FLOURISHING FROM THE MARGINS:

LIVING A GOOD LIFE AND DEVELOPING PURPOSE IN MARGINALISED YOUNG PEOPLE

RESEARCH REPORT

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Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues is a unique and leading centre for the examination of how character and virtues impact on individuals and society. The Centre was founded in 2012 by Professor James Arthur. Based at the University of Birmingham, it has a dedicated team of 30 academics from a range of disciplines, including: philosophy, psychology, education, theology and sociology.

With its focus on excellence, the Centre has a robust and rigorous research and evidence-based approach that is objective and non-political. It offers world-class research on the importance of developing good character and virtues and the benefits they bring to individuals and society. In undertaking its own innovative research, the Centre also seeks to partner with leading academics from other universities around the world and to develop strong strategic partnerships.

A key conviction underlying the existence of the Centre is that the virtues that make up good character can be learnt and taught. We believe these have largely been neglected in schools and in the professions. The Centre also holds a key conviction that the more people exhibit good character and virtues, the healthier our society will be. As such, the Centre undertakes development projects seeking to promote the practical applications of its research evidence.

This report was launched by Ian Webber, Managing Director of Rathbone Training UK, in the Senate Chamber at the University of Birmingham on 26 October 2017.

['CHARACTER IS A LESSON YOU NEVER STOP LEARNING.'

Ash Carter, Former US Secretary of Defense]

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[1]   Online Appendices can be found at: www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/flourishingfromthemargins

Foreword
Dame Kelly Holmes

Growing up, I think it's fair to say that I didn't have the easiest start in life. My mum was 17 when she had me and I don't really know my natural father, as he left before I was even one.

At school I always felt I was behind; almost just going through the motions at times. The fact I wasn't academically gifted probably didn't help, however I never felt I was getting much out of the education system, particularly in terms of life lessons and values.

It wasn't until the age of 12 when this changed. It was my PE teacher Debbie Page who saw something in me and for the first time I thought I could actually be good at something. She identified my talent.

It altered my entire outlook and completely changed the way I went about life on a daily basis. I had a goal, which got me focussed, motivated and determined.

Nothing was going to stop me achieving my goal of becoming an Olympic champion. This in turn made me more resilient across other aspects of my life and enabled me to respond to various other setbacks.

I know for sure, that if I hadn't met Debbie, I wouldn't have achieved the things I've been able to as an adult – both in sport and across other aspects of my life. I learn regularly of elite sportspeople who have gone through a very similar upbringing and journey to me.

That's why I set up Dame Kelly Holmes Trust nine years ago. It's not about creating Olympic champions but empowering young people facing disadvantage to achieve a positive life and reach their full potential. We've proven that sportspeople can be exceptional vehicles for change; the results speak for themselves.

This is why I know that character can be learnt and taught.

I believe every single young person – regardless of their background or current circumstances – has these traits deep within them. It can often just take one special person or support network to help them be realised.

That's why I support the work of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues and their desire to improve the knowledge base within this area.

I'm particularly interested in their focus on schools and marginalised groups, which is why this latest report is so welcome.

Despite some recognition by government of the need to develop character and soft skills over the past 20 years, exam results have often been prioritised at their expense. This must change.

Teaching character and creating environments that promote positive virtues is arguably more important today than it has been in a long time.

Character is central to young people leading positive lives, however it's also crucial to benefiting local communities. I truly believe it can help heal some of the divides that currently exist within our society at the moment.

My charity will continue to work alongside the Jubilee Centre and other leaders across education, industry and the youth sector to promote this agenda over the coming years and ensure changes are made to empower the next generation of young people across the UK.

Dame Kelly Holmes
Double Olympic Gold Medallist
Founder and President at Dame Kelly Holmes Trust
damekellyholmestrust.org

Executive Summary

There is a long-standing educational interest in the development of character in young people from 'marginalised', or deprived, backgrounds. However, there is a lack of meaningful research conducted on the views of marginalised young people as to what a 'good life' constitutes, as well as on the effectiveness of teaching resources at developing character and purpose.

Working with a combined dataset of nearly 3,250 young people from mainstream and non-mainstream, marginalised and non-marginalised, educational backgrounds, including state secondary schools, academies, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), Youth Offender Institutions, youth training organisations, and football academies, this research report aims to give a 'voice' to young people on the margins of education.

The study engaged with non-mainstream education providers and sought their advice and expertise in adopting character-led teaching in non-mainstream settings. This report seeks to illuminate the vital practical work that tutors, youth workers, and community leaders do every day in supporting and guiding marginalised young people to build character and become moral, engaged, intelligent members of an increasingly complex and challenging society.

The project was conducted in three stages – a large empirical survey of 3,000 young people from both mainstream and non-mainstream education provision, marginalised and non-marginalised backgrounds; the development and trial of an educational intervention, with pre- and post-intervention surveys of 200+ young people in non-mainstream provision; and in-depth interviews with eight young people and six tutors from non-mainstream provision.

This report explores:
- whether or not young people who have become 'marginalised' from mainstream education provision have a sense of personal identity, purpose, and understanding of their own character development;

- who and what the key influencing factors (both positive and negative) are on young people's sense of what it is to lead a 'good life';
- the part that an intervention on character education can play in addressing issues of disengagement amongst marginalised young people in the UK.

This research provides large-scale empirical data and in-depth qualitative data on young people's perspectives of their own sense of purpose, factors influencing their impressions of living a 'good life', and their sense of character development.

Key findings

A sense of meaning and purpose
- Participants in non-mainstream provision (27.4%) showed greater indications that they had a sense of purpose in life than those in mainstream settings (24.2%).
- More than half of all participants felt that they understood their life's meaning, and nearly two-thirds of participants indicated that they had a good sense of what made their life meaningful.
- Participants categorised as 'having purpose' reported that family and friends, and particularly teachers and members of the community, had a greater and more positive influence on their sense of living a 'good life'.

Factors influencing ideas of a 'good life'
- Whilst the majority of non-mainstream participants (Stage One) considered supporting one's family, being close to one's family, being a good person, and striving to do one's best to be 'very important' to their idea of living a 'good life', responses were lower than from mainstream respondents.
- Participants from non-mainstream settings regarded the influence of family and friends and people in their community as being greater than those from mainstream settings on their concept of living a good life.

- Older participants (15–19-year-olds) reported that influences on their idea of living a 'good life' were less positive than with younger participants (11–14-year-olds).

The role of the tutor as a character educator
- Tutors in non-mainstream settings considered their roles as character educators carefully, and reported that adopting a character-led approach to teaching (Stage Two) challenged them to consider their own character development in addition to that of their learners.

Key recommendations
The report makes three key recommendations pertaining to non-mainstream education providers and the development of their learners' character. It is recommended that:
- non-mainstream education providers should dedicate time and space within their curricula to character education opportunities for their learners;
- people in positions of responsibility for developing and delivering non-mainstream education curricula should consider developing a culture and ethos of character and virtues within their organisation or setting;
- providers working with marginalised young people should consider using the teaching materials used in Stage Two of this research project.

The teaching resources and film that accompany this report are available at:
www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/
flourishingfromthemargins

1 Purpose of the Report

This report describes research conducted with young people in both mainstream and non-mainstream education provision and from both marginalised and non-marginalised backgrounds; in particular, it explores their consideration of their own character and virtues development as part of a 'good life' and developing a sense of purpose. The project sought to compare survey responses of young people in mainstream provision with those in non-mainstream provision (Stage One); consider the effectiveness of character-led teaching resources with marginalised young people (Stage Two); and provide a narrative opportunity for marginalised young people to speak about their character development (Stage Three). Character and virtues are the personal qualities that help an individual to engage in civic society, lifelong learning, and personal and societal flourishing, and are qualities that reach beyond narrow confines of academic success and attainment (Arthur and O'Shaughnessy, 2012; DfE, 2017a; Arthur *et al*., 2017a). The report defines 'marginalisation' within the context of the participants involved in the research, and the organisations and education providers that support them.

In the 'A Neo-Aristotelian Model of Moral Development' presented in *A Framework for Character Education in Schools*, an individual's commencement into personal moral development begins with exposure to positive or negative moral habits. This is not a polarised pathway, and individuals can 'respond well, or less well, to the challenges they face in everyday life' (Jubilee Centre, 2017: 3). It is an individual's personal character strengths, and the successful and positive development of a blend of intellectual, moral, civic, and performance virtues that allow them to flourish personally and contribute to the good of society around them.

The routes to becoming marginalised from mainstream education, employment, and/or training are many, and should be treated with individualised and nuanced responses appropriate to contextual circumstances. It is not the purpose of this research report to seek a new definition of 'marginalisation', nor is it to advocate that marginalised young people are of bad character, nor characterless, which an exposure to character building resources will correct. The purpose of the study was to challenge young people engaging in both mainstream and non-mainstream education to consider what influenced their concept of living a 'good life' and to reflect on their sense of purpose in life. The study also sought to evaluate whether the development of character-led teaching resources tailored for non-mainstream settings could contribute to the development of character in young people in non-mainstream education.

The aim of the research was to attempt to understand what factors influence young people's views of how to live a 'good life', how positive or negative young people consider those factors to be, the extent to which they feel that they have developed a sense of purpose in their lives, and the character strengths that they see as being important to them. The research also sought to produce practical outputs, with the development of a suite of teaching resources, trialled with a number of non-mainstream educational providers. These resources were designed to encourage critical self-reflection on personal strengths and weaknesses of character, so that young people engaging in non-mainstream education have access to similar opportunities for personal growth and character development as would be available in mainstream education (see Arthur, *et al*., 2015; Jubilee Centre, 2014). The research questions that this study attempted to answer were:

- Do young people who have become 'marginalised' from mainstream education provision have a sense of personal identity, purpose, and understanding of their own character development?
- Who and what are the key influencing factors (both positive and negative) on young people's sense of what it is to live a 'good life'?
- What part might an intervention in character education play in addressing issues of disengagement amongst marginalised young people in the UK?

'IF WE CAN'T IMAGINE WHO WE CAN BE, HOW WILL WE BE IT?'

Michael Sheen, Actor

2 Background

2.1 CHARACTER AND VALUES AMONGST MARGINALISED YOUNG PEOPLE

A good education is the foundation of a flourishing life (Arthur, 2010). Achievement in education paves the way for prosperity, greater opportunities at work, a more stable family and better life chances (Wood and Scott, 2014; Blanden and Gregg, 2004). The ability to flourish[2], at home and in school, is seen by the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues as an imperative, and one that educators should work to develop in their learners through character education[3]. The revival of interest in character education in the UK by academics, policymakers, politicians, as well as other education stakeholders, has been brought about, at least in part, by the Jubilee Centre's expanding research that has incorporated pupils, teachers, and other participants from hundreds of schools across the UK. Previous research conducted by the Centre has found that 54% of secondary teachers and 80% of primary teachers believe that their schools already have a 'whole school approach to character building' (Arthur et al., 2015).

Advocacy for the inclusion of 'character education' or 'moral instruction' in education dates back to ancient Greek times. More recently, proponents such as George Dixon and F. J. Gould were prominent figures behind the introduction of formal moral instruction lessons in the schools of Birmingham and Leicester around the turn of the 20th century. Both were strong advocates for including a moral focus within the formal education curriculum, and extending this focus beyond it, especially in the cities in which they worked. Gould outlined his plan for moral teaching in his four-volume *Children's Book of Moral Lessons* (see Wright, 2006). Gould, Dixon, and colleagues took inclusive approaches to moral education, and sought to extend provision beyond the traditional classroom so as to benefit as many young people as possible at a time when

the numbers of young people completing traditional 'schooling' through to 16 years of age were considerably lower than today.

More recent work by the Department for Education (DfE) in the area of character education was extended to non-formal and non-mainstream education settings, so that provision for character education could be made for young people at risk of under-achievement and marginalisation. In 2015, the DfE awarded grants to a number of alternative education providers to 'build character and resilience amongst the most deprived and disengaged schoolchildren'[4]. Such programmes seek to 'empower' disengaged and marginalised young people through activities drawn from DfE 'Building Blocks of Character'; altruism, the ability to bounce back (resilience), comfort zone busting, and destination. Conversely, though, the DfE have recently reported that 'alternative provision and PRUs were least likely to use extra-curricular activities to deliver character education' (DfE, 2017a). The DfE 'Building Blocks' differ from Jubilee Centre 'Building Blocks' in that they do not encompass the 'intellectual', 'moral', and 'civic' virtues which are required in developing practical wisdom, and focus almost exclusively on 'performance' virtues; those 'character traits that have an instrumental value in enabling the intellectual, moral and civic virtues' (Jubilee Centre, 2017: 5).

Senior politicians and policymakers in the UK recognise that character development is something that a) marginalised young people should not be excluded from; and b) can help re-engage marginalised young people with education and training opportunities. It is imperative neither to see marginalised young people as symptomatically lacking in 'character', nor that an acquisition of the 'language of character' can provide a 'fix' to solve the problems that underpin marginalisation. It is essential that whilst the belief that character education can

assist with individual and societal flourishing, the characteristics and circumstances creating areas of marginalisation be properly and carefully understood. Therefore, a focus on bringing the 'language of character' into the syntax of all young people, whether they be marginalised or not, is an important starting point, but character should not be seen through an individualist bias (Arthur et al., 2014; Jubilee Centre, 2017).

Cycles of marginalisation can leave young people adrift in a world that has prioritised attainment and conformity over character development (Arthur and O'Shaughnessy, 2012) and descends into 'moral panic' at signs of non-conformity with 'positive' stereotypes (Cohen, 2002; Fornäs, 1995). Understanding why some young people find themselves consigned to, or actively choose to reside in, the margins of society, and education in particular, is vital when studying the development of individual and societal flourishing. A complex mix of societal, economic, personal, and other factors, as well as differing levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to engage in educational activities, can lead to young people becoming marginalised from mainstream education.

In 2017, the routes and means through which education is delivered are in flux, and both mainstream and non-mainstream providers are required to work hard to keep teaching interesting, engaging, and relevant to pupils. Likewise, young people are challenged to engage with education in different ways, and those who disengage from mainstream education require a non-mainstream provision that equips and prepares the individual for a life outside of education in a thorough and effective manner. The DfE state that non-mainstream education, or alternative provision (AP), 'is for pupils who can't attend mainstream school for a variety of reasons, such as school exclusion, behaviour issues, short- or long-term illness, school refusal or teenage pregnancy[5].' Its purpose is to

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[2]   The Jubilee Centre uses flourishing in the Aristotelian sense meaning not only to be happy, but to fulfil one's potential for both individual and societal good (see Arthur et al., 2017b; Jubilee Centre, 2017; Kristjánsson, 2015).

[3]   The Jubilee Centre defines character as 'a set of personal traits or dispositions that produce specific moral emotions, inform motivation and guide conduct. Character education is an umbrella term for all explicit and implicit educational activities that help young people develop positive personal strengths called virtues.' (Jubilee Centre, 2017: 2).

[4]   See www.gov.uk/government/news/measures-to-help-schools-instil-character-in-pupils-announced [Accessed: 5 March 2017]

[5]   See Children outside mainstream education (alternative provision) www.gov.uk/government/policies/children-outside-mainstream-education [Accessed: 8 September 2017]

reintegrate young people with mainstream education at the earliest possible opportunity. However, AP should also support and facilitate young people unable or unwilling to reintegrate with mainstream education to progress to further education or employment. Whilst exams and qualifications form easy metrics on which to judge young people's academic development, employers and educators are increasingly recognising the importance of an individual's character, sometimes in preference to the academic qualifications that they may hold (*The Times*, 2014). It is a key conviction of the Jubilee Centre that character can be 'caught' through institutional or organisational ethos, and 'taught' through effective teaching provision to all young people, regardless of setting, situation, or barrier. Every person is born with moral potential, but in order to develop one's character, character must ultimately be 'sought' independently and autonomously by an individual, once they recognise the positive developmental benefits that building one's character can bring (Jubilee Centre, 2017).

Research to date has largely been confined to mainstream educational settings, and has not sought to differentiate findings nor provision between mainstream and non-mainstream education provision. The research presented in this report sought to engage young people on the margins of mainstream education, as well as those formally engaging in non-mainstream education, along with education providers in non-mainstream settings.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING EDUCATIONAL MARGINALISATION

The term 'marginalisation' is one that has many meanings, many levels, and many interpretations, particularly within education. The ways in which 'marginalisation', and its derivatives, is used in this report are intended to recognise that both structure and agency can cause young people to be excluded from education, employment, and/or training. Within the literature, there are four broad themes to explain how young people become marginalised: educational attainment (Thompson, 2011; Nelson and O'Donnell, 2012); family and personal circumstances (Pemberton, 2008; Rees *et al.*, 1996); labour market structure (Avis, 2014; Simmons and Thompson, 2011); social exclusion (Martin and Hayden, 2000).

A young person does not need to experience negative aspects of all four themes to either 'become', or be considered, marginalised. One does not need to be formally removed from mainstream education provision to experience marginalisation in some form. Many young people experiencing negative aspects of any of these themes may actually achieve average or higher levels of educational attainment, and are supported by their families (Maguire, 2015; Attwood and Croll, 2006). Where marginalisation within mainstream provision does occur, it is harder to identify and quantify.

It is easier to identify young people who are not in any form of education, employment, or training, or who are 'NEET'. 'NEET' is generally accepted to include young people aged 16–24-years-old (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999). In the second quarter of 2017, there were 790,000 NEET young people in the UK aged 16–24 years, or 11.1% of the age group. Of all NEET young people, 41.1% were considered unemployed, with the remainder being considered 'inactive' (ONS, 2017).

More than half of young people considered NEET in the UK are female. More than half of NEET females are also considered 'inactive'; not actively searching for work or training. Fewer than 20% of NEET females consider themselves to be carers of others (Mizra-Davies, 2015; YWT, 2014). The number of NEET young people varies considerably by region across the UK. In England, in 2016, the highest percentages of NEET young people were recorded in the North East (15.2%), whereas the lowest were recorded in the South East (8.4%) (Brown, 2016). As many as 75% of young people who are considered NEET are in the lowest socio-economic groups, and only 6% from the higher groups (see Thompson, 2011; YWT, 2014).

A young person's basic literacy and numeracy abilities are also linked to their likelihood of becoming marginalised. Young people with low literacy and numeracy skills were found to be seven-to-nine times more likely to become NEET than counterparts with high literacy and numeracy skills (OECD, 2016).
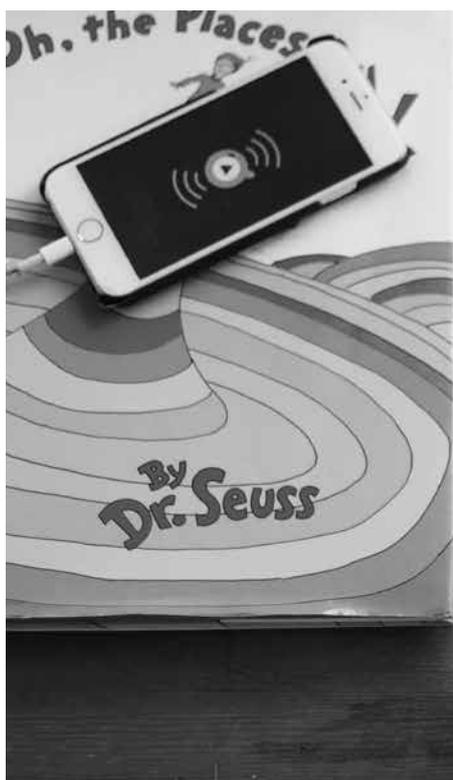
2.3 A VIRTUE ETHICS APPROACH TO MORAL DEVELOPMENT

The Jubilee Centre advocates a virtue ethics approach to moral development. Such an approach leads to the fulfilment of one's potential to live life for the good of society as well as oneself. The building blocks to live such a life are the virtues, or character strengths, which are learned through habituation and teaching (Jubilee Centre, 2017).

Damon (1988) argues for a virtue ethics approach in considering the unshakable link between the emotions and moral dispositions, or virtues. As Kristjánsson (2010) has argued, an individual needs to both *feel* the need to act, *and* then to *act*, in order to practice virtue. Damon argues it is the moral emotions that offer an affective framework towards moral concerns, that drive us to be morally aware and compelled to act, but crucially these emotions are socially (and culturally) situated. He highlights the need for close, nurturing relationships between parent and child to ensure sustained moral development. Yet he does not suggest that adults are the only source of moral guidance in young children. He argues that children learn about morality through interaction with their own worlds, around issues of importance to them, often unrecognised by adults because they do not fit the 'adult view' of the world. By learning the norms of both social and moral engagement through play and friendship, children really *feel* the moral way to respond to situations, rather than responding to rules and authority from outside of their world. Damon proposes that to fully understand how young people conceive of the 'moral', it is important to try to enter the life world of young people, rather than imposing a mature, adult view of morality on them.

Linking the fields of psychology, philosophy, and sociology may be possible by considering the idea of moral identity (Lapsley, 2008). Building on Blasi (1984), Lapsley has argued that moral self-identity, as a theoretical concept, takes account of the context, relationships, and social definition of the individual, as well as their moral motivation and behaviours. The path from virtue knowledge and understanding to virtue action and practice involves the assumption of personal responsibility, through moral habituation and critical reflection, so that one internalises virtuous habits and seeks autonomous virtuous action (Jubilee Centre, 2017). Once a person has embedded that responsibility in 'who' they see themselves becoming, they are then motivated to ensure that their actions match that identity (Blasi, 1984; Hardy and Carlo, 2005; Aquino and Reed, 2002).

2.4 A SENSE OF PURPOSE IN A TIME OF CHANGE

Rapid contemporary changes and accelerated fragmentation of society have led to differing understandings of the development of social identity. At home, family structures have changed rapidly. Working patterns have shifted, traditional career progression is less certain, regular employment has become disrupted, as have expectations of lifelong learning, flexible working hours, and working locations. Education has been characterised by the constant drive for attainment and certification ahead of moral development (Arthur and O'Shaughnessy, 2012; ONS, 2016). Patterns of migration and immigration have disturbed national identities. These trends have combined with indicators of serious disenfranchisement and disillusionment amongst young people, for example voting patterns[6]. Such trends point to challenges that young people have to negotiate when 'deciding' who they want to be. Contribution to society can often be through social or civic action, and many young people from socio-economically disadvantaged communities, many of whom were marginalised from the 'mainstream', are often more civically engaged than mainstream counterparts (Cremin *et al.*, 2010).

Concern over the numbers of young people who appeared to be disengaged from active citizenship, or who failed 'to launch,' led Damon and colleagues to investigate why some young people appeared to thrive, while others 'dabbled', or simply 'dreamed' (Damon, 2009). The four-year, US-based study involving young people aged 12–26 years found that participants struggled to identify and find a purpose to their lives. Damon's conclusions were that a sense of purpose in life kept young people motivated and engaged in their communities and in their pursuit of education and/or work. Damon conceptualised purpose as having a long-term dimension; both a commitment to and the taking of action towards the fulfilment of that commitment; and that the commitment must extend beyond one's own interests, and therefore be considered 'noble'. In Aristotelian virtue ethical terms, purpose should lead to flourishing of both the self and society. Purpose has been presented as being critical for positive youth development (Burrow, 2011; Bronk, 2011; 2014; Bronk *et al.*, 2009). Some works have conceived purpose as a virtue in its own right, albeit a second order virtue that helps to moderate other virtues (Han, 2015).

Developing a sense of purpose can complement the development of moral identity; it is an important part of human flourishing; it is linked to a greater sense of happiness and resilience (see Benson, 2006; Seligman, 2002; French and Joseph, 1999; Benard, 1991). From a developmental psychology perspective, developing and having a sense of purpose is a strong indicator of someone who is civically engaged, and committed to both their own and society's flourishing. For those who do not find a sense of purpose in the turbulence of adolescence, the resulting disengagement can have long-term effects on how they engage with, and thrive within, education, immediately, and wider society, generally.

Studies of young people's sense of ambition have presented similar findings. Whilst purpose requires a moral element in order to contribute to both individual and societal flourishing, ambition can remain more individualist in nature, and is more amoral in definition. Society's lexicon can sometimes confuse the two, or see them as synonymous, however, it is important to consider them as different things. A study by the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust (2017) recently found that only 49% of 1,012 young people aged 16–24 years have a clear sense of ambition, with over half reporting that they were uncertain or without any idea at all about what they wanted to achieve with their lives. Research by Sport England (2015), with YouthInsight, considered the key attitudes and motivations of 1,997 young people aged 14–25 years, and identified six main personality types, with key 'traits', or character strengths, attributed to each. Whilst the research considered these in the context of getting young people more physically active, it did so in order to develop ambition, motivation, and drive in participants beyond sport and exercise.

External societal factors, the strengths of the family and community, and the individual strengths of each individual can all play a role in the moral development of a young person (Albee and Ryan-Finn, 1993). So, the more unfavourable or oppressive the surroundings, the greater the need is for positive character strengths to help to maintain one's sense of purpose. Hart (2013) calls these positive strengths 'conversion factors' that allow a young person to develop a sense of purpose to drive them onto something beyond their immediate geographical, cultural, family, and educational surroundings. Others have highlighted the importance of communities in fostering positive character in individuals and that lasting positive development requires more than

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[6]   Whilst 'young voters' (aged 18–24 years) were much more likely to vote Remain in the 2016 EU Referendum in the United Kingdom, turnout of 'young voters' for the 2016 Referendum was lower than other age groups of voters. See www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-36616028 [Accessed: 1 May 2017].

the individual or the family (see Benson 1997; Power *et al.* 1989; Lies *et al.*, 2008; Lorion and Sokoloff, 2003).

Overcoming or breaking out of dysfunctional, or marginalised, environments is not insurmountable (Willis, 1997). Anderson (2000), whilst context-specific, describes how a young person has two pathways, 'decent' or 'street', and the ability to straddle both pathways may determine an individual's ability to flourish. Fisher *et al.* (2012) have suggested that individuals are products of the sum of their individual assets (competencies, virtues, and identity) plus their environmental assets (role models, community attributes). Such examples help highlight the point that whilst challenging environmental conditions make it harder for a young person to develop their individual assets, character strengths, and sense of purpose, it is not impossible to do so.

2.5 OVERALL EVALUATIVE GOALS

The research presented in this report has endeavoured to approach marginalisation from a positive perspective, by emphasising the strengths of young people, and looking at developing purpose and reaching potential, rather than from a 'deficit' perspective, where marginalised young people are considered to be 'lacking' in character, and character education is seen as a 'catch all' fix. There is a gap in the literature on the role of character and its development amongst marginalised individuals. An understanding of the role that character development plays in young people in marginalised communities, and what education can do to address that, is essential, and one that this research report attempts to address. Although more is now known about character education in mainstream schooling, little has been studied about what works in more challenging environments with young people facing different issues. This research has attempted to fill that gap.

'[T]HE GREAT END OF EDUCATION . . . IS TO PERSUADE AND TO INSPIRE THE SINCERE LOVE OF VIRTUE.'

George Turnbull, Theologian

3 **Methodology**

This research engaged young people from both mainstream and non-mainstream education, aged 11 to 24 years, and schools, organisations, and education providers who work with marginalised young people. The research was designed to survey the opinions of young people on what influences their view of living a 'good life', and how established their sense of purpose is, as well as to engage participants in conversations and activities designed to help them reflect on their own character development and understanding of living a 'good life'.

3.1 RATIONALE

The project adopted an 'inclusive' definition of 'marginalisation', with research participants being considered to be experiencing different forms of educational marginalisation, and/or participating in different types of non-mainstream education provision.

The project was divided into three phases, using a mixed methods approach to data collection. Each phase was designed to provide the young people participating in the study with a 'voice'. The data collected across all stages has provided opportunity to convey participants' experiences from the margins of mainstream and non-mainstream education specifically, and examined how resources dedicated to character development can help with their own sense of flourishing.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND INSTRUMENTS

3.2.1 Literature Review and Background
A comprehensive literature review was undertaken, which revealed a significant gap in the area of character development amongst marginalised young people.

3.2.2 Method
Some 8,000 mainstream and non-mainstream organisations and schools were contacted regarding participation in the project. These were drawn from public lists of youth organisations, as well as providers that the

Jubilee Centre had previously engaged with. Staff from participating organisations were invited to attend introductory meetings held in Birmingham and London, at which the initial plans for the project were explored, interest in participating was sought, and opportunities to collaborate were highlighted. A full list of organisations that took part in the project is available in the Appendix.

The research was conducted across three stages:

> 1) **Survey:** a survey of young people aged 11–19 years, from both mainstream and non-mainstream educational settings, and marginalised and non-marginalised backgrounds (n=2,910);
> 2) **Intervention:** the delivery of a structured educational intervention for non-mainstream provision, and use with marginalised young people. This was evaluated using pre- and post-surveys, participant focus groups, and tutor interviews, to assess impact (n=108);
> 3) **Narrative research:** in-depth discussions with young people in non-mainstream provision (n=8). Further in-depth interviews were undertaken with tutors in non-mainstream educational settings (n=6).

3.2.3 Stage One: Survey – 'Character and Values in Young People'
Researchers administered a survey to nearly 3,000 young people aged 11–19 years (n=2,910) from 35 mainstream secondary schools and academies and 22 non-mainstream youth organisations and PRUs. The survey was designed to ask young people about their concept of living a 'good life', how much external factors influence their view of living a 'good life', and whether they felt they had a sense of life purpose. It was administered in paper and online formats. Participating schools and organisations were selected randomly, with no upper or lower limit on pupil involvement. Participating mainstream schools and academies covered a broad range of free

school meal (FSM) provision (from 1.30% to 32.60%) and Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) (from 8.19% to 54.48%)[7]. Data was either unavailable or less applicable for most participating non-mainstream providers, however, one example of a PRU is worth nothing, where pupil eligibility for PPG was 96.00% and FSM was 61.40%. The most recent figures suggest that the 2016 national average for FSM in UK schools was 14.3% (13.2% for secondary schools) (DfE, 2016). Full details of PPG percentage and allocation and FSM data is provided in the online appendices.

3.2.3.1 Large Empirical Survey
The survey was split into four parts, consisting of:

- a section asking for basic demographic information (with categories drawn from the 2011 UK Census);
- a shortened Marlowe-Crowne (1960) social desirability scale (see Strahan and Gerbasi, 1972). This was included to strengthen the internal validity of the measure;
- a section asking participants their thoughts on what it means to flourish, or to live a 'good' life, and who or what influences this; and whether participants felt their life had purpose (some questions adapted from Ballard *et al.*, 2015);
- a section on moral identity presented as an adapted version of the Moral Self Relevance Measure (Patrick and Gibb, 2012).

Part of the survey (questions 11–16) challenged participants to think about where their ideas about a good life stemmed from, via a prescriptive list, and asked participants to rate whether each influence was positive or negative on a scale out of 100. Participants were then asked to rank the top three influences on their lives.

The survey was delivered in three different formats:

- A hard copy, paper and pen, version;
- An interactive version, delivered by a facilitator; designed for participants who

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struggled with reading and writing, or found giving dedicated attention to such tasks challenging, as deemed by tutors; delivered using larger pieces of paper and moveable cards to answer the questions. Researchers were not present;

■ An online version, completed via a computer or tablet; with audio recordings of instructions.

3.2.3.2 Data Collection and Analysis
Responses to all three formats of the survey were collated, and analysis conducted across the dataset as a whole. The survey is available via the online appendices. Data from the survey were exported to SPSS for analysis.

3.2.4 Stage Two: Intervention – 'Character and Values Amongst Marginalised Young People'
Accompanying this research report is a comprehensive set of teaching materials, grounded in and based on existing Jubilee Centre curricula resources, but which were adapted for use in non-mainstream education provision. The research team used the existing Jubilee Centre Primary and Secondary Programmes of Study[8] as the basis for adapting and differentiating lesson plans and activities.

3.2.4.1 Development of the Teaching Resources
Representatives from nine education providers attended two Resource Development Days at the University of Birmingham. Existing Jubilee Centre resources were developed to create a 'bank' of flexible materials for delivery in non-mainstream education.

The research team canvassed the opinions of 10–15 young people on the activities and lessons, the design and style of the materials, and ideas for further development of the materials. The resources were categorised into 5 'modules':

1) Introduction to virtues;
2) Pupil Referral Unit resources;
3) Individual and small group;
4) Extra curricula resources;
5) Summary and recap.

3.2.4.2 Pre- and Post-Intervention Surveys
The trial of the materials involved over 200 young people from six non-mainstream providers of education, based in locations across the UK. Each provider trialled the

resources with groups of learners aged 15–21 years, with one organisation working with individuals up to 24 years (and one participant who was in their 30s). A pre-intervention survey was administered, in paper format, before any teaching of the resources had commenced, with a post-intervention survey administered once teaching had concluded. Whilst anonymity was assured, participants were asked to include their names, or at least an alias, on both the pre- and post-intervention surveys to allow researchers to match both as being completed by the same individual. Copies of the pre- and post-intervention surveys are available via the online appendices.

The organisations delivering the resources were tasked with delivering at least one resource from each of the introductory and summary 'modules' (modules 1 and 5), and then any relevant resources and lessons from the other three modules. This provided some consistency over the resources being delivered in terms of participants being introduced to the language of virtue (module 1), and a recap of virtue terms and reflection (module 5). Modules two, three, and four of the resources were differentiated for delivery in different educational settings, ie, formal classroom settings and PRUs, less formal but still structured settings, and informal, 'street-corner', mentoring type settings.

3.2.4.3 Data Analysis
The surveys comprised four sections that were designed to challenge participants to consider similar themes and questions posed in Stage One, as well as provide some feedback on the resources themselves (post-intervention survey only).

Tutors administered surveys directly. Completed surveys were posted back to the research team, or collected in person by a researcher when attending an observation or focus group. Data were entered manually into spreadsheets and analysed using SPSS.

3.2.4.4 Observations, Focus Group, and Tutor Interviews
Mid-intervention observations were conducted by the research team, where details about the settings, availability of resources, numbers of young people participating, engagement with the resources, levels of facilitation required from the tutors, and frequency and understanding of virtue terminology were

recorded. During these observations, researchers kept interactions with the young people and the tutors to a minimum so as not to impose any unfair or inconsistent input. Due to capacity and some timetabling clashes, it was not possible to observe sessions being taught at all of the participating organisations.

Following the delivery of the resources, and the completion of the post-intervention survey, researchers conducted small focus groups with the learners to gain qualitative feedback on the resources. Where participating organisations were delivering materials to learners across multiple sites, researchers visited as many of those sites as possible. Focus groups were conducted as conversations with participants, with questions used as prompts by researchers. Where participants were less forthcoming with responses, it was sometimes necessary for tutors and/or researchers to facilitate the conversations more directly. Focus groups were recorded and transcribed. Quotes have been used in verbatim to supplement the empirical findings.

In addition, researchers conducted interviews with at least one tutor who had delivered the resources at each site. Interviews explored whether the resources had challenged tutors to reflect on their own character development, and whether they saw the development of character and virtues in their learners as useful and beneficial both to their learners, and to the outcomes of the organisation that they were representing. Interviews were recorded and transcribed.

3.2.5 Stage Three: Narrative Research
Stage Three of the project was constructed to give 'voices' to a small number of participants to 'tell' their stories in a narrative fashion; why they were in the educational programmes; why they weren't in mainstream education; their aspirations and motivations for the future. Six young people from three of the participating organisations were interviewed on camera, with their stories recorded and retold by the research team, and presented as a short film available at www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/flourishingfromthemargins

The organisations that participated in Stage Three had all participated in Stages One and Two, and were selected based on their availability and their interest in the project. Tutors were asked to nominate two learners

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8   Available online via www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/1610/character-education [Accessed: 4 March 2017].

who were willing to speak about their educational experiences. The participating learners had all been taught at least some of the resources trialled in Stage Two. The three organisations selected to participate in Stage Three covered the three main areas of non-mainstream education provision; a PRU, a football and education academy, and a training provider. The training provider had delivered the teaching materials to participants at multiple sites across the UK, and two of these sites were selected for inclusion in Stage Three based on their availability and willingness to participate.

In addition to capturing the stories of the learners, tutors at each of the sites were interviewed. Tutors were asked how they found teaching in non-mainstream settings, and the extent of their involvement in teaching the resources in Stage Two. Tutors were also asked whether delivering the resources had caused them to reflect on their own character development.

3.2.5.1 Data Analysis

The narrative interviews were filmed and later transcribed and analysed, and emerging themes noted. Interviews were edited into a film.

3.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The survey conducted in Stage One was delivered to young people in both mainstream and non-mainstream settings. This research sought to collect data from young people on the margins of education. No self-report data was collected from individual participants regarding whether they considered themselves marginalised or not. Participating schools and organisations were recruited randomly and opportunistically based on responses to an initial mail out to over 8,000 organisations. It was possible to recruit participants from mainstream schools with higher than average FSM and PPG figures, which can give an indication of potential marginalisation of some pupils. Some schools recruited were already oriented towards character development, and some had engaged with previous Jubilee Centre research. The participating organisations in Stages Two and Three were recruited opportunistically, and based on their involvement in Stage One and/or participation in the resource development workshops. No form of randomisation or control elements to the Stage Two trial were implemented, and,

largely due to the way in which the tutors at each of the participating organisations interact with their learners, the trial was experimental in nature. Delivery of the resources differed between participating organisations, and tutors were encouraged to use the resources in the ways that best suited their learners, highlighting the flexibility of resources. The participants in Stage Two were exposed to the resources for different periods of time, with some tutors delivering resources over a period of several months, where others were doing so intensively over one week. Caution is required regarding inferences of findings between participants from different sites, and generalisations across the whole cohort.

Participants in the Stage Two focus groups were generally nominated by tutors either for their willingness to engage with the resources during teaching, or because they were more outspoken. Consent was obtained from all participants prior to the focus groups; however, a caution is noted with regards to the focus groups providing a representative sample across all young people participating in the intervention.

The sample of participants in Stage Three was not random. Participants were either self-selected, or nominated by tutors because of the 'story' that they had to tell, or their willingness to appear on camera.

Non-mainstream education provision and 'marginalisation' within education covers a huge number of areas, factors, and types of provision. This study has attempted to provide an inclusive approach to the field, however, in doing so, there are areas of the field that have not been covered, therefore making the application of findings more difficult.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The University of Birmingham Ethics Committee granted ethical approval for the research and informed consent was obtained from participants. In the case of schools and youth organisations, initially a senior member of staff consented to their participation; the issuing of information sheets and the signing of consent opt-out forms for participants followed this. In Stage Three, parents and participants were provided with these, and consent was required from both parties in every case where a participant was under 18 years of age. Participants were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity, and could withdraw up to a given date. Codes were used as substitutions for participant names.

> '**CONTINUALLY DOING THINGS THAT YOUR MIND SAYS IS NOT POSSIBLE BUILDS RESILIENCE.**'
>
> **Hannah England, Athlete**

4 **Findings**

This section reports upon the findings from each of the three stages of the research project; Stage One – Large Empirical Survey (n=2,910); Stage Two – Intervention (n=108); Stage Three – In-depth Interviews (n=14).
The research questions are listed below:

■ Do young people who have become 'marginalised' from mainstream education provision have a sense of personal identity, purpose, and understanding of their own character development?

■ Who and what are the key influencing factors (both positive and negative) on young people's sense of what it is to lead a 'good life'?

■ What part might an intervention in character education play in addressing issues of disengagement amongst marginalised young people in the UK?

The findings are presented as they relate to each stage of the study. Interpretation and discussion of the findings are presented thematically in Section 5.

4.1 STAGE ONE – LARGE EMPIRICAL SURVEY

Some 3,014 surveys were submitted by participants, of which 2,910 were completed sufficiently to be included in the analysis, with 104 being rejected as 'incomplete'. The majority of respondents (92%) were recruited from mainstream education settings, with 226 respondents (8%) from non-mainstream settings. Non-mainstream settings included youth organisations, PRUs, sports academies, and training and employment providers.

4.1.1 Gender
Chart 1 presents the frequencies of respondents to the survey by gender. As can be seen right, just less than 50% of respondents reported as female, and just under 46% reported as male.

4.1.2 Age Range
Respondents' ages ranged from 11–19 years, with two-thirds (66%) of respondents aged 12–14-years-old. Chart 2 shows the respondents to the survey by age.

**Chart 1: Stage One Participants by Gender – Full Cohort**
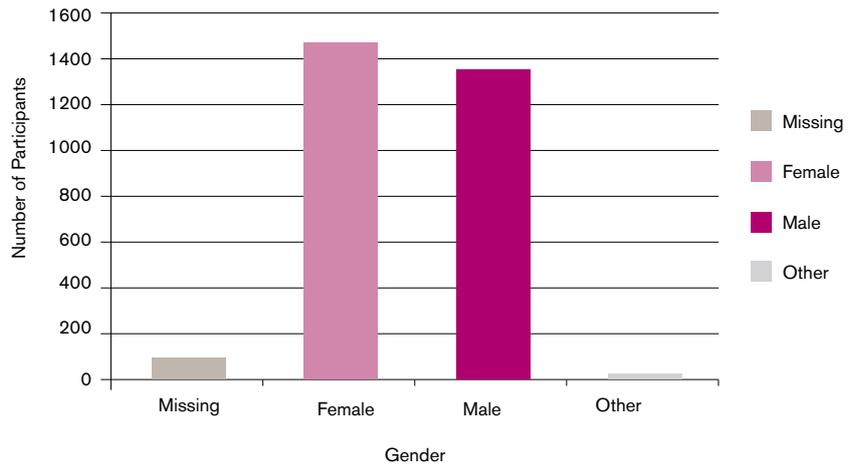
Chart 2: Age of Participants (years) – Full Cohort
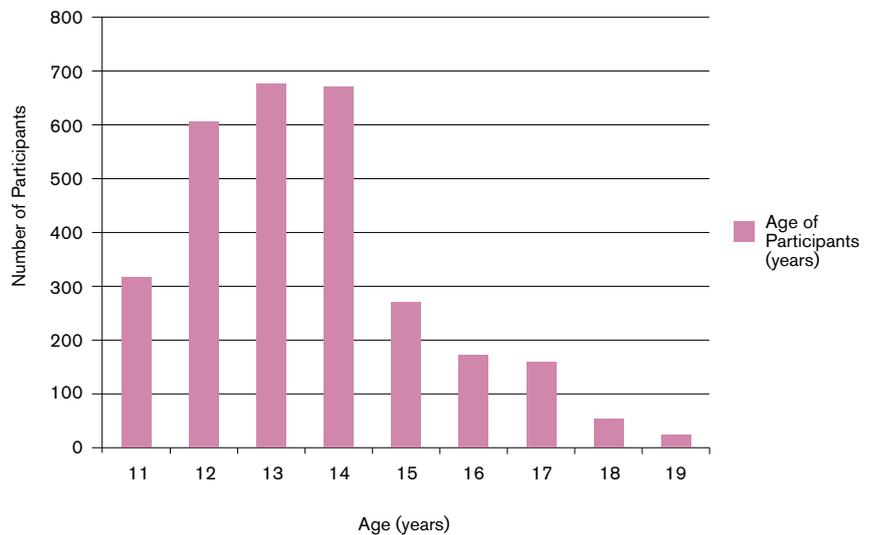
4.1.3 Who Do You Live With?

The survey asked participants who they lived at home with, whether they care for someone at home, and whether they have a disability. More than two-thirds of participants reported that they came from a 'nuclear family' (mother and father) (68%); 7% reported as living with a single mother; 20% reported as helping to look after a family member on a daily basis; and 4% reported as having some form of disability.

4.1.4 What Does It Mean to Have a Good Life?

Participants were asked to respond on a Likert scale to questions on whether given statements were important to their concept of living a 'good life'. Available responses were 'Not important at all', 'Slightly important', and 'Very important'. Nearly 2,500 of all respondents (88.8%) indicated that 'Supporting their family' was 'very important' to their ideas of being able to live a good life, and 84.7% indicated that 'being close to one's family' was as important. Over 80% of participants indicated that 'Being a good person' was 'very important' to them (85.7%) and 80.3% indicated that 'Striving to do my best' was 'very important' to their concept of living a good life.

Other statements that were favoured positively by respondents included 'Having good friends' (77.9% of the full cohort responded 'very important'), 'Having a lot of fun' (76.8%), 'Being successful in life' (75.9%), 'Having a good career' (75.1%), 'Helping others' (73.4%), and 'Earning the respect of others' (72.0%).

The factors 'Serving God/a Higher Power' (43.8%), 'Being involved in music or dance' (48.6%), and 'Being feared' (69.3%) were considered as 'not important at all' by respondents' idea of a 'good life'.

The above percentages reflect respondents of the total cohort in Stage One. Table 1 reflects the percentage of responses to the same questions considered above, with respondents split by whether they attended mainstream or non-mainstream education.

Table 1: What Does It Mean to Have a Good Life? – Influencing Factors Non-Mainstream/ Mainstream Comparison

		Non-Mainstream/Mainstream			
		Non-Mainstream		Mainstream	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
B. Supporting my family	Not at all important	1	0.5%	20	0.8%
	Slightly important	33	15.9%	256	10%
	Very important	174	83.7%	2295	89.3%
	Total	208	100%	2571	100%
W. Being close to my family	Not at all important	14	7.4%	52	2.1%
	Slightly important	42	22.3%	303	12.1%
	Very important	132	70.2%	2141	85.8%
	Total	188	100%	2496	100%
T. Being a good person	Not at all important	9	4.6%	36	1.4%
	Slightly important	54	27.8%	287	11.4%
	Very important	131	67.5%	2190	87.1%
	Total	194	100%	2513	100%
U. Striving to do my best	Not at all important	10	5.4%	43	1.8%
	Slightly important	43	23.1%	424	17.3%
	Very important	133	71.5%	1990	81%
	Total	186	100%	2457	100%

The percentages of respondents indicating that the selected four factors were very important to them differ quite markedly. Whilst 'Supporting my family' was still seen to be very important to 83.7% of non-mainstream respondents (compared with 89.3% of mainstream respondents), 'Being close to my family' was only considered very important to 70.2% of non-mainstream respondents, compared with 85.8% of mainstream respondents.

Table 1 also shows that 'Being a good person' was only considered very important to 67.5% of non-mainstream respondents, compared with 87.1% of mainstream respondents. 'Striving to do my best' was considered very important to 71.5% of non-mainstream respondents, compared with 81.0% of mainstream respondents. 'Living life to the fullest' (81.1%), 'Being successful in life' (80.7%), and 'Having a good career' (80.9%) were other statements that participants considered important to living a 'good life'.

The factors considered 'not important at all' to respondents from non-mainstream provision were 'Being involved in music or dance' (54.2%), 'Serving God/a Higher Power' (46.6%), and 'Being feared' (59.1%).

The survey was designed to gain some consensus of opinion of factors influencing one's concept of a good life. However, as a Stage Two focus group participant acknowledged:

> …everyone's interpretation of a good life is completely different… Everyone's achieving something in their life and it makes them happy and that's it. Happiness doesn't mean like one way. Hopefully everyone has their own way to be happy…
> – Stage Two Participant 1

> [IF YOU'RE NOT A PATIENT PERSON BUT IN ANOTHER WAY YOU'RE KIND, SO IT STILL MAKES YOU A GOOD PERSON, [YOU DO] NOT NECESSARILY [NEED TO HAVE] EVERYTHING.']
> **Stage Two Participant 3**

4.1.5 Where Do Your Ideas About Living a Good Life Come From?

Participants were asked to consider the extent to which 13 different factors affected their concept of living a good life, and score out of 100 the level of influence each factor had on them. Then, participants were asked to score out of 100 how positive they felt that influence was (the higher the score, the more positive the influence). Participants were not required to respond to all of the 13 factors.

Parents or guardians were considered the greatest influencing factor on participants, with 2,735 responses, and a mean score of 77.02 (out of 100). Although, the standard deviation of responses was high (SD=21.16), meaning that some participants suggested the influence of parents and guardians was almost absolute, whilst others felt that is was only just about 50. This influence was considered positive by participants, with a mean of 76.32 (out of 100), although, again, the standard deviation of responses was high (SD=24.01).

It was possible to aggregate the factors into three 'circles' of influence. Circle 1 was composed of close family and friends (parents or guardians, close friends, other adults in the family, and boyfriend or girlfriend). Circle 2 was composed of people in the community and teachers. Circle 3 was composed of outside influences (sports, music, news, social media, TV, and celebrities). Table 2 presents the mean scores for each of Circles 1, 2, and 3, and the mean score for how positive respondents indicated those factors were, both out of 100. A score of over 50 was considered as 'positive', and a score under 50 was considered 'negative'. The table splits the overall responses by participants in mainstream and non-mainstream education provision.

Table 2: Circles of Influence – Non-Mainstream and Mainstream Responses

	Non-Mainstream/Mainstream	
	Non-mainstream	Mainstream
	Mean (out of 100)	Mean (out of 100)
Circle 1 Close family and friends	N=62.62	N=61.16
Circle 1 Positive or negative	N=63.47	N=66.41
Circle 2 People in the community	N=53.40	N=51.41
Circle 2 Positive or negative	N=58.27	N=56.77
Circle 3 Outside influences	N=54.76	N=55.09
Circle 3 Positive or negative	N=57.72	N=56.01

The mean scores for Circles of influence 1 and 2 were slightly higher from respondents from non-mainstream provision than from mainstream education provision. Respondents from non-mainstream settings indicated that Circles 2 and 3 had a greater positive influence on them and their sense of living a good life than their counterparts in mainstream education (Circle 2 58.27 compared with 56.77; Circle 3 57.72 compared with 56.01). However, non-mainstream respondents reported that Circle 1 (parents, close friends, and family) had a less positive influence on them than their mainstream counterparts (63.47 compared with 66.41). Further discussion and interpretation is provided later in this report.

Across the whole cohort, the extent to which factors influenced respondents declined with older respondents. Table 3 shows the decline in perceived influence of parents, family, and close friends for older respondents, and a perception amongst older respondents that such influencing factors were less positive. Older respondents reported as being more susceptible to external stimuli, such as music, news, and social media in their perception of a good life, and saw such factors as more positive than the younger respondents. Chart 3 shows the decline in influence of parents, family, and close friends on older respondents compared to younger ones. Respondents aged 15–19-years-old were grouped together as the numbers of responses in each age category were too small to consider individually (see Chart 2).

Table 3: Where Do Your Ideas About Living a Good Life Come From? Whole Cohort by Age Group

	Age (years)				
	11	12	13	14	15-19
	Mean (out of 100)				
How much do your parents or guardians influence your idea of a 'good' life?	84	79	77	75	74
Is the influence of your parents or guardians positive or negative?	83	78	77	76	71
How much do other adults in your family influence your idea of a 'good' life?	68	65	64	60	56
Is the influence of the other adults in your family positive or negative?	75	72	70	72	65
How much do your friends influence your idea of a 'good' life?	62	60	60	61	57
Is the influence of your friends positive or negative?	67	67	65	67	60
How much does sport influence your idea of a 'good' life?	65	60	58	54	53
Is the influence of sport positive or negative?	72	67	66	64	62
How much does music influence your idea of a 'good' life?	52	51	51	57	55
Is the influence of music positive or negative?	57	58	59	64	62
How much does what is reported in the news influence your idea of a 'good' life?	46	48	51	48	49
Is the influence of the things you see in the news positive or negative?	41	43	41	40	39
How much does social media influence your idea of a 'good' life?	53	55	56	58	55
Is the influence of social media positive or negative?	54	56	52	54	50
How much does what you see on TV influence your idea of a 'good' life?	53	54	53	54	55
Is the influence of what you see on TV positive or negative?	54	56	54	55	54
How much do people in your town or community influence your idea of a 'good' life?	50	48	43	43	41
Is the influence of people in your town or community positive or negative?	58	54	53	51	48
How much do teachers or youth workers influence your idea of a 'good' life?	65	61	58	55	56
Is the influence of teachers or youth workers positive or negative?	66	62	60	60	60
How much do the things you learn at school influence your idea of a 'good' life?	75	74	68	65	65
Is the influence of the things you learn at school positive or negative?	71	71	68	66	64
How much do celebrities influence your idea of a 'good' life?	52	51	49	52	47
Is the influence of celebrities positive or negative?	54	56	54	54	50
How much does your boyfriend/girlfriend influence your idea of a 'good' life?	49	45	47	48	53
Is the influence of your boyfriend/girlfriend positive or negative?	59	61	57	60	60

Chart 3: Where Do Your Ideas About a Good Life Come From? Influence of Close Family and Friends by Age Group – Full Cohort
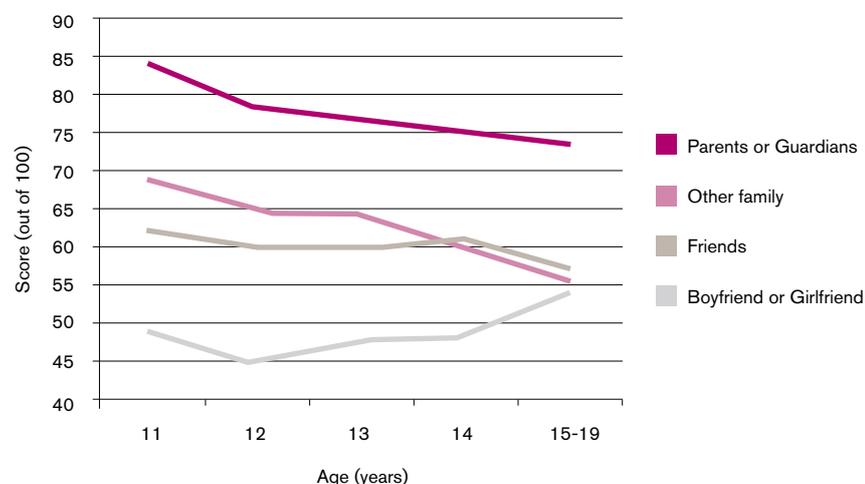
Participants in Stage Three of the project were asked about their experience of mainstream schooling, and how it compared with their experience of non-mainstream education. Almost all participants in Stage Three spoke of negative mainstream schooling experiences, and whilst teachers were not always mentioned specifically as causes for this, the negative influence of teachers on their lives was a common theme.

Well as soon as I ended primary school I hated school everything just went downhill
– Stage Three Participant 1

When I was younger… I always had… bad anxiety and I never really said that much at school. I was always quite shy and I never really got involved in anything at school, so I just pretty much went through school not really doing that much, and it was quite difficult. …A lot of my subjects I really, really, struggled in and just I had like quite a bad experience, with bullying as well in school and there's not a lot [of] support from teachers.
– Stage Three Participant 2

They always have something to say like, like them kind of teachers that always have to moan and stuff like that.
– Stage Three Participant 3

In contrast, however, participants in Stage Three indicated a far more positive influence of tutors in non-mainstream provision.

Yeah, [non-mainstream provider] is probably the best thing in my life, because if I wasn't here I'd probably be in prison or dead probably because like of all the things I was doing, but from the time that I started to now where I'm at I've realised I've grown up, I know like, the past is the past, I can't change it but I can make my future better, but [tutors] are the main… people that I'll speak to if I've got anything I need to speak to, and they're always there, like…
– Stage Three Participant 1

…it's like a little family.
– Stage Three Participant 4

[Non-mainstream provider is] just quite good because you don't really get any like bad judgement and your just meeting other young moms that are the same age as you and in the same situation as well, it's good… More schools should actually be like [non-mainstream provider] because… if you have a problem, or if you have an issue, they don't attack you and they don't, you know like, get angry at you, they support you, they help you, they speak to you on the same level.
– Stage Three Participant 2

4.1.6 What is Your Purpose?
Section 3 of the survey asked respondents to consider their own sense of purpose. Participants were offered five possible responses regarding how much (or not) they agreed with the statement, or whether they 'didn't know' how to respond. Options included 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'agree', and 'strongly agree', as well as 'I don't know'. Participants were presented with five statements.

Findings show that 51.7% of all participants felt that they understood their life's meaning, by either indicating that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Of the full cohort, 50.8% indicated that they felt that their life had a clear sense of purpose; and 65.5% of participants felt that they had a good sense of what made their life meaningful. Just over half (52.9%) of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that their life had no clear sense of purpose. This question was asked in the negative form to test the internal validity of the survey instrument.

Positive and negative responses to the first four questions on 'purpose' were aggregated (excluding the negatively phrased question), therefore grouping respondents in terms of 'having purpose' and 'not having purpose'. Table 4 shows the comparison between non-mainstream and mainstream respondents, and shows a higher percentage of non-mainstream respondents (27.4%) responding positively to all four questions on purpose than mainstream counterparts (24.2%). This positive finding was supported by data drawn from the narrative interviews conducted in Stage Three.

> *I want to get out of here and get a job when I'm older. I want to be a Lawyer but some kids here they just… want to start as we would call it 'shotting', like as you see them 16-year-olds left college, just out there with no job, that's what they want to be but I don't want to be like that.*
> – Stage Three Participant 3

> *If you want to do something… you like, and you're thinking, like, for five years I can make this, I can do this, you just like push yourself to do it… some people… think… when they [have] finished this course, they can… be [a] PE teacher.*
> – Stage Three Participant 5

The factors influencing one's idea of a good life were compared with participants' responses to concepts of purpose. The 'having purpose' group scored 11 of the 13 factors higher than the 'not having purpose' group. Those who responded positively to the questions on purpose ranked parents/guardians as the greatest influence on their idea of a 'good life' by a mean score of 8.56/100 more than those who indicated that they did not have a sense of purpose. The same group also indicated that parents/guardians were a more positive influence on them than the 'not having purpose' group, by a mean score of 8.57/100.

The 'having purpose' and 'not having purpose' groups were compared using the same circles of influence introduced above. Table 5 shows that those categorised as 'having purpose' scored each of Circles of Influence 1, 2, and 3 higher than the 'not having purpose' group. Further, each circle of influence has a greater positive influence on those 'having purpose' than those 'not having purpose'. Circle 2 in particular, composed of people in the community and teachers, was scored higher by a mean of 7.42/100 by the 'having purpose' group than the 'not having purpose' group.

Table 4: Mainstream/Non-Mainstream Respondents by Purpose

| | | Non-Mainstream/Mainstream | | | |
| | | Non-Mainstream | | Mainstream | |
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Purpose	No purpose	164	72.6%	2,035	75.8%
	Purpose	62	27.4%	649	24.2%
	Total	226	100%	2,684	100%

Table 5: Circles of Influence – 'having purpose' and 'not having purpose'

| | Purpose | |
| | 'Not having purpose' | 'Having purpose' |
	Mean (out of 100)	Mean (out of 100)
Circle 1 Close family and friends	60.33	63.93
Circle 1 Positive or negative	64.92	69.00
Circle 2 People in the community	49.59	57.01
Circle 2 Positive or negative	55.17	61.53
Circle 3 Outside influences	54.21	57.42
Circle 3 Positive or negative	55.01	59.09

['YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE STRENGTH OF CHARACTER TO BE ABLE TO GO AND APPROACH THAT COMPLETE STRANGER, COMMUNICATE AND FIND OUT WHAT'S WRONG.'

Stage Two Participant 4]

4.2 STAGE TWO – INTERVENTION

More than 200 young people participated in the trial of a character education intervention designed for use in non-mainstream education settings. Not all of the participants completed the pre- and post-intervention surveys, and findings are drawn from data of matched pre- and post-surveys (n=108).

Table 6 shows the breakdown of participants by organisation.

4.2.1 Demographics

Of the 108 matched pre- and post-intervention surveys, 56.5% were completed by male respondents, and 33.3% by female respondents. Two-thirds (65.3%) of respondents were White-British in ethnicity, with 34.7% of respondents being of other ethnicities, or preferring not to answer. 11.2% of respondents declared that they had a disability of some form; 7.5% had children of their own; and 13.2% helped look after a family member on a daily basis. A quarter of participants (25.9%) were aged over 19-years-old, and 52.8% of participants were 16–18-years-old. The youngest participants were 12-years-old.

4.2.2 Life Wheel

Section Two of the survey contained a 'Life Wheel', where respondents were asked to score out of 10 (where 10 meant 'definitely, yes', and 1 meant 'no, not at all') how true six statements were about their lives. A small increase in score between the pre- and post-intervention scores was noted in five of the six statements. The one statement that recorded a decrease in score in the post-intervention survey was 'I have the character traits to achieve my goals', which fell from a mean of 6.65 to 6.48.

Table 6: Intervention Participants by Organisation

		Count	Column N %
Organisation	Albion Foundation	4	3.7%
	City of Birmingham School	12	11.1%
	Making the Leap	10	9.3%
	Rathbone Training	46	42.6%
	Switch Project	6	5.6%
	The Martin O'Connor Education and Football Academy	26	24.1%
	Vi-ability	4	3.7%
	Total	108	100%

'THE FINAL FORMING OF A PERSON'S CHARACTER LIES IN THEIR OWN HANDS.'

Anne Frank, Diarist

4.2.3 What is Your Purpose?

Participants were presented with the same five statements on 'purpose' as in Stage One, and asked to respond with how much they agreed or disagreed with the statements using a five-point Likert scale, with a sixth option of 'I don't know'. Overall, the post-intervention survey data reported higher levels of agreement with the four positively phrased statements, and greater disagreement with the negatively phrased statement (included to increase the internal validity of the measure). The largest recorded increase in the post-intervention survey was for the statement 'I understand my life's meaning'. Combined percentages indicating participants 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement rose from 56.5% from the pre-intervention survey to 67.3% in the post-intervention survey. For the statement 'I have discovered a satisfying life purpose', combined percentages agreeing with the statement rose from 46.3% from the pre-intervention survey to 57.7% in the post-intervention survey. However, the responses indicating that participants strongly agreed with the statement fell from 18.9% to 15.4%.

4.2.4 What is Important to You?

The final part of the survey asked participants to indicate how central (1 – 'very central'; 5 'not central at all') particular character strengths and personal characteristics were to them. These character strengths and personal characteristics had formed the focus of many of the teaching resources in the intervention. The mean scores between pre- and post-intervention surveys varied by very little for each of the 22 character strengths and personal characteristics. However, the most significant changes were seen where participants indicated that being compassionate and resilient was less important to them after completing the intervention than before beginning it. The importance of being compassionate scored a mean of 2.03 in the pre-intervention surveys; a figure that rose to 2.26 in the post-intervention surveys, indicating that being compassionate was less central to participants after the intervention. The importance of being resilient scored a mean of 2.38 in pre-intervention surveys; a figure that rose to 2.59 in post-intervention surveys. In all, participants scored 16 of the 22 character strengths and personal characteristics higher in the post-intervention surveys, indicating them as less central to them.

4.2.5 Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted with small groups of participants at as many of the participating sites as it was possible to visit. Questions largely centred on the reception and development of the teaching resources, but also attempted to explore whether participants had found focussing on their character development worthwhile.

Yeah, so like personal traits, yeah. That was interesting. It made me really think of I have this, what can I improve on and stuff like that. So that was good.
    – Stage Two Participant 2

I never realised… how much was that important to me… just because I hadn't really like ever actually sat down and thought like ah I think that's important like that was the first time I'd ever did it so.
    – Stage Three Participant 2

I wouldn't really care I had no respect for anyone, and it hit me like a brick one day, because I thought I was a big man, and I went up to some kid [who was the] same age as me, and [he] taught me how to respect people but he didn't use… violence, he spoke to me like I was ready to hit him, but he spoke to me saying like 'respect is earned not given'. Trust is one of the main things that you need to get off someone.
    – Stage Three Participant 1

Participants in Stage Three displayed high degrees of resilience; conveyed both as something that young people had developed themselves in order to overcome educational challenges and obstacles, and also something that non-mainstream providers had instilled in their learners:

We've got some people like the third year GCSE, they fail English, maths, even science, chemistry… but [non-mainstream provider teaches you about] determination you… just… do [that] exam again, even if you failed in this year, but next year they'll keep like 'you can', 'you can pass your exam'.
    – Stage Three Participant 5

Like I came here with nothing and then I done my maths and English resits; passed my maths but failed my English again, but I'm going to get that done soon.
    – Stage Three Participant 4

4.3.2 Interviews with Tutors
It was important to capture the voices of tutors in their roles as character educators of young people.

4.3.2.1 A Focus on Character Education
Tutors welcomed the opportunity to formally focus on character development of their pupils through the use of the resources. In doing so, tutors began to reflect on their own character development.

We did the introduction to virtues, obviously with them being parents talking about what makes a good life was quite eye-opening, they had very different ideas and it was very much family focussed and relationship focussed… everybody was very much in agreement no this is how we make a good life this is what makes us good people.
    – Stage Three Tutor 1

Focus group participants overwhelmingly conveyed positive responses when asked whether the resources had been of interest and of use to them. Almost all answered positively when asked if they would recommend them to peers and colleagues. Qualitative feedback on the activities has been used to refine and edit the resources, which are available online at: www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/ flourishingfromthemargins

4.3 STAGE THREE – NARRATIVE INTERVIEWS

Participants in Stage Three had all participated in Stage Two of the research, and, in some cases, had met the research team before. In Stage Three, they were asked to simply tell their 'stories' regarding their journeys through mainstream and non-mainstream education. Participants were asked whether they felt that they had a sense of purpose in their lives, and whether they had a clear sense of ambition, or aspiration, regarding achieving that purpose. Eight young people and six tutors were interviewed on camera in order to produce the accompanying film to this research report www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/ flourishingfromthemargins

4.3.1 Interviews with Young People
Interviews were transcribed and analysed, and key themes that were identified from the data centred around reasons for disengaging/disliking mainstream provision; reasons for entering in to, or benefits of being in non-mainstream provision;

a sense of direction, ambition, and purpose in life; and reflection or admission over mistakes made. The interviews support the findings from the survey and trial that young people from marginalised backgrounds and engaging in non-mainstream education have a positive sense of life purpose. Some were motivated to re-engage with mainstream provision:

I want to get back into mainstream, it's not good being here, like so say if like people ask me what school I go to or something I don't like saying here because it's like kind of embarrassing… if I say that I go to [non-mainstream provider] they might look at me as if I'm like a bad person.
    – Stage Three Participant 3

Whereas others felt comfortable in non-mainstream provision, but still had a clear sense of ambition and purpose:

I got a place at the… College for September, so I will be starting there, and doing my baking course.
    – Stage Three Participant 4

Others were confident in expressing a level of critical self-reflection and articulate weaknesses in, or absences of, character strengths that had contributed to them to being in the positions that they were in:

Tutors also considered the role of character specifically within the context of non-mainstream education, and the factors affecting marginalisation, like low literacy and numeracy levels, and how the resources trialled in Stage Two can benefit their learners:

A lot of [marginalised young people] can't write very well or spell very well, so they find that frustrating and that comes out in poor behaviour… they get very distracted, they shout, they throw things at each other, so… so we've been using things like some card matching… we did an introduction talking about virtues a lot of the learners didn't really know what virtues were so we talked about things like honesty and compassion, some of them took that as a slight and said well I am honest… and compassion they think they're quite caring, but… we've had learners who think that it's absolutely fine to stand on the roundabout outside where they smoke and blow smoke in your face.
          – Stage Three Tutor 2

Around our type of sector [non-mainstream provision], in areas where people are coming from deprived backgrounds, where they quite, quite vigorously don't understand what the world actually is, [a focus on character] does help them get a more well-rounded understanding.
          – Stage Three Tutor 3

4.3.2.2 Setting Goals and Developing Purpose

Tutors consciously aimed to develop a sense of purpose in their learners. This took the form, initially, of setting short-term goals, and helping their learners plot a path from where they found themselves to where they wanted to get to:

We had a… look at what's stopping you thinking about goal setting, where they want to be in five years' time, how we can help the kids achieve their goals.
          – Stage Three Tutor 1

[The resources] really helped; like I don't want to say 'plugged a gap', but it did plug that little bit in the curriculum; it added that little extra bit to help learners understand more about who they are… diving in a little bit more… to understand [what] their purpose in this centre is… then help them understand what their purpose outside of this centre is… You can't function in the world if you can't go out there and actually be someone who plays your part. What is your purpose? There isn't a purpose for somebody who can't go out there and actually be a decent human being.
          – Stage Three Tutor 3

4.3.2.3 Self-Reflection

Providing space and time for planned and meaningful character development allowed tutors the opportunity to reflect on their roles as character educators and reflect on their own character. This was seen as important in tutors' own personal development, and was welcomed by tutors who actively participated in the delivery of the resources in Stage Two.

I would contribute my opinions on what makes a good life what makes a good person and discuss with them what I would like to work on with myself like self-discipline patience definitely things that I think, I could be doing a wee bit more than that.
          – Stage Three Tutor 1

I think because I'm older, quite a bit older, then most of the [virtues are] things that I would take for granted, personally… so yes, it has made me rethink… and how I need to consider my teaching with different people because they all come from different backgrounds… I've probably thought more about how people behave and why they behave but linked it very much into employability and I've always done that but this has made me think about behaviours more and the different types of behaviours that I'm dealing with.
          – Stage Three Tutor 2

Yes, in terms of the virtues themselves, I look and I was like 'am I entirely virtuous?', 'am I entirely honest with the learners?'
          – Stage Three Tutor 3

4.4 OVERALL FINDINGS

This research combines large-scale empirical data and in-depth qualitative data on young people's perspectives of their own sense of purpose, factors influencing their impressions of a 'good life', and their sense of character development.

The dataset suggests an a-typical cohort of young people. Whilst more than two-thirds of participants in Stage One reported as living in a 'nuclear family', some 32% did not. Further, 20% of participants indicated that they look after a fellow family member on a daily basis at home, which is well above the national average for young carers. This makes the positive findings regarding marginalised young people more significant.

Participants in non-mainstream provision (27.4%) showed greater indications that they had a sense of purpose in life than those in mainstream settings (24.2%). Where participants responded positively to all questions on purpose, there was a positive correlational link with participants' circles of influence. Those categorised as 'having purpose' reported that family and friends, and particularly teachers and members of the community, had a greater and more positive influence on their sense of living a 'good life'. Those categorised as 'having purpose' also reported that particular character strengths and personal characteristics were more important to them than those categorised as 'not having purpose'.

Over 80% of participants in Stage One of the project indicated that supporting one's family, being close to one's family, being a good person, and striving to do one's best were 'very important' to participants' ideas of living a 'good life'. Whilst these four components were still considered 'very important' to the majority of participants in non-mainstream education, responses were lower than from mainstream respondents.

More than half of all participants felt that they understood their life's meaning, and nearly two-thirds of participants indicated that they had a good sense of what made their life meaningful. Just under half of participants indicated that they had discovered a satisfying life purpose.

More than 200 young people participated in the trial of a character education intervention designed for use in non-mainstream education settings. Participants in the intervention scored five of six statements on ambition and aspirations, and four statements on purpose more positively after the intervention than before. The largest increase in positive response from pre- to post-intervention survey was for the statement 'I understand my life's meaning.'

The role of the tutor as character educator was seen as fundamental for the positive character development of marginalised young people. Tutors considered their roles as character educators carefully, and teaching the resources used in the intervention did challenge them to consider their own character development as well as that of their learners.

‘CHARACTER, NOT CIRCUMSTANCES, MAKES THE MAN.’

Booker T. Washington, Educator

5 Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

This section considers the findings in the light of the three main research questions stated in Section 1 of this report.

5.1 DO YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE BECOME 'MARGINALISED' FROM MAINSTREAM EDUCATION PROVISION HAVE A SENSE OF PERSONAL IDENTITY, PURPOSE, AND UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR OWN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT?

5.1.1 Participants' Self-Reports

This research report challenged young people to consider their own sense of purpose. Research has found marginalised young people to be withdrawn from society, or not demonstrating any sense of life purpose or personal ambition. The findings presented in this report suggest the opposite. Overall, the majority of the young people that participated in Stage One reported that they felt that their life did have a clear sense of purpose. When considering the responses from participants in non-mainstream education, the percentages were even greater. The findings show that, almost without exception, participants from non-mainstream settings suggested that they had a more positive sense of purpose than their mainstream counterparts. This directly opposes findings from Damon (2009), who found that young people (aged 12–26 years) in the US struggled to find their life purpose.

Literature discussed in the Background section to this report draws a distinction between purpose, in the moral sense, and ambition, in the amoral sense. The Dame Kelly Holmes Trust (2017) found that 51% of young people lacked a sense of ambition, with regards to what they want to achieve or accomplish. The Trust supports young people facing disadvantage to lead positive lives. The findings presented in this report challenge those of the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust, Damon, and others where they present a very positive image of marginalised young people, and they deserve attention from all with a stake in education provision in the UK.

5.1.2 Challenging and Chaotic Home Lives

Sodha and Guglielmi (2009) have found that young people with more chaotic home lives struggle to engage with education and schooling. One-third of the young people surveyed in Stage One of this project reported that they did not come from a nuclear family home. ONS statistics suggested that in 2016 there were some 1.8 million lone-parent families with children under the age of 18 years, or 23% of all families with dependent children in the UK (ONS, 2016). Therefore, the cohort of participants in Stage One did not conform to UK average statistics on families and households. One-fifth of respondents to Stage One indicated that they care for a family member at home on a daily basis. Whilst the exact numbers of young carers in the UK are unclear, the 2011 census reported that there were at least 166,000 young carers aged 5–17-years-old caring for a family member in England (DfE, 2017b). The 20% of respondents from Stage One who reported that they care for a family member at home further emphasises the atypical nature of this dataset. Whilst this may make comparisons against national averages more challenging, it makes the positive findings regarding marginalised young people more significant and worthy of attention.

Damon (1988) found that the risk of disengagement from education can increase where a young person does not receive a nurturing relationship within the family home. Whilst the findings presented above do not discount young people from having become disengaged from mainstream education, the findings do indicate that disengagement, where it has become formalised in entry to non-mainstream provision, has not diminished the positive impression that the immediate family have on young people, nor deterred the development of a positive sense of purpose.

5.1.3 The Role of Non-Mainstream Education Provision

Marginalisation and disengagement from mainstream education can take many varied and diverse forms (Foliano et al., 2010; Hosie, 2007), so non-mainstream education provision is required to be adaptable and flexible in approach and nature. Non-mainstream providers are often required to manage the sometimes-conflicting aspects of reintegrating a young person into mainstream provision at the earliest and safest opportunity, and educate another young person who, in all likelihood, would remain in non-mainstream provision for a much longer period, possibly never returning to formal mainstream education until post-16 or post-19 stage.

This presents challenges to the tutors, curriculum managers, and other stakeholders in non-mainstream education provision where more personalised and individual education is often required with marginalised young people in order to better manage behaviour and attainment, to offer opportunities to re-engage with education, or simply provide 'safe spaces' to continue with education in a non-mainstream setting. The education of marginalised young people should include opportunities for character development and chances to develop a positive sense of purpose. The DfE has begun to formally recognise and request this in the recent 16 to 19 Programme of Study (DfE, 2017c), however, this should be extended across all non-mainstream provision, where possible.

5.2 WHO AND WHAT ARE THE KEY INFLUENCING FACTORS (BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE) ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S SENSE OF WHAT IT IS TO LIVE A 'GOOD LIFE'?

5.2.1 Factors of Importance When Developing a Sense of Purpose

Developing a sense of character, and the virtues that make up good character, is an essential partner in developing a sense of moral purpose, and therefore the ability to live a 'good life'.

5.2.1.1 Circles of Influence

Much research has been conducted on reasons for young people disengaging from education (see Hayden and Blaya, 2005; McGrath, 2009; Finlay et al., 2009). Where young people do disengage from particular lessons, or mainstream schooling more broadly, the influence of the teacher, as an educator for character development, will lessen, and young people won't see their teachers as having substantive influence on their characters, nor on their sense of purpose. The findings of this report show that where an individual does have a sense of purpose, that they recognise the positive influence that teachers can have on them. Equally, findings from this study show that the influences of close family and friends and outside influences (sport, music, social media), are considered greater and more positive where a person has a sense of their own purpose in life. The links between sense of purpose and circles of influence, here, are

correlational rather than causal, so further work is recommended to better understand how developing a clear sense of purpose can be affected by an individual's circles of influence.

5.2.1.2 Youth Social Action and Societal Flourishing

Many researchers have demonstrated the links between positive community action, good character, and a sense of purpose (see Albee and Ryan-Finn, 1993; Lies, *et al.*, 2008; Ballard, *et al.*, 2015; Arthur, Harrison and Taylor, 2015; Arthur *et al.*, 2017c). This report adds further evidence to the argument that where young people perceive themselves to be positively engaged with their community, or society around them, so their senses of purpose and of living a 'good life' develop more positively.

5.2.2 Age and Susceptibility to Influence

The findings in this study demonstrate the waning effect that age can have on a young person's impressionability to influencing factors. The influence of primary (family and friends) and secondary (school and community) factors across the broad range of age groups (11–19 years) is shown to be consistently lower with older respondents. The influence of outside influences (social media, music, news) is shown to be greater in older age groups. Even accounting for self-report bias, it is important to consider early intervention with regards to developing a sense of purpose and the character of young people.

5.2.3 Marginalisation is No Barrier to Developing a Sense of Purpose

Where previous studies have indicated that marginalised young people have a less positive, even negative, sense of purpose and/or ambition than counterparts in the mainstream (Damon, 2009; Dame Kelly Holmes Trust, 2017), the findings in this report suggest that being marginalised does not inhibit the development of one's sense of purpose. By group, a greater percentage of young people formally participating in non-mainstream education provision responded positively to all questions on purpose than their counterparts in mainstream provision. Further, where an educational intervention dedicated to developing character and a sense of purpose is taught, so young people develop a sense of life purpose on a greater scale.

5.3 WHAT PART MIGHT AN INTERVENTION IN CHARACTER EDUCATION PLAY IN ADDRESSING ISSUES OF DISENGAGEMENT AMONGST MARGINALISED YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE UK?

The Jubilee Centre has undertaken large amounts of research across the UK to better understand the place and position of character education in mainstream schooling (see Arthur, *et al.*, 2015; 2017a; Jubilee Centre, 2017). This report provides an evidence base for advocating that character education should form part of non-mainstream education provision, and for continued inclusion of a character-led philosophy to education more broadly.

5.3.1 Character Education in Non-Mainstream Provision

Recent research conducted by the DfE found non-mainstream providers (alternative provision and PRUs) more likely than mainstream schools to report supporting the development of character strengths for reasons other than for academic attainment. 'PRUs and special schools particularly emphasised the importance of resilience, self-esteem and self-regulation in enabling their pupils to overcome barriers to learning.' (DfE, 2017a: 7). The new DfE Programme of Study for 16 to 19 education provision includes a focus on character as one of the four elements that providers need to include, along with academic or vocational qualifications, English and maths to GCSE pass standard, and practical work experience (DfE, 2017c). The tutors interviewed in Stages Two and Three of this study would argue that they provide for all four of these points already. The positive findings from the trial of the intervention in Stage Two give confidence that the resource can be rolled out on a wider scale.

5.3.1.1 The Language of Character

The intervention was designed to bring the language of character into the classrooms and educational settings of young people who are outside of mainstream provision. The Jubilee Centre has previously found that a focus on the language of character can assist with the positive development of 'virtue literacy' (Arthur, *et al.*, 2014; Jubilee Centre, 2017). Whilst this research did not test participants' abilities to

reason discerningly through moral dilemmas, this report does show that by introducing the language of character to young people in non-mainstream education provision, so it is possible to give young people a vocabulary through which they can voice their ideas about their own character development, their purpose, and their place in society.

5.3.1.2 Tutors as Character Educators

During the course of the project, the research team identified the need to focus on the voice of the tutor in non-mainstream settings, as a character educator. The tutors who participated in the research included both specialist non-mainstream facilitators, and those who had previously worked in mainstream provision and had chosen to engage more directly in supporting the development of marginalised young people. Tutors often saw their roles as dual-focussed; not only supporting their learners to engage with academic subjects and exams, but also to understand why they had become disengaged from education, and support their re-engagement, either with mainstream education, or progression through to further or higher education. Much of this support could be seen to be through character-led conversations, albeit without the formal language of character. The tutors involved in this study cannot be badged with the same descriptor that Damon (2009) used when he identified that teachers (and parents) did not talk to young people about how the positive and negative experiences that had affected their own lives contributed to their own character development. The participating tutors from across the non-mainstream education sector worked hard to engage with their learners through the sharing of life experiences, and understanding how they have helped their own development and life choices, as well as supporting their academic attainment.

6 **Recommendations**

In light of the findings outlined in this report, this section makes recommendations to education stakeholders in both mainstream and non-mainstream provision with regards to improving opportunities and access for marginalised young people to flourish through character education provision. These recommendations should be of interest to politicians, practitioners, policymakers, and educators who are charged with the development of marginalised young people. A one-size-fits-all approach to character development of marginalised young people is not suggested. It is vital not to see the implementation of any character-led teaching as a 'fix' which will cure the causes of educational marginalisation, or becoming NEET altogether.

Non-mainstream education providers should dedicate time and space within their curricula to creating and developing character education opportunities for their learners.

The findings presented here demonstrate that marginalised young people do not lack a sense of moral purpose. It is recommended that stakeholders build upon this positive base and help guide marginalised young people in terms of providing both opportunities to fulfil one's purpose, and the language of character to assist their development and ability to flourish.

Where possible, provision for character education should be extended throughout non-mainstream curricula and extra-curricula activities. As character is now a formal part of the DfE 16 to 19 Programme of Study, time and space to deliver effective character building activities with young learners should be planned for by curriculum managers and senior leaders in non-mainstream settings.

People in positions of responsibility for developing and delivering non-mainstream education curricula should consider developing a culture and ethos of character and virtues within their organisation or setting.

Non-mainstream education providers should look to build an ethos, or culture, of character within non-mainstream settings, where one doesn't already exist. Where non-mainstream providers have links with mainstream schools, they should look to develop and extend such links to share a culture of character development. Character education should become a formal part of non-mainstream provision, with curriculum managers and school and youth organisation leaders supporting and facilitating tutors to introduce a planned and meaningful focus on character education with learners.

Opportunities to learn and share best practices for delivering character-building activities with marginalised young people in formal and non-formal settings should be encouraged across non-mainstream provision.

Providers working with marginalised young people should consider using the teaching materials used in Stage Two of this research project.

As a way 'in' to delivering character-led teaching, and as a tool for exposing marginalised young people to the language of character, non-mainstream providers are encouraged to use the resources trialled in this study. The resources provide a starting point for the teaching of character in non-mainstream settings. Tutors are provided with the flexibility to deliver resources in the best way to suit them, their learners, and the setting in which they are being taught.

The teaching materials are available to download at: www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/flourishingfromthemargins

Further work is recommended to explore the links between developing a clear sense of purpose and an individual's primary, secondary, and tertiary circles of influence.

The relationships presented in this report between circles of influence on participants' concept of living a 'good life', and their sense of life purpose, are correlational, not causal. More work is encouraged to explore those positive relationships, and to consider whether the links between the development of purpose and one's primary, secondary, and tertiary circles of influence, are causal or correlational.

> 'LIFE DOESN'T GET EASIER OR MORE FORGIVING; WE GET STRONGER AND MORE RESILIENT.'
>
> **Steve Maraboli, Researcher**

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Appendix
Participating Schools and Organisations

The following schools and organisations participated in some or all of Stages One, Two and Three of this research. Without their assistance and facilitation, this project would not have been possible.

- The Albion Foundation
- The Avenues Youth Project
- Baytree Centre
- Byrchall High School
- City of Birmingham School
- Coal Clough Academy
- CUL Academy
- Davenant School
- The Douay Martyr's School
- Framwellgate School Durham
- Grange Technology College
- The Hollies Pupil Referral Unit
- King Edward VI Sheldon Heath Academy
- King's Lynn Academy
- Lancaster Royal Grammar School
- Loreto Grammar School
- Making the Leap
- Martin O'Connor Education and Football Academy
- Nene Park Academy
- Nottingham Girls' Academy
- Ormiston Academy
- Oscott Academy
- President Kennedy School
- Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Ashbourne
- Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Barnet
- Queens Park Community School
- Rathbone Training UK
- Richard Challoner School
- The Royal Latin School
- Sarum Academy
- Shirebrook Academy
- Sporting Edge School
- Southside Learning
- St Edmunds Catholic Academy
- St Edmunds School
- St John's Ambulance
- St Michael's Church of England High School
- StreetGames
- The Switch Project
- Tewkesbury School
- Tudor Grange Academy, Worcester
- University Academy Keighley
- Urmston Grammar School
- Vi-ability
- Walton Hall Academy
- Ward End Community College
- Witton Park
- Wodensborough Hitchin Boys' School

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'CHARACTER IS THAT WHICH REVEALS MORAL PURPOSE, EXPOSING THE CLASS OF THINGS A MAN CHOOSES AND AVOIDS.'

Plato

Acknowledgements

[
'IT IS OUR MORAL OBLIGATION TO GIVE EVERY CHILD THE VERY BEST EDUCATION POSSIBLE.'

Desmond Tutu
]

JOHN TEMPLETON
FOUNDATION

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