in the diagram below.

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<sup>62</sup> See for example, Sampson, A., and Themelis, S. (2009), ‘Working in the community with young people who offend’, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 12,2: 121-137.

**Figure 7.14 Making different choices and choosing alternative life-styles**



### **7.3 When outcomes are less apparent or negative**

#### **7.3.1 Under what circumstances, and for whom, is FFP less likely to make a difference?**

Similar to other research, this study has found that a minority of those who join the education programmes find a work placement or employment and continue to offend. A few who are good boxers continue to truant from school. Others ‘cut back’ but do not stop smoking cigarettes all together. In other words, connections between activities and positive outcomes are not necessarily linear or strongly inter-linked. One young woman in Rio reflected these differential outcomes when she commented:

*‘The young people change when they come to LPP. Some of them used to use drugs and when they come to LPP they stop. Some who enter LPP manage to get away from drugs, others continue to use them’.* (Female,12)

The reasons for this continuation of illegal activities are numerous, and the following gives an insight into why problematic behaviour can continue:

Some young people have deep problems such as psychotic behaviour, and where young people have severe mental health problems, for example, participating in sport is unlikely to be sufficient to address their motives and reasons for offending.<sup>63</sup>

Young people find it difficult to 'shed' their bad reputation and shift their social position. Some feel that they '*aren't given a chance*' by teachers at school or by neighbours and community representatives, even though they want to change. They said that being '*picked on*' and insulted provokes them, and they continue to truant and to '*answer back*'. This young man in London explains:

*'in my new school, obviously they look at the papers, they looked at my record and it was not good, it was quite bad. So now ... I get picked on by the teachers, so I don't know what to do. It's come to a point now where I just give up, I don't know what to do, whenever they pick on me, I just talk back to them, because I have to stand up for myself, it's come to that.* (Male, 15)

Some young people feel a great loyalty towards old friends and these associations gets them into further trouble.

Young people are clear that it is difficult to stop offending, particularly if they have a local reputation as a criminal or gang member or a bad reputation at school, and they explained how FFP is supporting them in this long and uncertain process of trying to lead a 'normal' life.<sup>64</sup> These young people are very appreciative of how FFP staff give them continued support and guidance, and 'didn't give up on them'.

*'what makes me like this project so much is that they always give you a chance, they will never say, 'No we're tired of you, go away.'* Like how many times you've dropped them they'll always still be there for you, 'cause I've come to them for help and gone around, done my own business, got in trouble again' (male, 20)

Partners and staff have observed that on some of those attending the intensive groups have a difficult 'group dynamic' and this makes it particularly challenging to bring about positive changes.

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<sup>63</sup> See for example, Sampson, A., and Themelis, S. (2009), Working in the community with young people who offend, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 12,2 121-137.

<sup>64</sup> See for example, Haigh, Y. (2009), 'Desistance from crime: reflections on the transitional experiences of young people with a history of offending', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 12,3: 307-322.

### 7.3.2 Drug trafficking and 'gangs'

- It is illegal to associate with drug traffickers in Brazil and no information is collected about these young people. These young people are, however, involved in serious organised crime that is economic-driven and uses arms
- In London there are 11 known gang members attending casework and seven say they are no longer affiliated with gangs, and two joined gangs whilst at FFP. These are either 'loose groups' which are not necessarily territorial and young people are not known to the criminal justice agencies, or more organised groups which can act territorially, include fighting, and young people are more likely to be known to criminal justice agencies

Interviews with staff, partners who make referrals, and young people themselves all emphasise that there are no easy solutions and quick fixes when working with those associated with drug trafficking and gangs. Several factors exacerbate a difficult problem:

- these young people distrust adults, are often angry, and typically do not talk about anything 'personal' and this non-disclosure means that it is almost impossible to work meaningfully with them
- young people's refusal to disclose information arises in part from feeling misunderstood, and in part from other problems, severe mental health problems, for example
- once young people have a reputation as a drug trafficker or gang member it is extremely difficult for them to shed this reputation, and leaving their organised crime association creates a new set of problems including moving from relative wealth to poverty, no longer having 'easy sex', and having their illiteracy exposed to others, for example. This problem is exacerbated by police units with a remit to 'crack down' on traffickers and gang members.

The interviews for this study suggest that young people in Rio were involved in organised crime and are simultaneously perpetrators of serious violent crimes that can include the sexual exploitation of women, and trapped in a set of circumstances over which they feel they have little control over and have no obvious way to escape. The violence arises from street and community codes of conduct that legitimate violence, a 'cocky' confidence and a sense of being 'untouchable'. At the same time the use of violence arises from fear, intimidation, a lack of tolerance, and a desire for revenge.

These young people share several things in common. Firstly, they are 'joiners', they prefer to be part of a social organisation, their criminal activities are social, they are part of a group. Secondly, these young people are often alienated from and by all other social and public institutions including their families, school, the police, housing authorities and social services.

The strength of FFP is that it is a strong institution that is attractive to young people. It offers an alternative safe haven with the possibility of making friends and as 'joiners' those involved in organised crime have a preference for being part of social organisations, they are not 'loners'. FFP is non-judgemental, friendly and welcoming organisation. Staff work with these young people on improving their fitness and through this relationship gain their trust. At FFP young people do disclose information that enables staff to address their reasons for being part of an organised criminal group

and finding alternative solutions to their problems. The education and employment programmes offer practical options, and the youth work support offers opportunities to discuss and debate their lifestyles and how they may change.

There are, however, contextual issues in both countries which make it hard to work intensively with those involved in organised crime. In London, funding to reduce 'gang' violence has not been allocated through an open competition to local community-based organisations, and sentences involve evening curfews and electronic tagging with curfews which precludes these young people from participating in evening Open Access sessions. In Rio it is illegal to work directly with traffickers, and it is therefore not possible to apply for additional funding to work with them intensively.

### **7.3.3 Does the FFP model cause harm?**

Integral to assessing the effectiveness of a programme is to find out if it causes harm. This was rigorously tested on a wide range of indicators for those participating on the programme. Each question on the self-completion questionnaire had the option for a respondent to say that things had got worse for them since joining FFP; for example, that they less fit, were more likely to offend, or felt less confident. Some harm, that is negative experiences, was self-reported by a small minority of young people, although the reasons for this harm are difficult to attribute their participation at FFP.

In London, very little harm was identified by those attending Open Access. Since joining FFP no-one said that they were less fit, found it harder to make friends, felt less calm or less safe in their community. No-one was more likely to commit a crime or carry a weapon.

Five young people (4%) who identified harm were all 16 years and over; two black African men felt worse about themselves, another black African man said that he was more likely to become a member of a gang, an Asian man said that he was more likely to become a victim of crime, and a black African woman more likely to disrespect others.

Factors that may explain the harm are difficult to identify: they all attended voluntarily, four said that they can talk to staff about their problems and one thought they would be able to staff when they knew them better, all five felt that they could tell a member of staff if they are upset or if they did not like an activity. Four attended FFP for the sport, three to get fit, and four felt proud of being at FFP, and two felt that they belonged.

All five felt a lot or a little fitter and like boxing, gym, Muay Thai, and mixed martial arts, four found it easier to make friends and felt calmer (one young person did not respond to these questions).

Other factors that might cause harm were discussed with young people and included:

- getting injured; three young people who had injuries were interviewed and all these young people have been given other tasks at FFP and felt welcome and supported
- dieting; some young people were dieting to get into the 'right' weight category for their age, in competitions. Concerns were expressed about one young person in particular, but his coach drew up a clear plan with him, and whilst he may eat small portions, he explained that *'competitive boxers eat five times a day'*

- fear of failure and losing fights; young people who fought competitively all explained that whether they won or lost, they learnt from their mistakes and what they did well so that they could do better next time: *'you win or you lose, it doesn't matter, you learn....'* (Male, 18)

## Chapter 8: A concluding note on boxing and martial arts and life course of young people

### 8.1 Introduction

The findings from previous studies discussed at the beginning of this report highlighted uncertainties about the effects of 'doing sport' on the lives of participants, except for health outcomes where strong connections can be made to increased life expectancy and well-being.<sup>65</sup> Proponents of the provision of sports argue that they are a 'hook' for young people including those who are disaffected, and that time spent participating in sport is time away from the streets and getting into trouble. In short, participation in sport alleviates boredom that can lead to anti-social behaviour.<sup>66</sup> But does learning sports' skills have an influence that is more than 'attracting' and 'holding' young people? Do sports' skills themselves affect the life-course of a young person, and how?

Studies have found that social experiences associated with participating in sport, rather than learning and 'doing' the sport itself, accounts for participants' improvements in motivation, self-confidence, and abilities to work as a team.<sup>67</sup> It has also been found that these intervening variables - motivation and self-confidence, for example - do not necessarily translate to other social settings such as school, family, or streets bringing into question whether or not participating in sport does improve young people's life chances.<sup>68</sup> Research has also found that these intervening factors are not necessarily associated with improved behaviour or reduction in violent criminality or drug trafficking.<sup>69</sup> However, our knowledge about the nature of the linkages remains limited, as a review of the literature on the benefits of participating in sport concluded: *'The exact relationship between physical activity and crime reduction is not clear'*.<sup>70</sup> In addition, the relationship between physical activity and enabling young people to reach their potential is not clear.<sup>71</sup>

These uncertainties were explored in this study and, in particular, the relationship between boxing and martial arts and violent behaviour and improving young people's potential. The question is: are there any features specific to boxing and martial arts that explain these relationships? And under what circumstances are they active and contributing to positive changes in the life chances of young people?

The causal connections identified in this study occur within the values and ethos and Five Pillars model of FFP and these both provide the conditions for, and the generative causal mechanisms that explain how boxing and martial arts can contribute to improving young people's lives. It cannot, however, be assumed that these changes will necessarily occur in boxing gyms or venues where boxing and martial arts are the predominant activity. Such claims would require further research.

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<sup>65</sup> See for example, Cox, S. (2012), *Game of life*, London: Sport and Recreation Alliance.

<sup>66</sup> See for example, Coalter, F. (2007), *A wider role for sport*, London: Routledge.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group (2007), *Literature reviews on sport for development and peace*, Toronto: University of Toronto.

<sup>68</sup> See for example, Coalter, F. (2007), *A wider role for sport*, London: Routledge; Cox, S. (2012), *Game of life*, London: Sport and Recreation Alliance.

<sup>69</sup> See for example, Coalter, F. (2007), *A wider role for sport*, London: Routledge.

<sup>70</sup> Cox, S. (2012), *Game of life*, London: Sport and Recreation Alliance, page 132.

<sup>71</sup> See for example, Coalter, F. (2007), *A wider role for sport*, London: Routledge.

## 8.2 Core FFP theory of change

In essence, this study has found that FFP, as a social institution, is able to support young people to 'move from one state of affairs to another' to change the logic of their situation so that they are able to improve their potential, and are no longer motivated, or have reasons to use violence, and lead a life-style dependent on criminal activity.

This study also shows how these changes take place in two different countries with contrasting histories, cultures and community structures. Young people's life chances improve despite the fact that they often continue living in low income areas prone to violence. Structural constraints such as finding work that pays a living wage, gaining a place at college, state violence, and inadequately funded social support services, all remain. FFP occupies a position in local communities where it can successfully offer services and opportunities to young people which other agencies are often failing to provide.<sup>72</sup> Boxing and martial arts have a distinctive role in attracting young people to FFP, and in particular young men; they are able to identify with high body contact sports through their own street life experiences and use of violence and the image of boxing as a 'macho' sport.

The findings from this study show how the values and principles that are put into practice, and underpin the Five Pillars intervention model provide a context conducive to young people making changes to their lives. Thus, whilst some skills and features specific to boxing and martial arts can be identified and their contribution to improving life chances ascertained, they occur within FFP as a particular social institution. Attributing specific changes in attitudes or behaviour changes to one particular activity or organisational value would misrepresent the impact of the 'FFP experience', as described by young people and staff. In interviews a combination of values and activities were often emphasised and disentangling the interaction of several factors to identify one causal factor misrepresents how FFP works. Thus, mechanisms related to boxing and martial arts are identified and discussed within this context of a holistic provision, but with some reservation about isolating them entirely from other FFP influences. As identified earlier in this report, the interaction of each of the Five Pillars in the FFP model best predicts positive outcomes for young people.

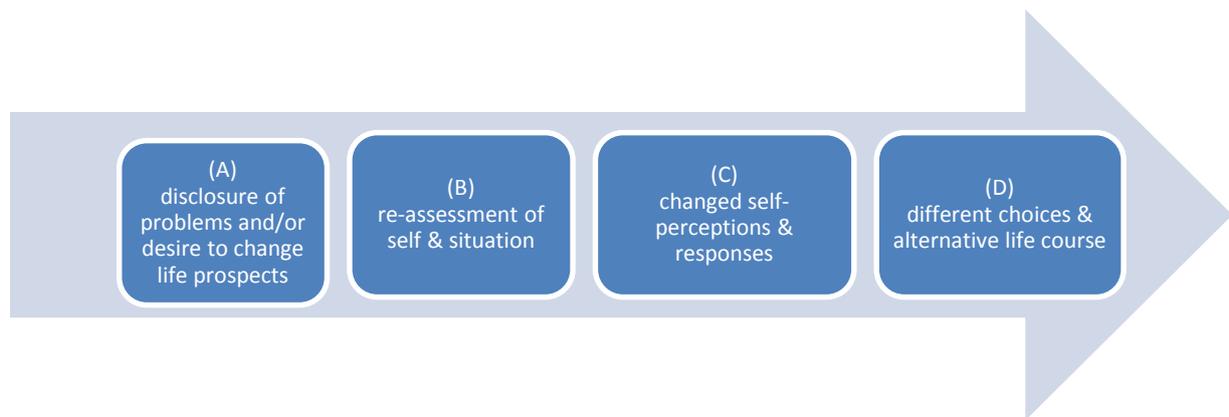
The core theory of change that underpins the FFP model is depicted in the diagram below. The findings discussed in this section show that at each stage of the process attributes and skills typified by the discipline of boxing and martial arts demonstrate how they contribute to young people feeling able to choose an alternative way of life.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> It is arguable that one of the successes of FFP is its pragmatism; by focusing on making a difference to the lives of young people in the here-and-now by responding to their immediate concerns and improving their life chances are activities which are realistic for a community organisation to achieve. A preoccupation with altering causes of poverty, disadvantage and inequality may take years to shift, and takes attention and resources away from young people who are currently in need of support, and there is a limited amount one small community organisation can achieve. FFP is an example of how success can be achieved without tackling deep-seated causes of poverty, crime, and limited opportunities arising from discrimination and failing state agencies.

<sup>73</sup> The FFP core theory of change is essentially a skills driven process that improves the potential of young people, as well as a preventive and rehabilitative programme. FFP brings about a change in the logic of their situation that leads to different decisions and choices because it is able to influence the reasons why young people use violence and to affect social divisions. Further, the FFP model works even though many so called risk factors remain in the local community within which it is situated, such as poverty, discrimination, violence, and failing social institutions. Thus, the FFP core theory of change may be described as strong; that is, the underpinning assumptions of the FFP model correctly predicts, in the majority of instances,

**Figure 8.1 Core theory of change: how FFP makes a difference to the lives of young people**



This study has found that some links between skills acquired from participating in boxing and martial arts at FFP and changes in the life course of participants can be identified and are specific to these high contact sports. Other connections are more generic to participating in physical activity. It is the intersection and dynamic interaction between the specific and generic sporting skills, combined with the attractiveness of boxing and martial arts to young people within the context of FFP and its Five Pillar intervention model that impacts upon young people's attitudes, thinking and decision-making.

The following sections identify the attributes and skills that arise from participating in boxing and martial arts that contribute to the core theory of change within the context of FFP as an organisation.

### **8.3 Physical activity; changing body shape and feeling able to affect change**

Physical activities at FFP include 'Fighting Fit' sessions in the gym as well as fitness training for boxing and martial arts. Young people often start by using the gym and, as they get fitter and more confident try boxing or martial arts. Martial arts are considered the most difficult and some young people try boxing and then move onto martial arts.

At FFP physical exercise is rigorous and typically changes young people's body shape in a short period of time. These changes in body definition demonstrate to young people that they can make a difference to how they look when they make an effort. Since society places a high value on physical appearance young people soon feel that their body shape is more attractive and this is often confirmed by peer approval which they find encouraging and motivating. Young women and men also emphasize their pride in being stronger. This sense of achievement is reinforced through FFP values and enables young people to feel more positive about themselves, and to be more self-accepting.

Participating in physical activity, alongside other FFP activities such as personal development and casework demonstrates to young people that they can take responsibility for themselves and make a difference to their own lives. Thus, changes in body image can be connected to taking personal

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how the aims of organisation can be realised, and this explains its success (see, for example, the argument that successful programmes are underpinned by strong theories; Weiss, C. (1995), 'Nothing as practical as good theory: exploring theory-based evaluation for Comprehensive Community Initiatives for children and families', in eds., Connell, J., A. Kubisch., L. Schorr and C. Weiss, *New approaches to evaluating community initiatives: concepts, methods, and contexts*, pages 65-92. Washington: Aspen Institute).

responsibility for one's situation and are key mechanisms that arise from intensive physical exercise that, amongst other things, triggers further effort and improvement.

#### **8.4 Attributes and skills arising from training**

FFP provides young people with a safe place to train where they can escape from feelings of fear associated with living in a violence prone area and the every day pressures of living in poverty. They train in a positive, friendly and supportive atmosphere at the FFP Academies and this environment enhances their commitment to learning the 'discipline'.

This study, like others, has found that those who routinely attend boxing clubs are not necessarily the most chaotic but rather those who wish to belong, and this includes active criminals who wish to conform.<sup>74</sup> A professional career in boxing and martial arts with the prospect of significant financial gains and a route out of poverty is an option for very few young people. For most, attending FFP gives them opportunities to improve their life chances, rather than making them rich and famous.

At FFP a strict training regime provides young people with a space to temporarily 'forget' their everyday worries, and the mundane routines and endless repetition of training drills provides an order and stability that many lack in other aspects of their lives. Training is repetitive and monotonous that requires self-control, and the adrenaline rush from sparring creates excitement, and this juxtaposition of control with excitement typifies boxing.<sup>75</sup> Young people also thrive on the routine of training which, at FFP, gives them a sense of pride and belonging. Through the training they learn that persistence and commitment are necessary to learn sporting skills, and to achieve.

The diagram below (figure 8.2) outlines the activities of the training and the skills that young people learn. Young people stress the importance of the unity of the FFP staff and how warming up for the training session is a joint activity that everyone does together, and how these activities create a sense of harmony and common purpose. This environment creates a positive feeling of togetherness and positivity that facilitates a willingness to listen and learn. During the training sessions young people are given attention and encouragement, and this makes them feel valued. Young people compare their emotional attachment to FFP to 'family', and describe FFP as their 'second home':

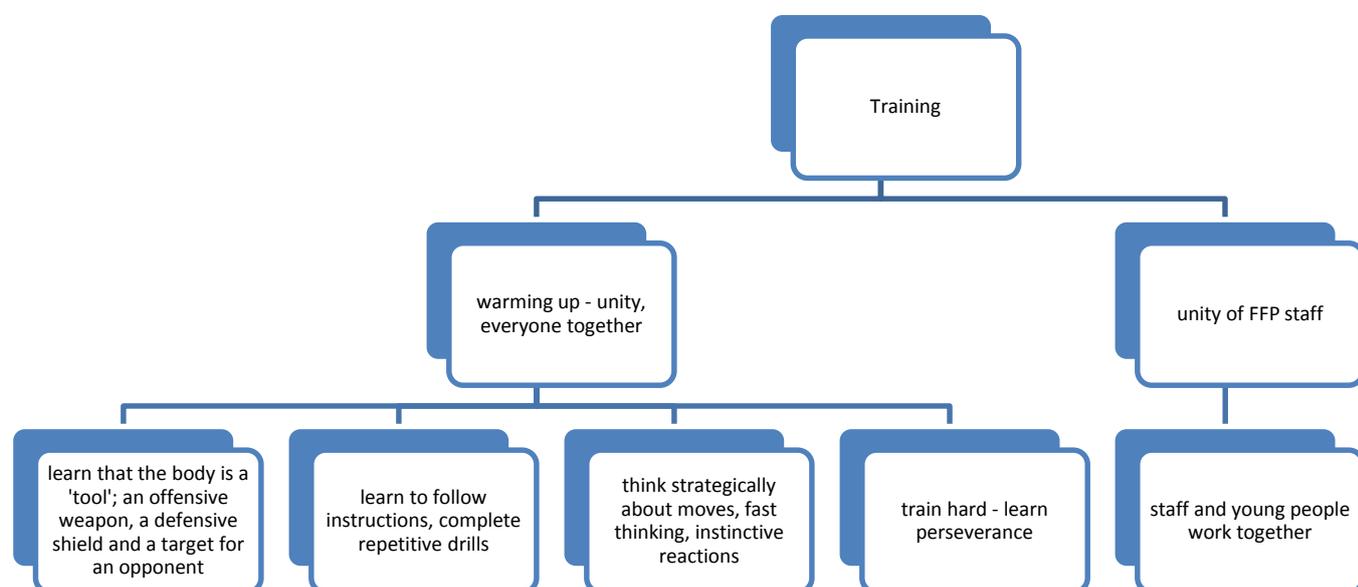
*'Yeah it's a friendly environment, it's like everyone's your family, it's good everyone says 'hey' smiling, it's good.'* (Male, 17)

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<sup>74</sup> In his three year participant observation study at a boxing club in a neighbourhood in Chicago's black ghetto in the late 1980s, Wacquant also found that the most chaotic did not regularly attend the gym, but as a coach commented '*if you want to know who's at d'bottom of society, all you gotta do is look at who's boxin''*', Wacquant, L. (2004), *Body and soul: notes of an apprentice boxer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, page 42. A desire to conform has been found even when people are leading 'extreme' criminal life-styles that excludes them from many mainstream opportunities. See Bourgois's ethnographic study with crack dealers living in East Harlem who aspired to an '*ideal-type, middle-class, nuclear family*', page 419. Bourgois, P. (1996 ), 'In search of masculinity: violence, respect and sexuality among Puerto Rican crack dealers in East Harlem', *British Journal of Criminology*, 36,3: 412-427.

<sup>75</sup> Personal communication: Luke Dowdney.

**Figure 8.2 Skills and attributes arising from boxing and martial arts training<sup>76</sup>**



Training sessions at FFP Open Access sessions are powerful scenes that exude energy and exhaustion, with coaches counting, watching and shouting general instructions, young people encouraging and cajoling each other or grunting and groaning. The sound of skipping ropes hitting the floor and bags being punched dominate, and a strong odour of sweat permeates the room. A line of young people can always be found skipping and shadowboxing in front of the mirrors to visually hone in on their skills, and to admire themselves, whilst others pause for a drink or to exchange banter. Young people learn to watch and are attentive to the moves of their peers. This learning from each other requires understanding, evaluating and then reproducing movements and relies on training with others of a similar or better standard, and on a nucleus of regular attendees to give this mutual teaching continuity.<sup>77</sup> These social skills and learning arise directly from how young people learn to box and explain the nature and strength of friendships formed at FFP that is integral to how young people reassess themselves and their situation (see figure 8.1; core theory of change). As described earlier in this report, the formation of new friendships with a shared interest in boxing, martial arts, and fitness, all contribute to improved outcomes for young people. Indeed, forming positive friendships is an aspect of FFP that many young people find particularly attractive.

The skills of the ‘discipline’ also affect how young people make their transitions into adulthood (see figure 8.2). Through training young people discover that their body is their ‘stock-in-trade’, learn technical skills and acquire a strategic knowledge in order to self-regulate hitting, being hit, and pain, and to maintain their body.<sup>78</sup> Through this self-regulation of their body young people develop an increased awareness of self which enables them to better understand who they are, and how to

<sup>76</sup> The diagram is a summary of information from observations at FFP, interviews with FFP staff and young people, and uses findings from an ethnographic study by L.Wacquant (2004), *Body and soul: notebooks of an apprentice boxer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pages 17-98.

<sup>77</sup> Loic Wacquant (2004), *Body and soul: notebooks of an apprentice boxer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pages 17-98.

<sup>78</sup> Loic Wacquant (2004), *Body and soul: notebooks of an apprentice boxer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pages 17-98.

behave.<sup>79</sup> As described earlier in this report, young people's responses to the training affects how they perceive themselves physically, socially, and emotionally, and these understandings enable them to re-assess themselves and their situation.<sup>80</sup> As a result, young people are able to revise their 'self rating of how well the self is doing', in other words, their self-confidence or self-esteem.<sup>81</sup> In addition, the findings from this study show that the skills young people learn during training are mechanisms that explain how they 'move from one state of affairs to another' and include:

- Listening and carrying out a set of instructions
- Learning new boxing and martial arts skills which gives young people a sense of achievement
- Communicating and working co-operatively with adults and other young people which gives young people a sense of being socially accepted and respected

The research has also identified that some 'states of being' arise from training and have multiple effects on attitudes and behaviour. Calmness illustrates how some responses or reactions can produce multiple causal reactions which are physical, social, and mental and affect how young people feel and behave. The research has found that calmness: increases the capacity of young people to listen and this enables young people to learn; reduces anxiety that enables young people to sleep better and feel 'refreshed' the next day; releases feelings of aggression so that young people feel less 'wound up' and less inclined to resort to using violence; and, the adrenalin that arises from physical exercise and sense of achievement enables young people 'feel better about themselves'. The following diagram summarises these effects:

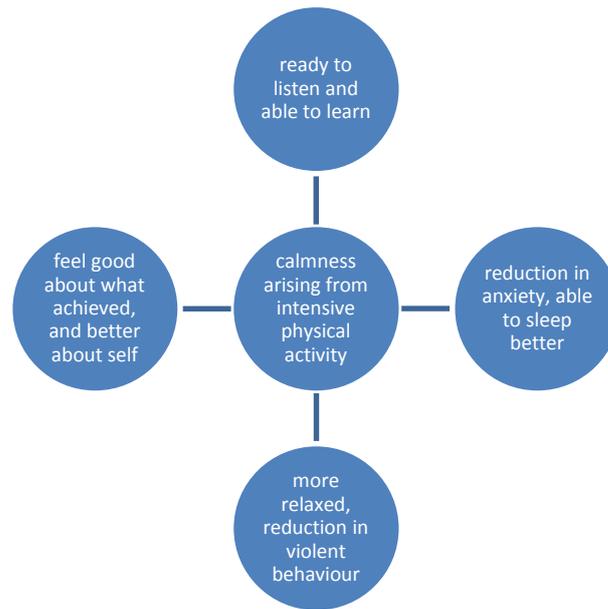
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<sup>79</sup> Fox, K. (2000), 'The effects of exercise on self-perceptions and self-esteem' in eds., S. Biddle, K. Fox, S. Boutcher, *Physical activity and psychological well-being*, London: Routledge, pages 88 – 117.

<sup>80</sup> Fox, K. (2000), 'The effects of exercise on self-perceptions and self-esteem' in eds., S. Biddle, K. Fox, S. Boutcher, *Physical activity and psychological well-being*, London: Routledge, pages 88 – 117.

<sup>81</sup> Fox, K. (2000), 'The effects of exercise on self-perceptions and self-esteem' in eds., S. Biddle, K. Fox, S. Boutcher, *Physical activity and psychological well-being*, London: Routledge, page 89. Self-confidence can, of course, be either positive and increase, or for some their confidence may decline and they become less confident. At FFP increased self-confidence is often an outcome, rather than a mechanism that triggers change, but for many young people it can be both, although improved confidence is often dependent on particular circumstances and therefore varies according to a young person's situation (Emler, N. (2001), *Self-esteem: the costs and causes of low self-worth*, York: York Publishing Services Ltd.). In this research attendees are interviewed and respond to self-completion questionnaires and since most attend voluntarily, they are likely to continue attending if they find FFP beneficial.

**Figure 8.3 Multiple effects of calmness arising from training hard**



### **8.5 Skills arising from competitive settings**

An integral part of training is practicing in competitive situations. When coaches decide a young person is 'ready' they are given the opportunity to spar, and compete against each other in training sessions. Young people are also encouraged to enter competitions and FFP has international, national and local competitors in boxing and martial arts.

Coaches stress how a young person needs to be 'mentally' ready to fight and it can take many months before they are able to combine strategic and physical skills necessary for a competitive situation. In these situations young people find out how fit, strong, and agile they are, and how well they can 'read the cues' of opponents to outwit them. Learning these skills enables young people to become more self-reliant and young people talked about being more independent, feeling able to resist peer pressure and to be themselves.

The climax of training has been described as sparring, a multi-sensorial skill specific to boxing; it teaches young people to learn visually, to guess opponent's attacks and read them in their eyes or from the orientation of their shoulders, to control expressive emotions to conceal hurtful punches, and requires efficiency through self-regulation to 'get the job done' in the most effective and least painful manner.<sup>82</sup> It has been argued that young people learn quickly in boxing and martial arts because mistakes hurt and pain reminds them not to make the same mistake again.<sup>83</sup> Effective sparring has been portrayed as a merging of the physical and mental so that the '*body and mind function in total symbiosis*.'<sup>84</sup> Young people who attend FFP describe this experience and the following young man, like others, connects this symbiosis to an improved life:

*'A better body image, a better thinking image, a better life.'* (Male, 20)

<sup>82</sup> See L. Wacquant (2004), *Body and soul: notebooks of an apprentice boxer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pages 78-96.

<sup>83</sup> Personal communication: Luke Dowdney, founder of FFP, and a boxer.

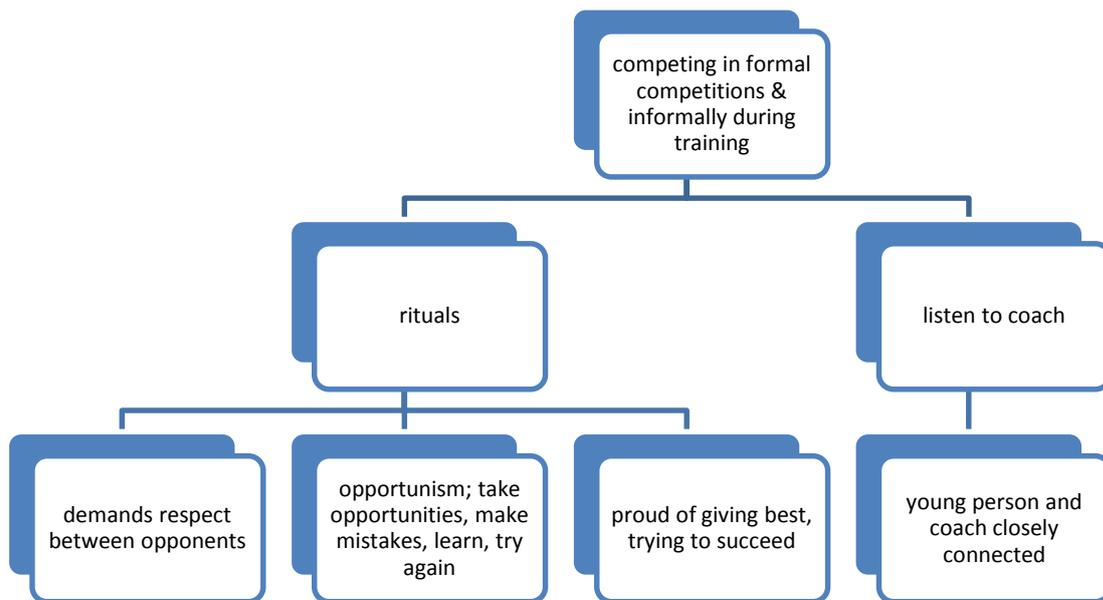
<sup>84</sup> See L. Wacquant (2004), *Body and soul: notebooks of an apprentice boxer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pages 78-96.

The mental strength that arises from routinely participating in boxing and martial arts is more than just *'better thinking'* and decision-making, and includes the strength to be more independent, and therefore less susceptible to peer pressure, and to be oneself. One young woman explains how these characteristics connect to the discipline and how she feels more powerful:

*'when I started boxing, they gave us discipline, fitness, determination, they inspired us to do well, so that really had an impact on me, so I know that I can be someone who I really want to be, not because my friends want to do something. So they made me more powerful. Before I used to get bullied, I used to think, 'I'm not strong,' but with FFP it's not only about your physical strength, it's your mental strength as well, because they strengthen that as well as your actual body strength.'* (Female, 15)

The following diagram (figure 8.4) summarises the skills and attributes identified by young people and staff that young people learn in competitive situations that explain how these changes have come about through participating in boxing and martial arts.

**Figure 8.4 Skills and attributes arising from competitive settings**



This study has found that striving to achieve a symbiosis between body and mind that typifies the *'discipline'* of boxing and martial arts challenges existing attitudes and behaviour characteristic of many young people who are negotiating their transition into adulthood and living in low income areas prone to violence.<sup>85</sup> For example, contact sport rituals demand respect between opponents (see figure 8.4 above), but for young street fighters respecting one's opponent requires a significant change in attitude and emotions. Coaches emphasize how feelings of revenge, hatred, and anger, all typical

<sup>85</sup> See, for example: Macdonald, R., and Marsh, J. (2001), 'Disconnected Youth?', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 4: 4, 373-391, and, Macdonald, R., Shildrick, T., Webster, C., and Simpson, D. (2005), 'Growing Up in Poor Neighbourhoods: The Significance of Class and Place in the Extended Transitions of 'Socially Excluded' Young Adults', *Sociology*, 39:5, 873- 891.

emotional components of violence and unbounded confrontations, contribute to losing a fight and prevent a young person from learning to become a good boxer or martial arts specialist.

Skills and attributes that arise from learning the 'discipline', identified in figures 8.2 and 8.4 above, challenge attitudes and behaviours typical of young people in other respects. Coaches teach young people that regulating violence in competitive settings is integral to preserving their bodies, the tool of their trade, including controlling their anger, and in training to understand that they have responsibilities to stop if their opponent is hurt. Learning to master and conceal their emotions enables young people to think strategically as well as react quickly and purposively during a fight and to win a fight in an effective manner, and to minimise the pain.<sup>86</sup> Where young people achieve symbiosis between body and mind they learn to manage their emotions and this skill enables them to make better judgements in pressured situations. Young people identify improved decision-making as a skill that they transfer to their everyday lives. This can, in part, be explained by a 'fusion' that is achieved between mental skills and actions; formed through repetitive training drills and sparring this fusion produces controlled responses which are automatic or 'instinctive' and become habits that are re-produced in other settings.<sup>87</sup>

Respecting one's opponent and learning from mistakes without 'losing face' can be counter intuitive to young street fighters with a 'cocky confidence' and an attitude that they are 'untouchable'. Coaches reiterate how trying new skills, making mistakes and learning from mistakes, and trying again, is how to improve, and they encourage young people to take risks, to push themselves further and to learn from these efforts. Young people learn from the coaches that this takes time, patience, and a commitment to train regularly. These 'demands' often require a change in 'mindset', and coaches understand that the 'discipline' can create uncertainties for young people because it triggers a process of reassessment whereby young people begin to problematise 'normal' behaviour, such as resorting to the use of violence. The use of praise, awards ceremonies, and ongoing youth work support provide young people with alternative forms of social recognition and guidance during times of reassessment and trying out new ways of behaving.

The experience of 'taking responsibility' is most apparent when a young person steps onto a mat or into a ring with an opponent. A young person is 'on their own' and how well they fight is due to their skill and their own effort. Whilst a young person is 'on their own' in a competitive situation, they also have the support and advice of their coach when making preparations, between rounds and after a fight. For young people this creates a strong social bond with an adult that has a common purpose and shared understanding. This experience of working together, receiving criticisms constructively, and trying to improve, is often a new experience for young people who are more familiar with conflictual social relationships and who live with violence at home and/or in their neighbourhood.

The FFP environment also contributes to young people developing positive attitudes that are part of their experience of 'doing' boxing and martial arts: they learn the value of mutual respect; experience pride that comes from trying to succeed; and, how to form constructive relationships with their coaches and other staff at FFP. This study has found that the 'can do' and supportive environment at

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<sup>86</sup> See L. Wacquant (2004), *Body and soul: notebooks of an apprentice boxer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pages 78-96.

<sup>87</sup> See L. Wacquant (2004), *Body and soul: notebooks of an apprentice boxer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pages 78-96.

FFP contributes to achieving cooperative behaviour and a positive disposition that are also learnt through participating in sport.

## **8.6 Connections between learning ‘the discipline’ and everyday life**

The proposition at the heart of the FFP theory of change is that young people develop a different value-base and life perspective from their ‘FFP experience’, and ‘naturally’ use their new life skills in all aspects of their life and make better decisions, from the logic of their new situation. The research has found that these processes of change are not necessarily linear, young people ‘lapse’ and make mistakes, but their direction of travel is towards ongoing re-assessment and re-evaluation that result in them making different choices.<sup>88</sup>

Several links between the use of skills learnt from the ‘discipline’ and changed behaviour in their everyday lives have been identified:

- Young people realise their strength and harm that they can cause to others, have greater control over their anger and aggressiveness, choose to avoid becoming involved in violent incidents and prefer to ‘prove’ themselves in the boxing ring or in martial arts
- Young people feel able to effectively use the skills they have learnt to defend themselves in the streets and feel safer, reducing the ‘need’ to carry a weapon, act defensively out of fear or to be aggressive or threatening
- Young people experience positive social relationships with adults, learn to give and earn respect, to take criticism constructively, to have more supportive relationships and make new friends with those who are from different ethnic groups and communities that are traditionally hostile to each other
- Young people gain mental strength and understand that to achieve they need to persevere and be focussed in what they do, and as a result, they are more inclined to do their homework, and acquire an independence that makes them are less reliant on peers

Three mechanisms in particular have been found to link participating in contact sports with changes in patterns of behaviour. These mechanisms interact, and are; self control, being humble, and altering gender relations. Within FFP they generate change by challenging existing attitudes and behaviour and by offering alternative values and ways of behaving that arise, in part, from learning the philosophy and skills of boxing and martial arts. Each is discussed below:

### *8.6.1 Self-control*

The findings from this research suggest that self-control learnt from participating in boxing and martial arts regulates young people’s anger and teaches them to manage their emotions. As a result, young people themselves recognise that they make better judgements in difficult situations and improve their behaviour. During informal discussions and one-to-one sessions, FFP staff work with young

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<sup>88</sup> One implication of the FFP core theory of change is that because the skills learnt at FFP change the logic of a young person’s situation then young people use these skills in many different situations, at school, at home and in the streets. What is challenging for young people is still being labelled a ‘troublemaker’, even though they have changed their attitudes and behaviour, and increased their aspirations.

people to enable them to cope better with their emotions and this reinforces the skills young people have learnt during boxing and martial arts training.<sup>89</sup>

A young man describes how training routines have affected his behaviour, an experience that reflects the views of others:

*'I was a rough fighter I would say, in a street fight before, I could defend that time as well – boxing, though I have a better body image and I'm more stronger than before, boxing doesn't teach you to go up and beat people if someone looks at you wrong or if he swears at you, it just tells you how to control your anger. The routine that you go through is phenomenal, it teaches you how to behave.'* (Male, 20)

As this young man explains the training has given him the skills to control his anger and improve his behaviour, *'it just tells you how'*. The *'how'* is the combined physical and mental skills that is specific to boxing and martial arts and an outcome of this relationship is self-efficacy. The research findings suggest that where confidence arises from self-efficacy then young people are able to exert self-control in other settings. A young man describes strong links between self-control and boxing skills as follows:

*'It makes you disciplined because it makes you control your anger when you're in the ring, ... you can't just lash out and be angry and then throw random punches because the fighter you're fighting, he could just move out of the way and just punch you, and that's you gone in the fight. So that helps you control your anger, the training, just how hard it is, it just makes you feel more disciplined like that and your anger just needs to get under control.'* (Male, 15)

Connections between improved behaviour and increasing young people's potential are also embedded in contextual factors; for example, professional training at FFP motivates young people to reach high standards, and youth work staff encourage young people to achieve in all aspects of their lives. A young person explains that he is learning how to be successful:

*'Yeah, the Muay Thai has a big effect 'cause it teaches you that discipline, motivation to push on, the coaches and the staff members help you to push on and reach a goal not only in the sport but in your life ... discipline to stick with my studies, not to drop out and stuff like that...'* (Male, 21)

### 8.6.2 Learning to be humble

Young street fighters and those involved in organised crime describe themselves as being 'untouchable', and other young people describe them as having 'cocky confidence'. The use of violence to create a 'macho' and 'cocky' persona has been described as a struggle for dignity, a strategy to manage fear and to compensate for feelings of inadequacy.<sup>90</sup> Through its ethos and activities the FFP model provides young people with alternative ways of achieving dignity and social recognition that are of importance to them. Acquiring boxing skills and knowledge contributes to a

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<sup>89</sup> The ability of youth workers to work effectively with young people's emotions to prevent further criminality has been identified in other studies. See for example, Sampson, A., and Themelis, S., (2009) 'Working in the community with young people who offend', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 12,2: 121-137.

<sup>90</sup> See for example Bourgois, P. (1996), 'In search of masculinity: violence, respect and sexuality among Puerto Rican crack dealers in East Harlem', *British Journal of Criminology*, 36,3: 412-427, page 414.

'mindset' change from 'raging' and 'pompous' to modesty, and from feelings of inadequacy to self-belief, as this young man describes:

*'I think kids come in with like a vulgar, raging attitude, walking in, thinking they're all pompous and big-headed, and then within a couple of weeks, or a couple of months... I have seen them to be more calm, more relaxed ... the first thing that you would learn is that you don't need to prove to anyone else that you can fight. As soon as you learn the skill or the art, you within yourself, you will believe within yourself.'* (Male, 20)

Another young man also describes boxing as an art and explains how using physical and mental skills to fight effectively requires a person to be humble:

*'Everyone thinks it's just about two people hitting each other, but it's not, it's like an art, it takes time, there's different aspects so it's not just about hitting you have to master each particular punch, all the ... it's crazy, it's mentally, physically and spiritually, you know? 'Cause you've got to understand when you're getting in a ring the person hasn't really done nothing to hurt you like emotionally or something, but you've still to ... how shall I say? Beat him up in a way. So you have to mentally be humble as well, if you want to go somewhere with it, to me you have to be humble.'* (Male, 17)

Several 'cocky' young men did, indeed, find the training 'humbling'. A young man who was a street fighter explains how learning Muay Thai has changed his self-perception, his thinking, and actions:

*'I grew up, like a man, as well, because I used to think that I could fight anyone or I could do anything I want,... When I came into Thai boxing, it made me grow more, to think before I act, that kind of stuff.'* (Male, 21)

### 8.6.3 Altering gender relations

Research studies have consistently found that young people in their transition years, and living in poverty and with adversity, place a high premium of being treated with respect.<sup>91</sup> Young women, like young men, 'stand up' for themselves, and resort to fighting if they are disrespected, and sexual promiscuity causes fights between young women.<sup>92</sup> Studies have also found that sexual relations, and the demands for sex by young men, creates complex and unequal relationships between young women and men that can be coercive and exploitative.<sup>93</sup> Young women talk about how some young men 'think that they can go up to a girl and just get whatever they want' (Female, 15), and staff know young women who have been, and continue to be sexually exploited by groups of young men. Thus, on the one hand young people attach great importance to being treated with respect, and on the other, they are disrespectful and exploitative in their own social and sexual relationships.

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<sup>91</sup> See for example, Anderson. E. (1999), *Code of the street: decency, violence and the moral life of the inner city*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

<sup>92</sup> See for example, Phillips, C. (2003), 'Who's who in the pecking order? Aggression and 'normal violence' in the lives of girls and boys', *British Journal of Criminology*, 43: 710-28; and, Batchelor, S. (2011), 'Beyond dichotomy: towards an explanation of young women's involvement in violent street gangs' in ed., B.Goldson, *Youth in crisis? 'Gangs', territoriality and violence*, Abingdon: Routledge, pages 110 – 127.

<sup>93</sup> These complexities can also be expected where young people are gay or transsexual. All the young people who were interviewed, and talked about sex and sexual promiscuity, discussed their experiences from a heterosexual perspective.

The findings from this study suggest that skills specific to boxing and martial arts, and the values and activities at FFP can contribute to changing young people's gender relations to be more respectful and mutually supportive.<sup>94</sup> Changes in self-perception and behaviour by young men, and by young women, and changes in how the role of women is perceived by men, and how women perceive their own position, contribute to these improvements.

Firstly, self-control arising from the 'discipline' (see figures 8.2 and 8.4), and taking greater responsibility for oneself by learning to maintain and protect one's body can include sexual responsibility. One young woman explains how some of the young men at FFP have stopped perceiving young women as sex objects and have learnt to control themselves:

*'... they just want the same thing, which is mostly sex,... some of them they used to be like that, but they've changed, they've changed their ways... they've sort of realised here you get disciplined ... you've got how to control yourself, like if you're in a fight or whatever, how to control yourself, how to protect yourself, how to deal with situations.'* (Female, 15)

Secondly, this young woman also explains that the discipline teaches '*how to protect yourself, how to deal with situations,*' and these skills enable young women to protect their own boundaries and space.<sup>95</sup> And, as discussed earlier in this section, through training young people's body image changes and this change in shape enables them to start a process of self-acceptance. Young people learn to make decisions independently through their experience of being in a competitive situation, when they have to rely on their own mental and physical skills. These skills contribute to young women – and men – feeling safer on the streets and better able to protect themselves.

Feelings of self-worth and self-belief that arise from a sense of achievement from learning boxing and martial arts techniques are reinforced in discussions with youth workers, and give young women a 'can do' attitude. These factors – independence, self-acceptance, ability to defend oneself, and ambition, all contribute to young women feeling better able to protect their boundaries on their own terms. The extent to which these young women can protect themselves from predatory male sexuality was, however, not explored in this study. Nevertheless, the research findings suggest that more respectful relationships amongst FFP members are negotiated.

Thirdly, boxing in particular is considered to be a sport for men, with its macho image and reputation for aggressiveness and it follows that, women participating in boxing and martial arts influences perceptions of gender roles. The values and principles at FFP mean that young women are given equal value, support, and encouragement. Being in an environment where women receive equal treatment, and training with women boxers can challenge young men's perceptions of women and their role, particularly in male-dominated cultures. Visits by 2012 Olympic boxing champion Nicola Adams to both Academies further challenges traditional stereotypes of women and what they can achieve, particularly as she is widely acclaimed for her boxing skills. For women, being offered the opportunity to participate in boxing broadens their horizons about 'what is possible', and the achievement of Nicola Adams shows them that women can succeed at the highest level, even in a sport typically pursued by men. In addition in both the Academies the managers are women and women are

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<sup>94</sup> The research findings presented in this section are limited, and further information is required about the complexities of gender relations, and how they may be improved so that women are not undervalued, and all young people can reach their potential.

<sup>95</sup> Kidd, B. (2008), 'A new social movement: sport for development', *Sport in society*, 11,4:370-80.

professional coaches as well as support staff. Thus, experiencing equal treatment in a typically male-dominated setting of boxing and martial arts has positive affects for young women, as well as young men.

Young women are representatives on the FFP Youth Council and have positions as assistant coaches, and this further reinforces the equal status accorded to women. Thus, young men experience being in an environment where women have responsibilities and leadership roles and with whom they make decisions as equal partners. Within society inequalities and discrimination is often deeply ingrained but within FFP a commitment to equal treatment provides young people with an opportunity to learn mutual respect and to form relationships based on experiences of equality and equal value.

## **8.7 Summary**

The findings from this study demonstrate that the FFP Academies are highly successful. The research shows how each of the Five Pillars are informed by, and interact with the values, ethos, and professionalism of the staff which are distinguishing characteristics of FFP as an organisation, and contributes to its achievements.

The effectiveness of FFP occurs because its activities and reputation are attractive to young people, partner agencies, and local communities, its programmes are responsive to young people's situation, and young people learn values and skills that enable them to make different and more positive choices in their everyday lives.

Thus, for example, within the context of FFP as an organisation and the robust implementation of the Five Pillar's model, learning the 'discipline' of boxing and martial arts contributes positively to young people's lives by:

- Regulating their anger and teaching them to manage their emotions and this enables young people to make better judgements in difficult situations.
- Learning that being humble and working hard leads to self-improvement. These are useful attributes to learn because young people use them in other aspects of their lives, on FFP education courses, on work placements, and at school, for example.
- Learning to respect one's opponent and to take responsibility for how well they fight gives young people the skills to form respectful social relationships and to be more self-reliant.
- Equal treatment given to young women challenges the stereotypes of women and enables young women to broaden their horizons about what is possible for them to achieve, and for young men to perceive and treat women with respect.

## **Appendix A: data collection**

In this appendix further information is provided on the data used in this study.

### **A.1 Data collection**

Data were collected from various sources and included self-completion questionnaires, interviews, observations and FFP monitoring information from 2010 to 2013. The following describes the data used in the report:

#### *A.1.2 Monitoring data from FFP/LPP*

During the research period the monitoring data at the FFP Academy in London was transferred to an electronic database. During this process some categories were changed by the company who developed the software for Greater London Authority, in particular, ethnic groups. This made comparison with previous years more difficult, and some categories are unsatisfactory, 'British', for example, but these will be altered for future years.

Monitoring data at LPP in Rio have been collected and entered onto an excel spreadsheet since 2011, and collated for annual reports. The way in which the data are entered does not lend itself to particular types of analysis, such as length of attendance over more than one year and attrition rates over two years, in part because double counting is a problem.

Outcome data are collected by both Academies at the end of a programme, but information on what young people were doing six months or a year after they had left FFP, was often incomplete. Both Academies have monitoring and evaluation officers and more emphasis is being given to the collection of data and, in particular, to outcomes such as places at colleges, further training courses attended, employment histories, and offending. Offending data in particular are likely to be under-recorded.

With respect to assessing outcomes missing data introduces greater uncertainties, but when all the data are considered together, in our judgement, the outcome data seem a fair reflection of the contribution FFP is making to improving the lives of many young people.

#### *A.1.3 Self-completion questionnaires*

Questionnaires are completed annually by young people, youth council members, staff, partner agencies and parents/carers. The questionnaires analysed for this report are those completed by young people and staff. Partners have been interviewed face-to-face and findings from these interviews have been analysed and used in this study. Due to the low response rate of the parents/carers questionnaires they have not been included.

The self completion questionnaires for young people are administered to all young people who attend during a particular week or two week period which is thought to be a 'typical' week, and in this sense can be considered as a census period. A member of staff at each Academy has responsibility for the collection of information, data entry and analysis. Staff in London and Rio understand the importance of administering the questionnaires to a high standard by encouraging young people to complete the questionnaires, making sure that young people have a pen and a quiet space, and time to fill them in.

Staff reported that the overwhelming majority of young people completed a questionnaire during the 'census days'. We know that attendance varies not just from week-to-week but also month-to-month depending on young people's other constraints and activities such as family illnesses and school examinations, so some variation in attendance can be expected throughout a year.

The reliability of the responses given by young people is a consideration. Every effort has been made to ensure that the questions are clear and easy to understand for a wide range of ages and abilities. The questionnaires have simple questions requiring 'tick box' answers, and for those who wish to write comments there are several places on the questionnaire to encourage free writing. The questionnaires have been administered yearly since 2009 in both Academies and during this time we have exchanged emails and had face-to-face meetings and discussions to scrutinise the questions and their responses. One method of 'checking' reliability is to compare findings from the same question over time and 'match' the findings from each year against what FFP staff are doing; for example, one year in London the implementation of the 'embracing' value was not practiced routinely (identified through observations and interviews with staff) and fewer young people responded positively to the question '*I feel I belong to FFP*' but the following year a new member of staff was hired and more emphasis was put on welcoming young people when they arrived, and the positive responses increased again, giving greater confidence that this question was sensitive to practices.

The use of culturally sensitive questions is also related to reliability; for example, 'ambition' is derogatory term, and the term 'gang' not understood in Rio and these words are not used, but they are included in the London self-completion questionnaires. Questions also reflect the different emphasis given to making a difference to the lives of young people; in Rio staff work more intensively with families than in London, and changes in young people's decision-making can be expected to be more closely linked to any changes in family relationships and therefore more questions are included in the Rio questionnaires on the possible influence of families on a young person's life course since they joined FFP.

Data are entered onto the statistical package SPSS in London and where a small number of questions have been answered or where the 'ticks' or 'crosses' are not clearly in a box throughout the questionnaire, giving the impression the person has rushed through the questionnaire, they are not included in the analysis. In Rio the data are first entered onto an excel data base and then converted to SPSS at the University of East London, and a few questionnaires have also been discarded.

Young people who were members of the Youth Councils in Rio and London also completed questionnaires about their roles and responsibilities and the affect of their membership on their lives. Staff also received self-completion questionnaires and questions include their understandings of, and commitment to the Five Pillar's model as well as questions on how they affect change in the behaviour of young people, and those who they are able to influence and those who are difficult to work with.

#### *A.1.4 Young people's interviews*

The main purpose of the interviews with young people was to understand more about how attending FFP affects their attitudes and behaviour and if these changes are consistent with the aims of the FFP programme; namely to reduce 'divisions' and 'violence', and to increase the 'potential' of young people. The interviews were also designed to compliment the information gained from the self-completion questionnaires by improving our understandings of the causal links that may explain

changes in attitudes and behaviour identified in the questionnaires; for example, feeling calmer and respecting the opinions of others. Young people were also asked about their future goals and what type of life style they aspired to when they were older to give meaning to what 'potential' signifies to them. There were variations between the interviews in Rio and London. In London particular emphasis was placed on finding out more about connections between boxing and martial arts and the use of violence in the everyday lives of young people. In Rio more attention was given to exploring issues related to drug-trafficking.

Young people were purposively selected with the assistance of FFP staff to gather information from a wide range of young people to find out how FFP worked, for whom, and under what circumstances. A range of ages, academic and sporting abilities, participation in the different martial arts as well as boxing, gender, personal circumstances, and length of time attended were all taken into consideration in the selection process. To keep within the research budget those attending FFP at the time of the research were interviewed and interviews took place on FFP premises. FFP staff encouraged young people to talk to the researchers. It is reasonable to expect staff to encourage those who they thought would create a favourable impression of the FFP to participate in the research. However, the researchers were very specific about the inclusion of young offenders and those who continue to be unemployed, as well as those who lived locally and were doing well at school or college. Those who were interviewed represent a wide range of the types of young people attending and any bias is likely to have been subtle. Our interview style was open and 'conversational' and encouraged young people to be reflective and critical in order to negate any tendencies towards attributing any changes in their 'mindset' or behaviour to their FFP experiences, and talking about FFP without reflection.

Some of the younger age groups, as well as those who felt vulnerable or who had limited English language skills preferred to respond to a series of questions led by the researcher. Others, however, became engaged in a conversation with the researcher and discussed connections between skills learnt doing boxing and martial arts and changes in behaviour in other aspects of their lives, and if, and when, improved social skills, educational qualifications and training in preparation for interviews for employment, made a difference to their lives.

In London in particular an interview style was adopted that challenged more confident interviewees when they made links between attending FFP and their improved lives, and in particular any links they made between a reduction in their aggressive behaviour or violent criminality and learning to box. Young people were asked to provide examples of when they had used aggressive behaviour and their fighting skills outside the ring. In this way more rigour was introduced through a process of refutation, based on the premise that young people are more likely to give a positive perspective, particularly if they enjoy an activity or have a loyalty to the organisation that gives them new opportunities.

Prior to the interviews with young people the researchers read relevant academic literature and used information gathered from observing boxing and martial arts sessions to inform the discussions with young people.

#### *A.1.5 Staff interviews*

Staff were purposively selected for face-to-face interviews. They were chosen for their in-depth knowledge of the area, the uniqueness of their role in the Academies, and because they were identified by young people as outstanding practitioners. The structured questions were designed to

'test' and refute hypotheses about how FFP worked and covered issues where we lacked information to make informed judgements about interpreting data for the analysis. As the interviews progressed they became 'free flowing' with the interviewee typically talking about young people's problems, how they worked with them, and factors that made it difficult for them to influence young people's attitudes and behaviour. The researcher(s) questioned the responses of interviewees to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of the problems young people experienced and the theories practitioners used to work with young people, and compared them with the FFP Five Pillars model.

#### *A.1.6 Partner interviews*

The partners selected for interviews were agreed in collaboration with FFP managers to ensure that a 'spread' of opinions and experiences were gathered from those involved in different aspects of the work of FFP; for example, some referred young people to FFP, others provided young people with training, and some received referrals from FFP.

The interview schedules were compiled prior to the interviews and sent to the interviewees, using email. They included sections on FFP as an organisation to find out how they work with FFP staff, if the arrangements are efficient and effective, and from their knowledge of FFP and their impressions and experiences of FFP as an organisation and if, and how, this affected their working relationships with FFP staff. Questions on the affect of FFP being located in the area and its influence, if any, on local communities were also included in the interview schedule.

## **A.2 Rio**

### *A.2.1 Partner agencies*

The 13 interviews with partner agencies were conducted by Maria Rita Villela, a Social Science PhD candidate who lives in Rio de Janeiro, and Alice Sampson, from the University of East London. The police declined to be interviewed, and one Community Association manager agreed to meet the researchers but on the agreed day had an emergency and the manager was unable to keep the appointment.

The partner organizations were as follows: five NGOs in Maré; a primary and secondary school attended by young people living in Maré; two community neighbourhood associations in Maré; and four public social service support /justice organisations.

The overwhelming majority of interviews were with women (77%), and only two took place with one representative of the organisation. Two or three people usually met with the researchers and all attendees typically contributed to the interviews. The interviews were taped, and lasted between thirty minutes and almost two hours. Most of the interviews started formally and then became more like conversations, with follow-up questions asked by the researchers and by the interviewees, who often had years of experience to draw on. Many were intrigued by the research and being part of a research study was a new experience for them, and they asked about its purpose and what we were doing. This interview style enriched the quality of the information gained from the interview, and gave the researchers greater insights into how the agencies did, and did not, work together and the reasons for a lack of co-ordination.

### *A.2.2 Staff*

A total of 37 staff, from a possible 58, completed a questionnaire (64%). Responses were therefore analysed from almost two-thirds of the staff.

Four members of staff were also interviewed; two were youth workers, one was a manager, and one a community outreach worker. Two of the staff were women and two were men. Three of the staff live in Maré and therefore have a perspective of LPP from the community within which LPP is situated, and these interviews gave different insights about living in Maré.

### *A.2.3 Young people*

In September 2012 self-completion questionnaires were administered over a two week period by those who attended the Open Access and New Pathways programmes. The Open Access questionnaires were administered to all young people who attended the citizenship classes during the two week 'census' period. All the young people co-operated and completed a questionnaire which was organised by FFP staff. During the same two week period all those who attended the New Pathways courses also agreed to complete a questionnaire. There was nothing unusual or special about this two week period and it is reasonable to assume that those who completed the questionnaires are typical of young people who usually attend these programmes.

A total of 86 questionnaires for the Open Access programme were completed and used for the data analysis. The table below shows that when comparing the monitoring data with the self-completed questionnaires there is an under-representation of young men and those 16 years and under. The ethnic groups are similar.

**Table A1: 2012 Open Access monitoring data and self-completion questionnaires**

	LPP monitoring data 2012 (n=1,260) (percent)	Self-completion questionnaires September 2012 (n=86) (percent)
female	24	29
male	76	69
16 years and under	55	41
Over 16 years	44	55
White Brazilian	30	30
Black Brazilian	26	24
Dual/multiple Heritage (Pardo)	44	41

Notes: 1) Where percentages do not add up to 100% this may be due to rounding or to a small amount of missing data. 2) The age data are collected for 15 – 17 years and the number of young people has been re-distributed equally to the 16 years and under and over 16 years categories.

All the young people who attend the pathways education course attend are 16 years and over. The table below shows that women and dual/mixed heritage are over-represented in the self-completion questionnaires.

**Table A2: 2012 New Pathways monitoring data and self-completion questionnaires**

	LPP monitoring data (n=334) (percent)	Self-completion questionnaires (n=83) (percent)
female	54	68
male	45	31
White Brazilian	14	19
Black Brazilian	16	22
Dual/Mixed Heritage (pardo)	37	55

Notes: 1) Where percentages do not add up to 100% this may be due to rounding or to a small amount of missing data. 2) A third (33%) of the data on ethnicity is missing. It has been suggest that 'ethnicity' is not integral to a young person's identity, as it is in the UK. In Rio young people living in a favela or same geographical neighbourhood often 'bond' irrespective of skin colour or background and therefore completing a question on ethnicity is not meaningful to them.<sup>96</sup>

Twenty-one face-to-face interviews with young people were conducted by Maria Rita Villela and the young people with the following profiles were selected: very good fighters engaged in boxing; those engaged in different types of sport; some attending the education new pathways programme only; long standing and new members; young people who are academically able and hardworking; young people with a history of drug use/criminality; young people with history of experiencing domestic violence; and, young mothers.

<sup>96</sup> Personal communication: Vinicius Ribeiro, Monitoramento & Avaliação, Academia Luta Pela Paz (Monitoring & Evaluation, Fight for Peace Academy).

Of these young people, 71% were male and 29% young women, and were aged between 12 and 25 years old and the majority were teenagers, 13 young people (62%), and seven young people were in their twenties. This age distribution of attendees reflected the age ranges of all attendees. Similarly, the sample included young people who had attended for a few months to those who had attended for 8 years, with seven young people who had attended for a year or less, seven who had been members between a year and four years, and seven who had attended between 5 and 8 years.

All 11 members of the young council completed a questionnaire.

### **A.3 London**

#### *A.3.1 Partner agencies*

The 11 interviews with partner agencies were conducted by Alice Sampson, and all those approached agreed to participate except for the local community association who did not respond to requests for an interview. Those interviewed included a wide range of partners from voluntary organisations who provided emergency accommodation for young people, agencies who found work placements and employment for young people, private companies offering skills training to assist young people to apply for work, criminal justice agencies and schools. Two interviews were conducted on the telephone with agencies who found work placements and the nine other interviews lasted between 45 minutes and an hour, and on two occasions two people were present. A total of seven men, and six women were interviewed and the semi-structured interview schedule used to structure a conversation involved many follow-up questions to explore more about their experiences of working with FFP, how the young people behaved, and the social skills they used outside the FFP Academies.

Contemporaneous notes were taken at the time of the interviews and written up immediately afterwards, and then themed and any anomalies identified.

#### *A.3.2 Staff*

A total of 16 staff completed questionnaires were analysed, a 57% completion rate.

Three members of staff were interviewed in person, the manager and two youth workers, one man and one woman, who were selected because young people talked about how they had made a difference to how they perceived themselves, their aspirations and the decisions they were making about their future.

#### *A.3.3 Young people*

In December 2011 self-completion questionnaires were administered over a two week period to all young people who attended the Open Access programme and the Intensive/Pathways programme. The following tables summarise demographic information from the monitoring data for 2011 and from the self completion questionnaires for each programme.

A total of 118 questionnaires were completed for the Open Access programme and used in the analysis. The monitoring data and self-completion questionnaires are comparable for gender. There is an under-representation of 16 years and over, Asians and British, and an over-representation of White Other who weremostly Europeans from Eastern Europe.

**Table A3: 2011 Open Access monitoring data and self-completion questionnaires**

	FPP monitoring data 2011 (n=575) (percent)	Self-completion questionnaires December 2011 (n=118) (percent)
female	18	15
male	82	81
Under 16 years	10	22
16 years and over	90	73
Black	41	43
Asian	16	10
British	10	6
White other (mostly Continental Europeans)	8	16
Dual heritage	9	11
Other ethnic group	6	8

Note: 11% of ages were unknown and 12% of ethnicity unknown. The age percentages were calculated using the number known (521); and percentage of ethnicity were calculated using total number (575). Where percentages do not add up to 100% this may be due to rounding or to a small amount of missing data.

For the intensive programmes a total of 70 questionnaires were completed and analysed. Comparing the monitoring data and self-completion questionnaires, there is an over-representation of young women, British, those with dual heritage, and a significant over-representation of those under 16 years, and an under-representation of Blacks, and white Europeans who are typically from East Europe. Thus, young people who attended the Twilight programme for schools were more likely to have completed a questionnaire than the older group who attended the Pathways education programme.

**Table A4: 2011 Intensive programmes monitoring data and self-completion questionnaires (Pathways and Twilight programmes)**

	FPP monitoring data 2011 (n=190) (percent)	Self-completion questionnaires December 2011 (n=70) (percent)
female	20	29
male	80	63
Under 16 years	28	59
16 years and over	72	31
Black	34	24
Asian	7	9
British	21	27
White other (mostly Continental Europeans)	17	4
Dual heritage	8	17
Other ethnic group	6	7

Note: For the monitoring data, 8% of ages were unknown and 6% of ethnicity unknown. The age percentages were calculated using the number known ages (167); and percentage of ethnicity were calculated using total number (190). Where percentages do not add up to 100% this may be due to rounding or to a small amount of missing data.

Of the 37 young people interviewed face-to-face, 9 were young women (24%) and 28 were young men (76%) and represented a range of ethnic groups including East Europeans and Portuguese, (12), white British (8), Black (6), Asian (4), and dual heritage (4), and other ethnic groups from across the world.

One young person ended the interview early and six young people asked that the conversations were not taped and on these occasions notes were taken immediately after the interview. One young person had moved away from the area and was interviewed by telephone. All the other young people were interviewed at FFP.

Those who were interviewed were selected to represent the diversity of circumstances and abilities that attend FFP. Thus, some are refugees and lived alone or in a hostel, others live in families who have been in East London for several generations; some have been excluded from school, attend pupil referrals units, and others attend school regularly; some have a long history of criminality, violence, and fighting, and a few take illegal drugs; some are victims of crime and witness domestic violence; some are young mothers; many are striving economically, have little money and feel stressed and under-pressure. Interviews lasted between 10 minutes and 45 minutes.

All 11 members of the youth council completed a questionnaire.