



ESTEEM

OUR STRATEGY

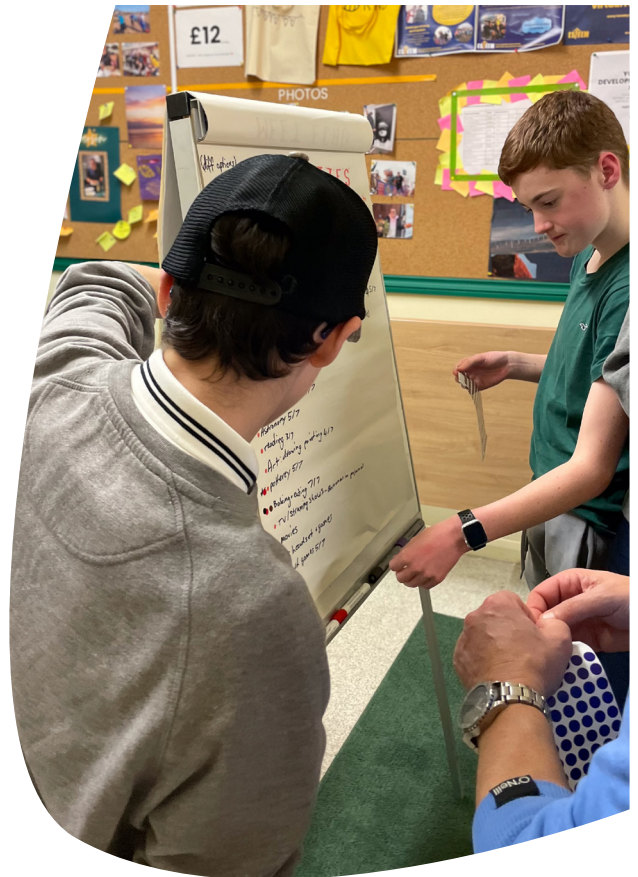
April 2023–March 2028

*Why and how we do what we do,
and where we go next.*

1. Introduction

This document outlines our agreed strategic direction for the next 3 to 5 years. The strategy has been co-produced with people across ESTEEM, including young adults, the staff team and Trustees. People have given their views and ideas through a variety of different meetings and involvement opportunities. These include a focused young adults strategy working group and discussions within the 'ESTEEM Team' (our ongoing participation group), staff and managers' meetings, Trustees meetings and an Away Day that brought representatives from all these groups together.

It is designed to be a rolling strategy, with six monthly reviews and revisions as appropriate. It builds on our previous strategy and continues our developmental journey in relation to achieving our vision. Managers will lead on specific goals, producing action plans for implementation and co-ordinating relevant input from others.¹ The action plans underpinning the implementation of the strategy will be live documents with actions overseen by relevant members of the ESTEEM management team.



Reviews will be six-monthly and will consider achievements in line with the strategic goals, changing circumstances and where and how goals need to be updated, added to or changed. In line with its co-produced foundations, these reviews will include all groups that have been involved in developing the strategy and other people that we may bring in for their additional expertise.

¹ All of the following goals will be underpinned by specific actions plans, with identified leads, timelines and outcome targets. These will form our first phase of implementation.



**We work *with* young adults
to build lasting self-esteem
and stronger communities
through *group activities* and
*1-2-1 support.***



ESTEEM creates spaces where everyone matters

Watch
our new
welcome
video.



2. Why ESTEEM Exists (Mission & Vision)



At ESTEEM, we can **belong**
and make a **positive difference**,
whatever challenges we face.

We all need **someone** to believe in us
and the **space** to believe in ourselves.

When we **value**
ourselves and
each other,
we can **all thrive**
together.



3. Why and how we do what we do (Theory of Change)

This describes why we do what we do and how we do it. In other words, what personal and social development changes we believe young adults can achieve with our support and what activities we offer to help young adults on their journey towards positive changes for themselves.

At ESTEEM, everything that happens is based on our 3 *underpinning* values: **Trust**, **Support** and **Respect**.

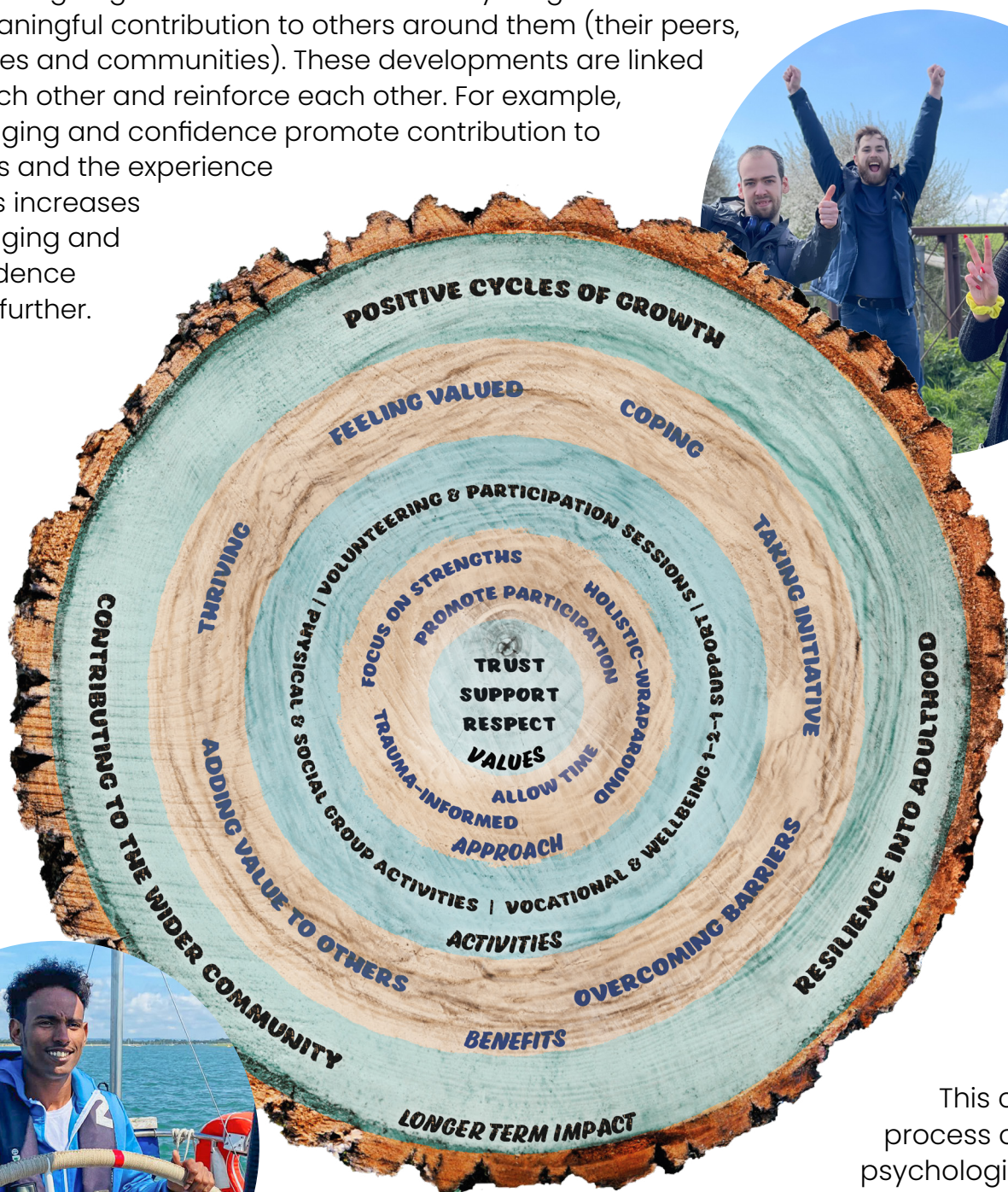
These values drive our own particular approach. We are *focused on people's strengths* and avoid othering young adults by labelling. We build from strengths and *actively facilitate independence and initiative*, aiming for young adults to work jointly with staff to *create and embed progress in their lives*. We offer young adults the time they need to trust and experience being trusted, to learn and to grow. Within ESTEEM, the emphasis is on everyone working together to create a safe and creative space of mutual respect, belonging, learning and growth.



Young adults can access a range of *person-centred, wraparound opportunities*. These include 1-2-1 support to engage through mentoring, counselling and wellbeing sessions such as The Walk and Talk. We also provide group activities where there's space to develop social relationships and the chance to get outside, get active, or have a meal. We offer volunteering and work experience opportunities wherever possible. Crucially, there are chances for any young adult to contribute at every level of ESTEEM, from supporting others to influencing decisions and being directly involved in how ESTEEM is run.

Through this range of opportunities, young adults can access the support they need to survive and cope with their life challenges and to create positive changes in their own lives. The safe environment we foster also helps young adults to feel a sense of belonging and to contribute to others, both of which are linked to improved confidence, self-ESTEEM and development of agency. These are the developments that we strive for in our work together.

We believe that accessing our support and activities can help young adults to develop positive cycles, despite any inequities or complex barriers they face. Young adults can access support to develop the capacity to thrive in their adult lives in the longer term. By continuing to grow and value themselves young adults can make a meaningful contribution to others around them (their peers, families and communities). These developments are linked to each other and reinforce each other. For example, belonging and confidence promote contribution to others and the experience of this increases belonging and confidence even further.



This cyclical process of what psychologists call 'mattering' has strong evidence in research. We

can see 'mattering' in terms of the mutual reinforcement between a sense of belonging and the knowledge that we are making a difference to others. Research shows that mattering contributes strongly to resilience development. This is a large part of what makes ESTEEM stand out. It is a safe space where feeling valued and knowing their value to others becomes part of every young adult's story that will continue with them into their future.

4. What we learned from reviewing where we currently stand

The 2023 Road Ahead report by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)² focuses on the impact of cost-of-living pressures on the third sector and identifying key predictions for the immediate to medium term future. First and foremost it highlights that running costs have already risen dramatically and will continue to rise, with high inflation affecting energy prices, consumables and staff wages. With regard to income, there are risks presented by trends of decreasing income for voluntary organisations with budgets under £1 million, and higher demand for what is a fairly static funding pot from local Councils and from non-statutory funders.³

The NPC report Recognising social value in public procurement⁴ (September 2022) estimates that public sector contracts do not usually cover full costs and are becoming increasingly short term as Councils face their own unprecedented budget pressures.

Research by ProBono Economics and Nottingham Business School found that 55% of charities are using reserves to

meet operating costs which is a sustainability risk.

Whilst ESTEEM is not in this position currently, it is evidence of a challenging financial environment for our organisation and we need a better diversification of income to mitigate potential losses or end of current funding streams.

Our services are needed more than ever before, with government statistics showing a 25% increase in the number of



young people with an identified mental health need and NHS mental health services for children and young people increasingly unable to meet more than a fraction of demand.⁵

ESTEEM has enjoyed a period of rapid growth in income, staffing and range of support options. This has enabled us to offer more opportunities for young adults to cope with challenging life situations and to develop and thrive now and into the future. We are all confident that what we are doing is working and now we want to be able to evidence this strongly to ourselves, to young adults who are not yet accessing our opportunities, to the communities in which we work and to those who might potentially fund our current and future delivery. Our young adults' strategy working groups and staff, in particular, feel that now is the time to consolidate our practices, consider our impact for individual young adults and how this can be maximised and to ensure we are the best we can be. All of these considerations have guided our strategic aims and goals.

Several voluntary sector young people's services in Sussex have recently closed, unable to sustain their required income. These environmental factors indicate that a time of consolidation and a focus on financial sustainability is the right focus for ESTEEM. It does not preclude ambition for growth, but it highlights the need for financial caution in our decision making over the short to medium term.

² [*The Road Ahead 2023: The ongoing impact of cost of living \(NCVO, 2023\)*](#)

³ [*CAF Charity Resilience Index \(Charities Aid Foundation, 2023\)*](#)

⁴ [*Recognising social value in public procurement \(NPC, 2022\)*](#)

⁵ [*The Guardian view on Camhs in crisis: young people need more help.\(The Guardian, 2022\)*](#)



5. Our strategic aims

Our overall aim stems directly from our vision and from our current environmental and organisational positions. This aim is to enable young adults aged 14-26 to develop their wellbeing and mental health and their sense of being valued and valuable members of their communities.

In order to achieve this we will:

- Consolidate and sustain what we already do and make sure we are doing it as well as we can, both financially and in terms of quality and impact.
- Continue to be ambitious in terms of opportunities to grow in reach, in line with our stated vision and Theory of Change.
- Increase our influence by sharing our learning and experience with others in our local area, nationally and beyond.

These aims reflect the current environment climate for third sector organisations in the UK, as well as our stage of organisational development.



6. Our strategic goals

We will achieve these aims by focusing on the following areas, looking outwards towards our funders, partners and the community whilst also paying attention to our internal development.

1

We will make sure we have enough money to keep doing what we do and secure our premises.

The current financial situation for UK third sector organisations is extremely challenging and many youth organisations are struggling to survive. Our first commitment therefore is to identify funding to sustain what we are already doing, which includes making sure our financial model is the best it can be. Part of this is identifying an achievable way of financing the purchase of our existing premises.

Key actions:

- Prepare an outline of income generation targets and success criteria.
- Obtain continuation funding from our existing funders where possible.
- Develop and implement a plan for diversifying our income sources to meet any gaps in funding needed to sustain our current activity.

2

We will find money to help us grow and do additional things, in line with our vision and theory of change.

Once we have identified funding to sustain our organisation over the next three to five years, we will be in a strong position to explore ideas for growth. This may be in terms of geographical presence or in terms of what we can offer young adults in terms of employment experience. Our revised Theory of Change provides a framework for what kind of growth we will seek to achieve, reminding us to gain funding for activity in line with our vision and what we do best.

Key actions:

- Link our income generation plans to our communication plans.
- Involve young adults in investigating opportunities for growth and obtaining funding for this.
- Maximise benefits of income generation to identify additional funding for new activities and/or geographical coverage, building from what we do best.

3

We will further develop and grow ways for young adults to be involved in everything we do.

Young adults' involvement in everything we do at ESTEEM is key to who we are. We want to be even more ambitious and to develop other opportunities for young adults to directly contribute to the life and community of ESTEEM.

Key actions:

- Capture relevant opportunities to involve young adults in a meaningful way in all our implementation plans and policies.
- Ensure that young adults are directly involved in formulating key action plans for the implementation of our strategy (for example, communications plan, involvement plan)
- Develop and monitor the impact of specific progression routes for young adults to work more closely with the Board of Trustees and in meaningful ways.

4

We will make sure that our working systems are what we need to give young adults the best opportunities.

We have expanded quickly in the last few years, increasing our range of support opportunities. Making sure that all our support options work together smoothly and that we all share an understanding of who can get what support with ESTEEM will put us in the best possible position for future growth. Developing measurement frameworks will help us understand how young adults benefit from ESTEEM and will help us communicate our learning and successes to others. We have focused energy and other resources on proactive strategies to improve staff wellbeing and this is highly valued. We will continue to prioritise this moving forward.

Key actions:

- Make sure our practices and policies are most relevant and useful for how we work together across different parts of ESTEEM's offer to young adults.
- Develop a clear way of measuring whether what we are doing is helping young adults and to measure our impact to provide information about our successes and where there is room for improvement.
- Promote even stronger impact by learning from impact measurement (Theory of change benefits to be reviewed in line with this).
- Commission an Equalities Diversity and Inclusion strategy and implement its recommendations.
- Continue to prioritise staff wellbeing as fundamental to our success.

5

We will increase our presence and reach in the local community and in the wider youth work sphere.

Our communications need to support all aspects of our strategy. They need to raise our profile in the community and to ensure that young adults, those who support them, and funders and supporters all understand exactly what we do and why it works.

Key actions:

- Agree our updated Vision, Mission and Theory of Change
- Identify our marketing and communications objectives for the next 5 years with clear outcome targets across our range of stakeholders.
- Develop a communications plan to address these opportunities, which targets funders, partners, young adults and others in the local community.
- Review how Trustees and Young Adults can be more involved to support communications and marketing of ESTEEM.

6

We will further develop our collaborations and share learning with other organisations.

We know that what we do works for young adults. With better impact measurement systems and targeted communications we can share our learning more effectively with other local and national partners. In this way we can directly help other organisations improve or expand their understanding of how valuing young adults and providing opportunities for them to add value to their communities is directly beneficial to mental health, belonging and healthy adulthood. We can also learn from others, improving how we address young adults' needs through mutual education and inspiration.

Key actions:

- Agree a clear set of messages about ESTEEM that we can all understand and share.
- Identify and address opportunities to share what we are doing well, to help other services do things better with young adults and to learn from the experience of other organisations.
- Develop relationships as 'practice partners' with Trusts and relevant National Umbrella organisations.