

USER INSIGHT ANALYSIS

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YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES

**EXPLORING VARYING DEGREES
OF MARGINALISATION**

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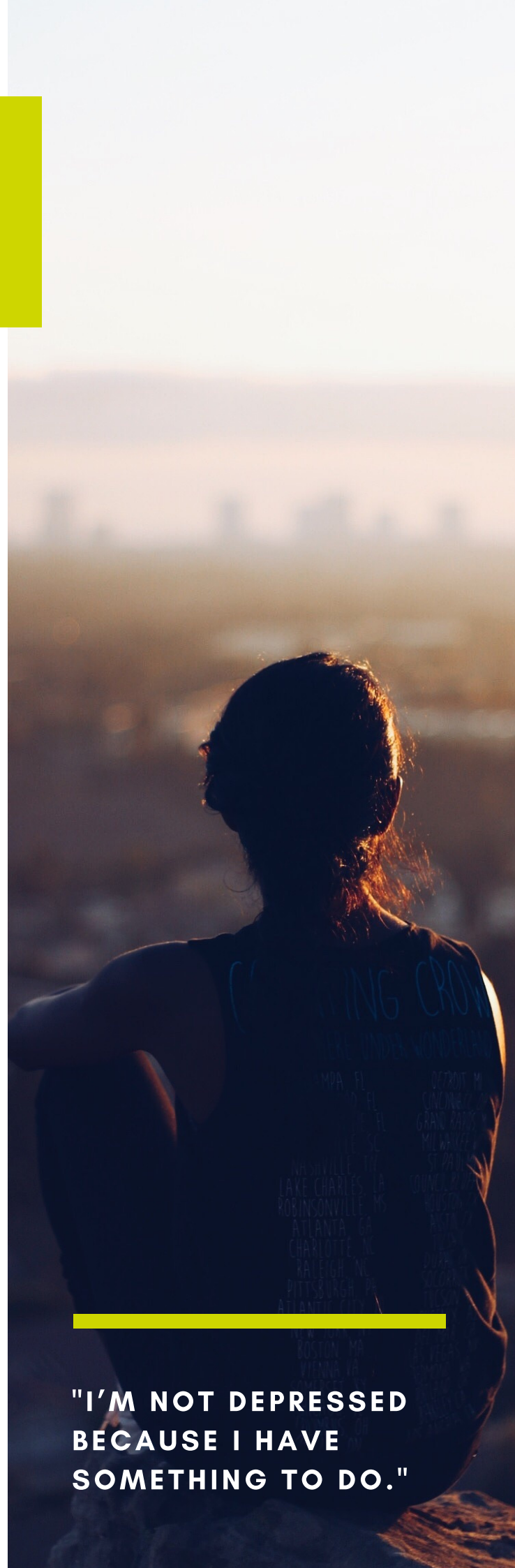
ABOUT

When looking at the lives of young people in Finnish society it is important to view them through a lens that takes into account the multifaceted nature of marginalisation and inclusion. As part of the Cosie project, undergraduates from Turku University of Applied Sciences have been trained as Community Reporters and using an insight storytelling methodology they have gathered stories of other young people who are encountering a range of challenges in their lives.

To access these young people and hear about their lives, the Community Reporters used their personal contacts and went out onto the streets of Turku. This enabled them to engage with young people who are less likely to be engaged with formal services, and through this began to uncover some of the issues that these young people are facing.

What the stories suggest is that having a purpose in life helps young people to create a positive sense of identity, which supports their overall wellbeing. This focus and sense of self helps young people to tackle the difficulties they face. However, as this insight report will detail, equating purpose to 'having a job' and linking this to 'improved wellbeing' is to simple a correlation to make. The key is that the work or purpose is something that is fulfilling for the young person.

[Click here to watch a short film of the key insights from the stories.](#)



**"I'M NOT DEPRESSED
BECAUSE I HAVE
SOMETHING TO DO."**

DEGREES OF MARGINALISATION

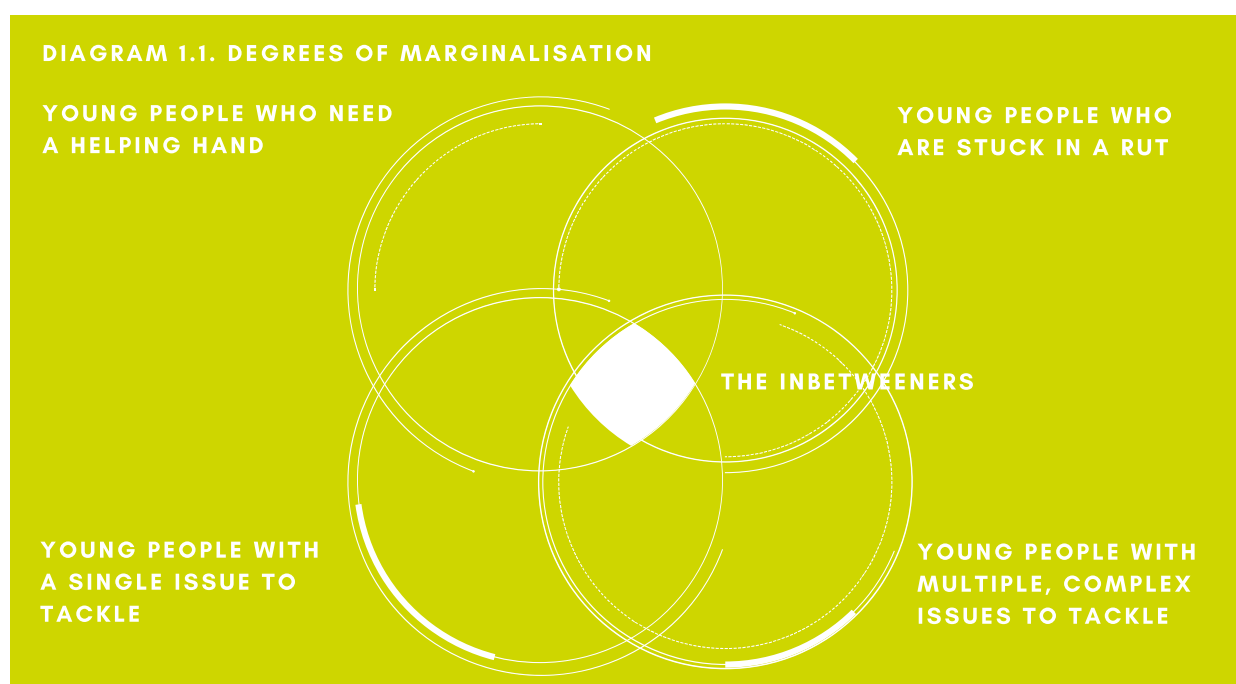
When analysing the stories, four distinct (yet overlapping) categories of 'marginalised' young people and their needs emerged:

1. Young people who need a helping hand – This group of young people usually have either have a sense of purpose or most of the tools needed to make positive changes in their lives but need a push in the right direction.

2. Young people who are stuck in a rut – This group of young people are extremely lacking in purpose and are generally not accessing any support. They are isolated and can't vision a way out of their current context.

3. Young people with a single issue to tackle – This group of young people have a specific barrier or issue that they need to overcome. Their challenge tends to be a single, external problem (i.e. a language barrier).

4. Young people with multiple, complex issues to tackle – This group of young people have a range of issues that they need to address and when combined present a number of barriers to them living less chaotic lives. Their challenges tend to be multiple, interconnected internal problems (i.e. addiction issues, past traumas etc.).



A PUSH IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION



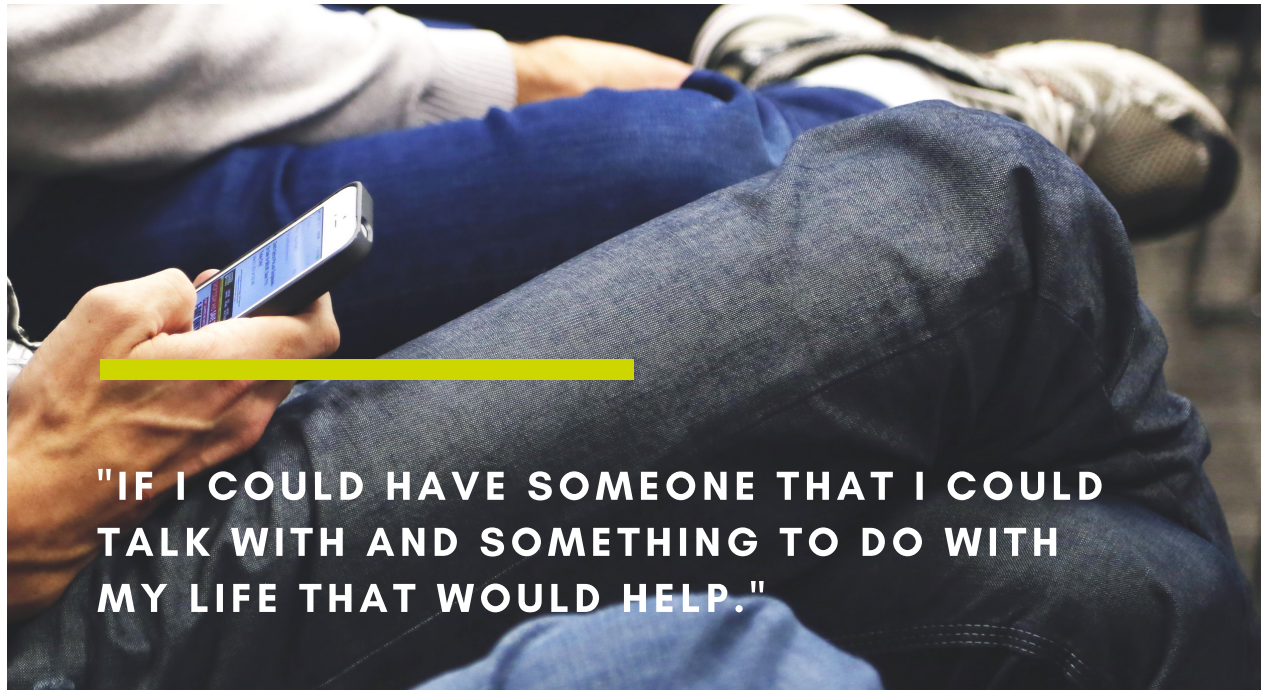
The young people that fall into this category have most of what they need in order to enhance their lives and are one of the groups that traditional services can have the biggest impact on if they personalise their support to meet their needs. For example, a young person with an education in graphic design explains how being unemployed and having finished her degree, she was left without a schedule and each day would be the same. Now although she is unemployed she is attending a workshop where she can use her talent and has realised she is already doing a lot and "appreciates [herself] more".

Another young woman has also found herself unemployed after previously being in work in the catering industry. She has a

degree but doesn't want to work in that field anymore. As she states, "I don't know what I want to do when I grow up. I picked my career based on what seemed to be nice when I was 16 years old". What this identifies is that services need to understand the flow of people's lives - we don't always stay on the same route throughout our journeys.

From these stories, we can see how simple enhancements to current provision can support young people. As the young designer identifies in her story, this could mean having better access to information. It could also mean, as the other young woman describes, providing further motivation as "after 80 job applications you lose your interest."

STUCK IN A RUT

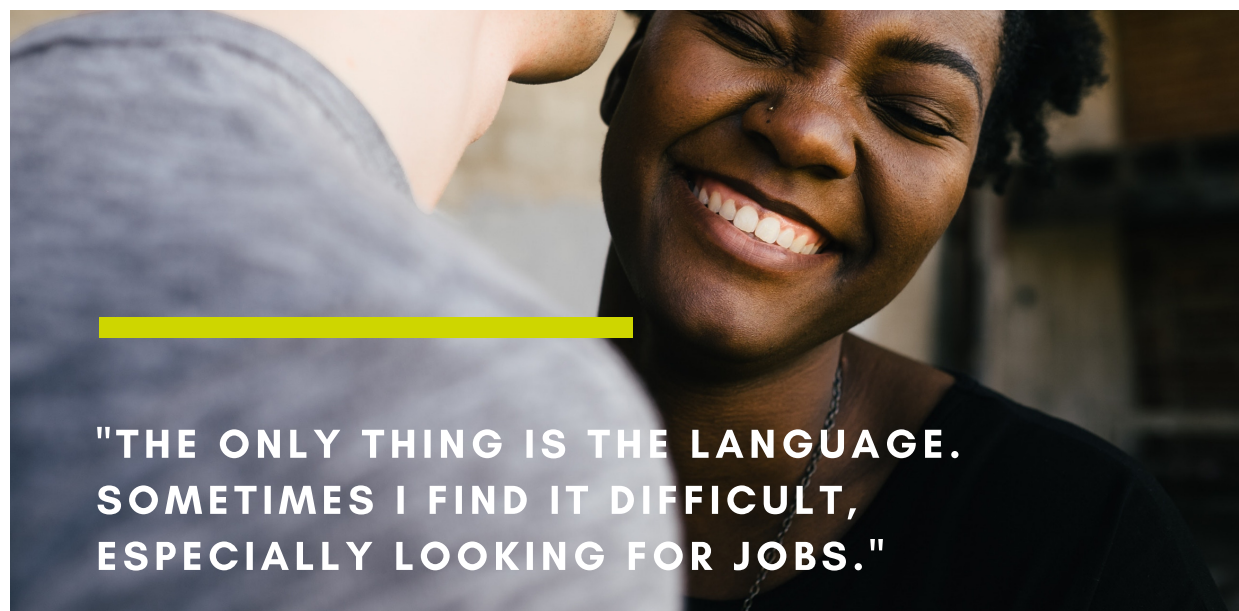


"IF I COULD HAVE SOMEONE THAT I COULD TALK WITH AND SOMETHING TO DO WITH MY LIFE THAT WOULD HELP."

A large number of the stories gathered fell into this category. Young people who fall into this category tend not to have a visible or obvious issue in their lives such as homelessness or drug abuse problems, but tend to have instead become isolated from society by not having anything productive to do with their time. As one young man explains, "I play the computer, that's all I do". This has resulted him feeling "lonely". Similarly, a young woman explains that she feels lonely as all she does is "reads books and watches television"; her only social interactions are with her family. As she describes, part of her problem is that she doesn't know what she wants to do.

If left without this support, these young people could continue to drift in life and their situations worsen. For example, a young man who has been unemployed for a number of years explains how he now suffers from financial issues. He has registered with the employment agency but feels his education is holding him back. He describes how he "has been in all kinds of schools but I haven't found any of them interesting". What is clear in these stories, is that if young people are left without a purpose or focus in life, they become more isolated and this enhances their issues and marginalisation from society. help.

REACHING FOR A LITTLE SUPPORT



The young people in this group are generally engaged in society, yet they seemed to be held back from their fullest potential due to a specific need. As a young person who has come to study in Finland from Nigeria states, he is broadly happy with the services provided in Finnish society and has settled. The only issue he has "is the language". This is making it difficult for him to find work and sometimes to make friendships. At school he has Finnish friends but not outside of school, and the Finnish language class he took at school just covered the basics. Whilst not experiencing language issues, another young man found that access to adequate healthcare was preventing him from living his life

to the fullest. As he describes, he has "diseases that the public healthcare won't treat because of costs". This lack of treatment has hindered his options for work and education. What these stories present is a lack in the support within current provision, rather than a complete lack of services. The people in these stories know how to access support but they have found the support to be lacking. It is plausible that continual lack of the 'right' support could push these young people - who are relatively included in society when compared to others in the stories - to further degrees of marginalisation and isolation if not addressed.

COMPLEX LIVES & NEEDS



The young people's whose stories have been positioned in this category face a number of issues in their lives. One young person describes how nothing is good in her life - "I only have problems". She describes how she has a mental health illness and that her medication isn't right and this leads her to being taken to hospital for psychiatric treatment regularly. In addition to this she takes drugs and feels that her education is holding her back. The issue of drug abuse was a prevailing factor in the young people's stories who lead quite chaotic lives and have complex needs. Another young person describes how drug abuse resulted in his relationship breaking down and him losing his home. As he stated, "I tried to relieve my bad feelings and bitterness. I was really broken."

The stories these young people told reveal a range of needs, issues and traumas, and as such the complexity of their situations must not be underestimated. However, a factor that also unites these stories is that they are all in some way being provided with some level of support. The fact that these young people are receiving support is a positive factor, perhaps what is needed and is alluded to in the stories, is a 'joined up' support that treats their complex issues via looking at them as a whole person rather than individual issues. This may help get to the root cause of the complexities that they are facing.

THE INBETWEENERS



"I AM CURRENTLY ON SICK LEAVE BECAUSE I CANNOT MANAGE ALL THE TIME, ONE HAS TO TAKE A BREAK ONCE IN A WHILE."

One of the most 'at risk' groups are the young people who fall between the boundaries of these groupings as they on one hand may present as being included or just needing basic support, when in fact there are other more significant issues at play. For example, three of the stories gathered were of young people who may not be usually seen as being marginalised as they are in employment, but their lives behind-the-scenes display characteristics of the other groupings. A truck driver states that although he is in work, he is trying to find "a balance with life and work" as his job is making him "gloomy". Similarly, a young person who came to Finland 14 years ago from Kosovo has secured employment but is currently on sick leave. As he explains, "I am currently on sick leave because I cannot manage all the time, one has to take a break once in a while". These young people

have work but that seems to be detracting from their wellbeing. In this respect, they present a similar outlook on life as those young people who are stuck in a rut.

Another story that falls between categories is a young man who is struggling to keep his job due to issues with drugs. As he states, "the challenge is that I use drugs in order to be able to work". Due to trauma in his childhood around bullying he uses drugs as a crutch to cope with people and to be in society. Again, as this young person is employed he would not necessarily initially appear to be marginalised, yet his life is similar to the complex lives category. What these three stories highlight is that looking purely down the employed/unemployed lens as a distinguishing factor for addressing the needs of marginalised young people is too one-dimensional.



RETHINKING THE STRUCTURE OF SUPPORT SERVICES

So, the question remains, what can services do to better support the lives of marginalised young people? In some instances, current provision is catering for some of the needs expressed in these stories. For example, the current provision is helping those young people who just need a little helping hand or push, such as the two young women who are experiencing unemployment. Furthermore, service provision in the realms of language support and healthcare might just need adding to in order to cover the additional needs in these stories.

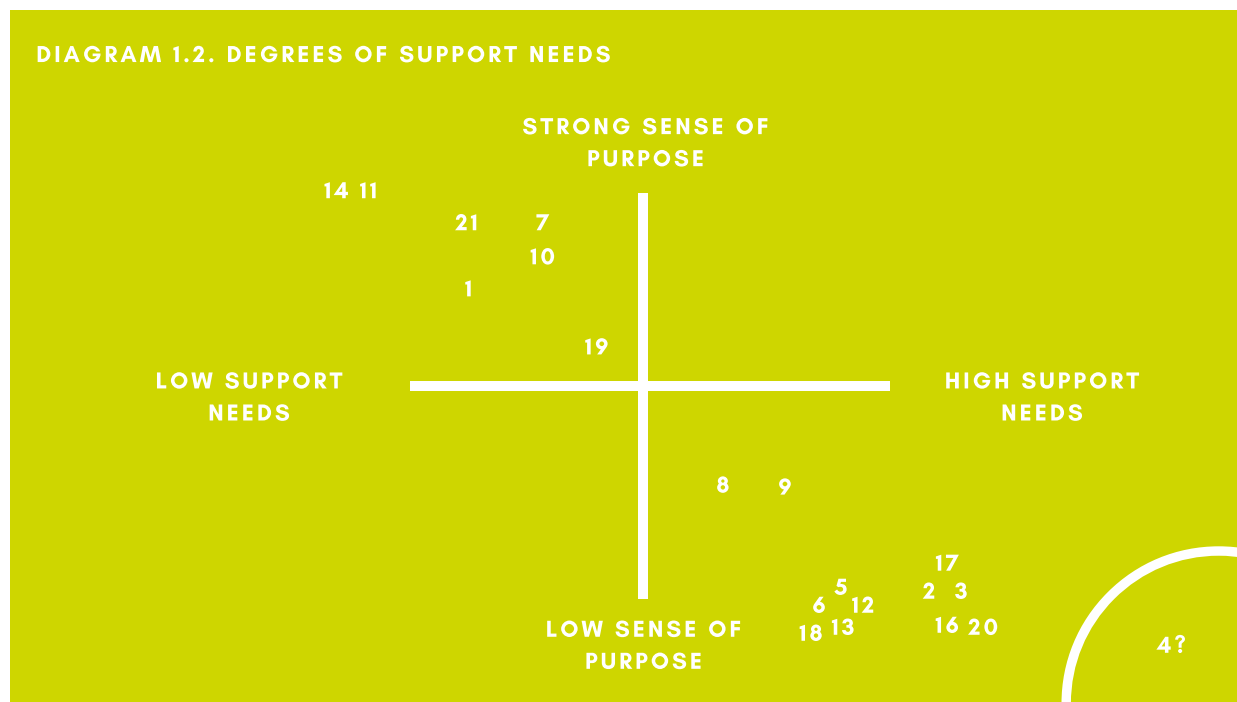
Where there is a need for more innovative change is in rethinking the types of provision that might engage young people who are more on the margins or in the peripheries – such as those who are between categories. Many of the stories advocate wanting to have someone to talk to or a space to meet new people. One

young man who feels isolated due to social exclusion other his looks and ways of being, suggests that “it would help to have a service where someone connects a few people to meet and get to know each other”. What this suggests is that support within more familiar, social or community settings would help to engage some of the marginalised young people. This support should help them to firstly identify and then secondly address their needs. Once young people have more fuller sense of purpose and identity, they will begin to develop the skills needed to access and navigate more traditional forms of services in order to meet their needs.

**"IT WOULD HELP TO
HAVE A SERVICE
WHERE SOMEONE
CONNECTS A FEW
PEOPLE TO MEET..."**

DEGREES OF SUPPORT NEEDS

Viewing the marginalisation of young people in this way has enabled us to see a correlation between a young person's level of support needs and their sense of purpose by mapping the stories on Diagram 1.2.



Story Number Summaries

1. Young person wanting to change employment sectors
2. Young person whose life fell apart due to drug abuse
3. Young person who is a regular drug user and needs help
4. Young person doesn't want to say his opinion in public
5. Young person who has lost a job and is getting isolated
6. Young person who is socially isolated with no purpose
7. Young man from Nigeria came to study but finds language an issue
8. A young man who is gloomy about his job and work/life balance
9. A Kosovan young man is on sick leave as work is too much at the moment
10. A Somali young man only had Finnish friends in school
11. A Somali young man support other immigrants to access support
12. Young man who is been unemployed and doesn't know what he wants to do
13. A young man is isolated because of what others think about him
14. A young person in training but currently unemployed
15. Young woman who is isolated and doesn't know what she wants to do
16. A young woman with drug, mental health and social problems
17. Young person struggling with work due to drug abuse
18. Young man who doesn't have anything positive to do in life or support
19. Young man whose health affects his ability to find work
20. Young person who is homeless due to drug problems
21. Young woman who has renewed sense in her abilities and purpose in life

KEY INSIGHTS & CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE



From the stories, the following **key insights** have emerged:

1. Sense of purpose and strong identity protect from marginalisation.
2. Work or education alone does not help a young person who is suffering from lack of direction or purpose in life.
3. Past traumas such as bullying and other forms of exclusion are a route source of young people's lack of confidence.
4. Where services are found lacking is in supporting people encountering an existential crisis.
5. Informal support such as peer-to-peer or less structure provision, may help to engage particularly marginalised young people in accessing services.

With these findings in mind, the **key challenges** that services need to address are:

- How could we support the development of identity and identifying of personal strengths?
- How could we support the establishment of positive social relationships and peer support networks?
- How can we develop services that don't feel like services?

Click here to watch a short film of the key insights from the stories.



WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

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