

# Better together: Youth work with schools

Complementing formal education  
to change young lives

New approaches to improving  
wellbeing and attendance





---

## Acknowledgements

This is an independent review co-chaired by former Children’s Minister Tim Loughton MP and former Shadow Education Secretary Kate Green, and commissioned and facilitated by the National Youth Agency (NYA), the national standards body for youth work in England. The review was supported by an expert panel from education and youth services. We are indebted to the panel and other contributors for their insight and experience, which have informed this report. Their expertise in the call for evidence and time spent on visits and hearings were critical in breaking down some of the professional silos that exist, as well as providing a clearer focus on what is known and where there are gaps in evidence. From these findings, the recommendations are those put forward by the co-chairs supported by NYA. They do not necessarily represent the views of individual panel members.

### Panel contributors:

- Abbee McLatchie, Director of Youth Work, National Youth Agency
- Carole Willis, Chief Executive, National Foundation for Educational Research
- Damian Allen, Chief Executive, City of Doncaster Council
- Jonathan Hopkins, policy adviser
- Kate Green, Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester and Co-chair
- Nick Brook, Chief Executive, Speakers for Schools
- Somia Nasim, Head of Research and Knowledge, UK Youth
- Tim Loughton MP, Co-chair

# Foreword

**As a nation, our young people have borne the brunt of significant change and challenges. Going through secondary school in the last few years, they have been faced with the impact of Covid, the Ukraine war, the risk of online harm, the dangers of exploitation, and the cost-of-living crisis.**

Schools are identifying increased prevalence and depth of challenges facing young people, including reports of poor mental health, wellbeing and anxiety, poverty and hunger. Teachers know that what takes place at home and in the local community impacts directly in the classroom and on young people's education.

At the same time, high numbers of young people are missing education by being persistently absent from school. We are at a critical juncture. Put simply, there is no time to lose for the generation of school-age young people to secure a surer footing from their education.

There are burgeoning pressures on schools. The strains on the system as a whole are plain to see. To fix the system means not doing more of the same and loading more onto schools and teachers. There is a compelling case to invest in youth and community work for a continuum of support for young people that focuses on wellbeing and supports their skills for life and work.

Done well, youth work with schools changes lives. It opens up opportunities for young people, building on their interests and aspirations. Through the course of this review we have heard from young people and those who work with them – teachers, support staff and youth practitioners – about the profound difference youth work has made to their lives in and out of school.

Youth work needs a rocket boost to demonstrate and achieve its full potential with schools. To deliver system-wide change requires leadership. Change starts from the top. We need a dedicated Youth Minister at the Department for Education with a remit and authority across departments. This would enable a stronger grip on the levers for change within government, and greater accountability of local authorities and academy trusts for young people's wellbeing – supported in the present, ambitious for their future.

**Tim Loughton MP** and **Kate Green**  
Co-chairs

## We believe there are practical, tangible steps that schools and youth work can build on, including policy levers held by government.

Yet time is running out for too many young people. We risk a bonfire of youth services through public spending cuts where schools are left to pick up the pieces without the resources and funding to meet young people's needs.

The pandemic threw into sharp relief the diversity of needs and challenges for young people and their families. The cost-of-living crisis across communities has compounded the pressures on schools. From policy to practice, our shared aim is to create opportunities and support activities that unlock all young people's potential, including those currently 'missing' from education.

Through the pandemic, youth services were seen to be an essential service, and youth workers were given essential key worker status. Meanwhile, budget cuts of 69% have decimated youth services over the last 10 years<sup>1</sup>. All too often, youth workers' jobs are patched together from project-led short-term funding and limited career or employment opportunities. A perfect storm of financial difficulty, lack of skilled youth workers, and insufficient investment in professional development has led to existing support being overstretched and inadequate. We need to protect youth services and grow youth work so that it complements the work of schools and colleges.

Therefore, our recommendations are for a bold alignment of youth work with schools, with a focus on the leadership and evidence base needed for the benefit of all our young people.

### **Leigh Middleton**

Chief Executive  
National Youth Agency



# Contents

|   |           |  |           |
|---|-----------|--|-----------|
| <b>1. Executive summary</b>   | <b>4</b>  | <b>Appendix One</b>  | <b>50</b> |
| <b>2. The view from here: a decade of change</b>                                | <b>12</b> | Definitions of youth work                                    |           |
| <b>3. What we learned:</b>  |           | <b>Appendix Two</b>  | <b>51</b> |
| 3.1. From the chalkface: practitioner insights                                  | 15        | Witnesses and visits   |           |
| 3.2. A role still in need of clarification                                      | 17        | <b>Appendix Three</b>  | <b>54</b> |
| 3.3. Education and wellbeing  | 20        | Call for evidence  |           |
| 3.4. School absenteeism: the need for engagement                                | 25        | <b>Appendix Four</b>   | <b>56</b> |
| 3.5. Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme                                | 27        | Youth work principles and the National Youth Work Curriculum |           |
| 3.6. Enrichment   | 28        |  |           |
| 3.7. Local youth partnerships and multiagency working: a clear point of contact | 31        |  |           |
| 3.8. Ways of working between schools and youth organisations                    | 33        |  |           |
| 3.9. Building an evidence base: what works                                      | 41        |  |           |
| 3.10. Insights from beyond England  | 44        |  |           |
| <b>4. Conclusion and recommendations</b>  | <b>46</b> |  |           |



# 1. Executive summary

**In 2013, NYA published its report for the Commission on Youth Work and Formal Education. In the intervening decade, we have seen lots of changes across the policy landscape that have affected so many aspects of young people's lives.**

We commissioned this review to explore how the current and future needs of young people can be met through youth work with secondary schools (including Alternative Provision, SEND and 16 to 18 colleges).

Our inquiry, led by an expert panel, issued a call for evidence and carried out a survey of schools and youth work organisations. We held online hearings and visited services where we listened to the views of young people. This report outlines our key findings and seeks to demonstrate some of the many ways in which youth work can help to develop young people's engagement in school and learning, as well as improving their wellbeing.

“

**It is imperative that education policy puts wellbeing centre stage: we know that statutory guidance drives policies and practices in schools... Where possible, discussions about the work that goes on in schools need to start from the position that improving wellbeing is not a means to an end but a worthwhile endeavour, in and of itself.**

**Ros McLellan, Associate Professor,  
University of Cambridge<sup>2</sup>**

”

We explore key challenges and opportunities and make the case for greater collaboration between schools and youth work professionals. We know that times are tough, and it is important to acknowledge the unprecedented pressures that schools are under. However, we know that when school leaders and staff work in partnership with youth workers, the results can be truly transformational.

## The growing challenge of mental health and wellbeing

The context in which this review takes place includes a significant decline in young people's mental health and wellbeing. In 2022, 18% of children aged seven to 16 and 22% of young people aged 17 to 24 had a probable mental disorder. The majority of referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) continue to be rejected, so schools are the main hub for referrals to social care services.

There is a stark increase in referrals after school holidays. We know that 11- to 16-year-olds with a probable mental disorder are less likely to feel safe at school (61.2%) than those unlikely to have a mental disorder (89.2%). They are also less likely to report enjoyment of learning or having a friend they could turn to for support. The long-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns on young people's mental health is also affecting school attendance.

With school staff at capacity and school budgets under enormous pressure amid a significant and growing teacher shortage, the need for youth services and effective school partnerships are priorities for young people and their families, as well as for schools and the local community.



“

Where [youth work] is used well, it absolutely enhances attendance and positive engagement in formal education. But when it's not used so well, all it does is isolate 'problem children' and segregates them from their peers.

Association of School and College Leaders,  
oral evidence

”

## The case for youth work

Around two million young people in England engage with a youth service at least once a week. This equates to 35% of young people in secondary school and further education (aged 11 to 19). Most youth provision is place based and focused on delivering support within a specific community or neighbourhood.

Youth work is a distinct form of education supported by a youth work curriculum that focuses on the personal and social development of young people to improve their wellbeing and agency. It aims to support skills for life and work as well as mental and physical wellbeing. It also seeks to connect to young people's lives and interests and help remove barriers to learning.

Youth work can support schools on site or via outreach by:

- Engaging or re-engaging young people in learning and school, reducing exclusions and persistent absenteeism, and improving their wider wellbeing.
- Delivering enrichment activities that support a range of skills development, progression and community engagement.

Young people often perceive youth workers as separate from school and part of their local community instead. They can play a vital role in forging connections between young people, their families, schools and communities, helping to address complex challenges by developing a holistic network of support that could not be achieved by schools alone.

## Key findings and areas for development

### a. Education and wellbeing

Teenagers in England have one of the lowest levels of life satisfaction in the world<sup>3</sup>. Mental-health problems among young people are increasing, doubtless exacerbated by Covid, and half of our young people worry about their future on a daily basis. In schools, there is growing support for embedding mental health and wellbeing across the curriculum, and the development of social and emotional skills is increasingly prioritised alongside attainment. Indeed, 'personal development' has recently been added to Ofsted guidance and the Education Inspection Framework.

The principal focus of youth work is to improve wellbeing, not just through the consideration of an individual's physical, mental or emotional health, but also the surrounding contextual influences that affect a young person's ability to achieve their goals. Youth work is most frequently accessed by schools when they need behavioural support, alternative provision, one-to-one support and vocational learning, so it is often associated with vulnerable young people.



**The principal focus of youth work is to improve wellbeing, not just through the consideration of an individual's physical, mental or emotional health, but also the surrounding contextual influences that affect a young person's ability to achieve their goals.**





Youth workers provide additional capacity and expertise for addressing complex issues, and they can support schools by:

- Helping young people develop self-regulation and agency.
- Facilitating opportunities for youth voice and leadership, coaching and mentoring.
- Working with young people to explore challenging issues, such as healthy relationships and identity.
- Being present online and through social media in ways that teachers cannot.
- Delivering targeted support and communicating with other statutory agencies to ensure joined-up working and progress.

## b. School absenteeism

Youth work can play a valuable role in helping young people develop a positive relationship with school, particularly those who are at risk of exclusion or experiencing barriers to attendance. Persistent absence can impact on academic attainment and emotional development, and with attendance levels currently lower than before the pandemic, this is a significant issue for many schools. Youth workers often act as a bridge between school and community support, working alongside family liaison workers, attendance officers, pastoral staff and other support workers and volunteers. Absenteeism is rarely addressed in isolation. Youth workers can help develop a holistic approach to support. They can work with a young person and their family to create a plan that addresses their needs and ensures they can attend school.



Youth workers often act as a bridge between school and community support, working alongside family liaison workers, attendance officers, pastoral staff and other support workers and volunteers.



## c. Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

Youth services across the country have seen an increase in young people going hungry, with many youth organisations using their activities budgets to provide food through HAF funding for children eligible for free school meals. The programme helps youth work settings to provide food and a range of enrichment activities, creating opportunities to connect young people's personal interests and experiences to the youth work curriculum and to learning in school. Sustained engagement with youth workers can help to maintain young people's interest in learning during the holidays, which can have a positive impact on attendance, behaviour and engagement when they return to school. However, the majority of HAF activities are targeted at primary school children and more needs to be done to grow the offer for teenagers.

## d. Enrichment

There is increasing demand from children, parents and teachers for extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Schools often have limited time and resources to develop this offer but they can act as facilitators of enrichment activities rather than delivering them all themselves. Some schools and academy trusts have enrichment coordinators or partnership managers. Youth and community link workers can also help to identify and secure learning opportunities outside school.

## e. Local youth partnerships and multiagency working

This report supports the development of local youth partnerships across the country, bringing schools, youth work settings and other providers (including allied sectors such as youth justice, social care and health) together at a local level to meet the needs of young people through a diverse range of experiences and learning opportunities. We would like to see greater collaboration between the youth sector and local authorities to explore the potential for bringing local youth partnerships together with Family Hubs. This would allow local infrastructure to come together to reach further and improve access to services.

## f. Ways of working between schools and youth organisations

— **Breaking down silos.** Teaching and youth work are two distinct professions, but we believe there are more points of similarity than difference. By developing a common language, shared outcomes and professional understanding between teachers and youth workers, we can break down the silos. Education-training providers need to work more closely together and explore opportunities for joint training and the development of transferable skills across initial teacher training, youth work training and continued professional development. We need to support and nurture positive long-term working relationships between schools and youth workers, including opportunities for sharing skills, knowledge and information.

— **A model approach.** Greater partnership working and new approaches to commissioning and delivery provide exciting opportunities for innovation and for new models to emerge. This report proposes a model for shaping high-quality youth work provision with schools, including open access; creating a safe space; the introduction of an elective premium; a whole-child approach to policy development and support; youth participation; and community engagement, measuring impact and opportunities for cross-sector professional development.

## g. Developing a stronger evidence base

We need to build and sustain a strong evidence base for youth work with schools, including common metrics for measuring impact and longitudinal research that demonstrates how youth work helps to deliver against key policy areas (such as attendance, skills and employability). Improved evidence requires greater consistency in collecting and sharing data across providers at a local and national level. We need to share what works (across education, health and children's services) so as to embed good practice and proven approaches more widely.



## Summary of recommendations (for full recommendations, see p.47)

### Recommendations for National Government

#### 1. Clear leadership: Youth Minister

An over-arching cross-department youth policy with oversight by a dedicated Youth Minister at the Department for Education with a remit and authority across departments.

#### 2. Clear strategy: National Youth Strategy

A cross-departmental National Youth Strategy that prevents young people from falling between the gaps created by departmental silos.

#### 3. Funding and accountability: Stable and joined-up funding and strengthened guidance

Dedicated, stable and joined-up funding is required. It should be supported by greater accountability from strengthened statutory guidance at national and local levels to put youth work on a surer footing with schools and facilitate more cross-sector working.

#### 4. Enhanced opportunity: Elective Premium

An Elective Premium for increased learning opportunities in and outside school settings so that all young people can benefit from enrichment activities.

#### 5. Teacher training and CPD: Youth work values and curriculum

Integrating youth work values and approaches into initial teacher training and CPD training to support the cross-collaboration and understanding between school staff and youth workers.

#### 6. Workforce: Transition route from teaching to youth work

Offering a transition pathway to become a youth worker through a youth work qualification to reduce wasted talent.

#### 7. Mobilisation: National taskforce

Focused on workforce planning across education and youth services, comparable to previous reviews of social work and early years.

#### 8. Holidays and Food Programme: becomes Activities and Food Programme

Delivered throughout the year and provided by the youth sector to engage older teenagers.

## Recommendation for Ofsted

### **9. Quality of external interventions and partnerships: Ofsted Inspection Framework**

An enhanced inspection framework with further measures and metrics to assess quality, consistency and longevity of external partnerships that aim to support the personal wellbeing of young people.

## Recommendation for school leaders

### **10. Partnership working**

Support for, and encouragement of, partnership working with the youth service and local youth and community organisations to benefit young people's wellbeing.

## Recommendations for all stakeholders – national and local government, MATs, schools and the youth sector

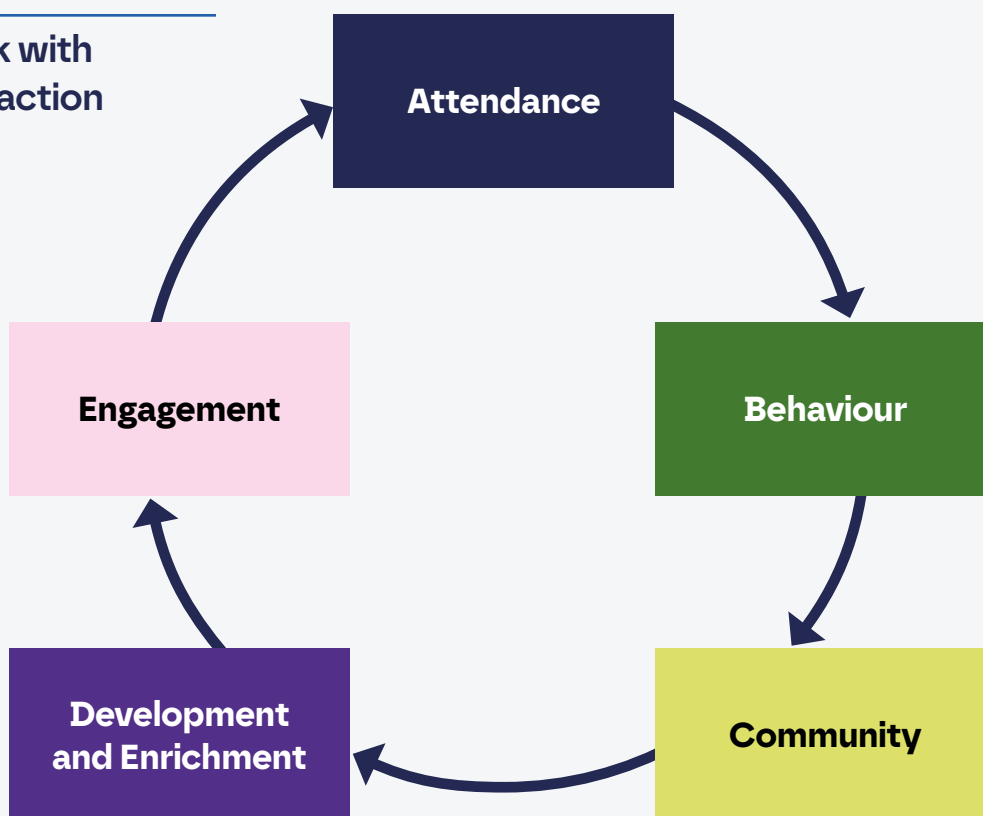
### **11. Evidence: building the case for youth work with schools**

Development of common metrics for measuring impact and investment in longitudinal research to demonstrate how youth work can support key educational outcomes, such as attendance, skills and employability.

### **12. A model approach**

Review our model approach to youth work with schools to embed cost-effective support for young people's wellbeing and education in school, in the local community and in other early help services (see p.38).

## Youth work with schools in action



### Attendance

Engagement and re-engagement in education through pastoral and outreach care or detached youth work to support young people's wellbeing and school attendance (supported by the Youth Work Curriculum).

### Behaviour

What happens at home affects behaviour in the classroom. Peer group activities and 1-2-1 mentoring can support personal and social development and help address low-level behaviour. Youth work methodologies are also used in Alternative Provision settings.

### Community

85% of a young person's waking hours are outside the school day. Youth work provides a safe space and trusted adult to support learning new skills and bridges access to specialist community support and educational opportunities.

### Development and Enrichment

Increased learning opportunities in and out of school. Youth work delivers planned learning through enrichment activities; PHSE and IAG; citizenship, youth voice and volunteering; Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme; outdoor learning; and Alternative Provision.

### Engagement

An educational approach personalised to interests and experiences. Supported by the Youth Work Curriculum, this includes skills for life and work, and mental and physical wellbeing.



# 2. The view from here

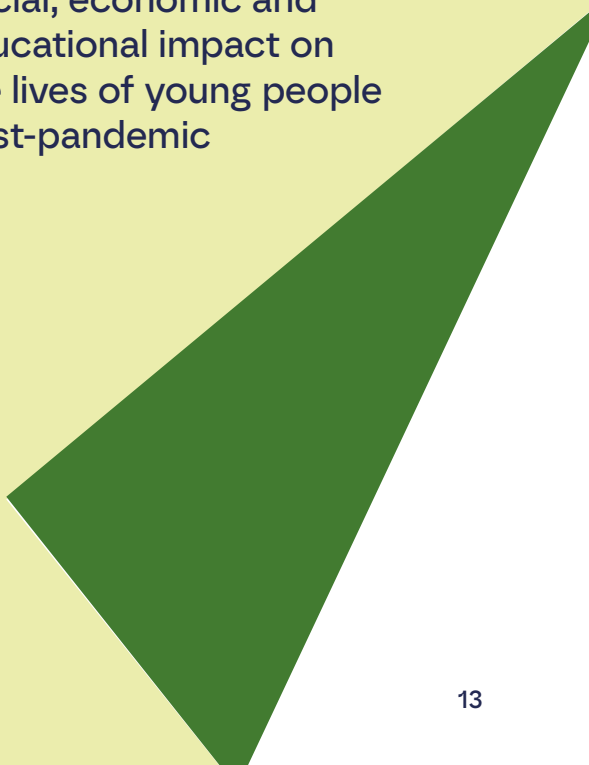
## A decade of change

The NYA Commission on Youth Work in Formal Education identified the need to<sup>4</sup>:

- 1. Help schools and colleges develop their understanding** of how youth work can complement formal education.
- 2. Support the youth work profession to articulate** and promote the unique contribution of youth work more effectively.
- 3. Create stronger collaborative working** between the teaching and youth work professions, with good youth work practice in schools and colleges recognised by Ofsted.
- 4. Establish an evidence base** to support work specific to schools.

---

## Since the report was published in 2013, we have seen:

- ✓ Participation age in education or training raised for 16- and 17-year-olds
  - ✓ Transfer of youth work from the Department for Education to the Cabinet Office and the Department for Media, Culture and Sport
  - ✓ Nine ministers with responsibility for youth policy
  - ✓ Closure of the Children's Workforce Development Council, and a fall in the number of qualified youth workers
  - ✓ Reforms to the National Curriculum and compulsory PSHE education
  - ✓ 2019 Education Inspections Framework, including personal development and the introduction of the Youth Work Curriculum
  - ✓ Introduction of the Pupil Premium; Opportunity Areas; and, most recently, 2022 Education Investment Areas and the Department of Culture Media and Sport's priority areas for a Youth Investment Fund
  - ✓ 2022 Education White Paper and SEND Green Paper in the expectation of increased academisation (currently around 80% of secondary schools)
  - ✓ National Youth Guarantee for regular out-of-school activities from the Department of Culture Media and Sport
  - ✓ Social, economic and educational impact on the lives of young people post-pandemic
- 

In the 2022 review, nearly all (95%) of the submissions concurred that youth work with schools benefits pupil-to-pupil relationships, as well as recognising a role for, and the contribution of, youth work to:

✓ Improve attendance rates and engagement of young people regularly missing school

✓ Deliver behavioural support in mainstream education and specialist support in Alternative Provision

✓ Ensure safeguarding in schools

✓ Promote enrichment through extra-curricular activities

### Barriers to working with schools:

**84%**

strongly agreed or agreed that there was a lack of understanding of youth work in schools

**81%**

81% strongly agreed or agreed that there were financial or employment limitations

**69%**

strongly agreed or agreed that there was a lack of evidence or case studies covering youth work within schools

# 3. What we learned

## 3.1. From the chalkface: practitioner insights

We visited schools to hear first-hand from youth practitioners, teaching and support staff, school leaders and young people, as well as service providers including local authority representatives. Their observations directly informed the recommendations in this report.

“

Once you've got the trusted relationship with a young person, everything else can happen. The ability for someone to link into the community from the school needs to be embedded in the school approach. A youth worker within the school is able to think about what sits around the school and the opportunities that they can take up.

London Violence Reduction Unit,  
oral evidence

”

Key insights included:

- Young people benefit hugely from peer-to-peer support and being able to talk to other young people who have experienced similar challenges.
- Youth voice and advocacy can help secure and strengthen relationships between schools and youth services.
- Mentors and volunteers deployed at the start of a school day act as a gateway to engage young people in school.
- Parents and young people want year-round HAF projects with more places for teenagers (the majority of HAF programmes target primary school children).
- Innovative approaches to youth work can help schools generate income. For example, youth worker-led business and enterprise activities attached to an academy can help raise funds for the school and for additional youth provision (as well as developing young people's employability skills).
- Ofsted should assess the quality of personal development and not just the level of activity.

“

Teachers have to teach and keep discipline. They are open to talk after lessons about subjects, but youth workers are more approachable – they are there for a reason.

Young person

”

“

The Early Careers Framework is a longer induction programme for teachers, with more emphasis on pastoral care in the next five to seven years, so we'll see a lot more youth work in this space.

Alternative Provision  
coordinator

”

“

It's how you get across the importance of youth workers and the purpose of youth workers, and what the benefits are. I don't think educators know.

Assistant head teacher

”

“

Work with schools involves us being community connectors and delivering contextual safeguarding to understand the needs and support required.

Young worker

”

“

Education is a statutory provision; youth work is not<sup>5</sup>. I have to bid for it. We have to beg for every funding scheme

Local councillor

”

“

Academy working is very varied – one is opening the commercial aspect and has shut down all youth services, and extra-curricular activities for community groups. The decision must come from the top; it has to come from the Department of Education for schools and academies to be community focused and outward looking.

Local authority officer

”



“

[Through youth work] I am more sociable, able to express myself more and mix with different groups.

Young person

”

### 3.2. A role still in need of clarification

With 85% of a young person’s waking hours spent outside the school day, establishing a connection between their personal and social interests and experiences can be hugely valuable for growing their engagement in learning and school. Many schools and academy trusts recognise the vital role that youth work can play in supporting personal development and learning opportunities with all young people. There are two broad strands of youth work with schools:

- Engaging or re-engaging young people in learning and with school<sup>7</sup>, reducing exclusions and persistent absenteeism and improving their wider wellbeing.
- Enrichment activities<sup>8</sup> that improve young people’s skills for life and work, and qualifications to help realise career opportunities and young people’s agency.

In the best examples, youth work is supported by a whole-school approach, with an emphasis on inclusivity to avoid stigma. However, most schools do not see youth work as a form of education. The challenge is to establish a clear articulation of what youth work is. A common



### What is youth work?

Youth work is a distinct educational process adapted across a variety of settings to support a young person’s personal, social and educational development. It involves developing a unique, bounded and challenging relationship with young people to:

- Explore their values, beliefs, ideas and issues
- Enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society
- Facilitate the learning of a set of practical or technical skills and competencies that enable them to realise their full potential

Youth work relationships are underpinned by youth work values and principles. The values provide an ethical foundation that informs the way youth workers make decisions about their work. They also underpin youth work principles that allow youth workers collectively to understand how they apply values to youth work practice. See the youth work principles in Appendix 1.

language, shared outcomes and professional understanding between teachers and youth workers would all be beneficial. The statutory basis of youth work ‘to improve wellbeing’ chimes with the professional view of teachers that exam results are not the same thing as knowledge. How we define and measure a young person’s social and emotional development is key.



A common issue identified was that the term ‘youth work’ is often confused with ‘work with young people’. This leads to conflicting ideologies and priorities, which does not help to support policy development. For example, youth work refers to a professional methodology for working with young people. It is based on a clear set of values and underpinned by the voluntary nature of the relationship between the young person and the youth worker, but this is often confused with the settings in which it is delivered. It is also confused with general work with young people even when there is no supportive or educational aspect.

Estyn, Education and Training  
Inspectorate for Wales<sup>6</sup>



**First**, around extensive opportunities for personal and social development that go beyond what is expected from schools.

**Secondly**, the levels of engagement and take-up of those opportunities.

**Thirdly**, on the quality of the rich experiences across curricular and extra-curricular activities.

**Fourthly**, around an exemplary development of character.

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council shows how top-down approaches and leadership supporting youth work practices within a council, and across multiagency settings, can ensure young people’s voices are heard in ways that can benefit young people, the school and the local community. The council has implemented youth voice structures and youth participation into all their schools through Youth Advisors, Youth Council and The Child Friendly Doncaster mark. The Youth Council operates in all secondary schools in the borough, with plans for more schools, including primary schools, to have youth representatives in the future. The case study below shows the transformational impact youth work has had on one young person’s life.



If a school has got really strong and productive relationships with youth work... it certainly would be credited within the inspection and within the judgements.

Ofsted, oral evidence



Below is a case study of a young person who engaged with youth workers at school and in the community in Doncaster.

## Case study

# RM



RM attends school regularly and feels that this enhances his chances in life and his goal of being a chef. Aged 15 (at the time of writing), he has been an orphan for the past four years. His mother died when he was 11 and his father also died when RM was young due to drug problems. His mother was a recovering drug addict and also had a drink problem. He is looked after by a grandparent and older sister.

Despite knowing school will help him achieve his ambition to become a chef, RM can get distracted and lose interest. He struggles to communicate appropriately with others and also with creating friendships.

RM attends the local youth centre, which provides opportunities for children and young people to take part in UK Youth Achievement Award programmes. Each level of the award connects to a different point on the UK Youth Social Development Journey and represents specific levels of participation. The Youth Centre is funded by the government's Myplace programme and offers high-quality facilities run by experienced youth workers. It provides opportunities to develop innovative methods that engage young people in positive youth development experiences.

RM decided he would like to take part in the programme, and, with the support of the local youth officer, set out his challenges for the award.

This focused on his ambition to become a chef by enhancing his social skills, working with others as a team, and gaining experience of customer service to improve his communication and confidence.

While carrying out his challenge, RM worked as part of a team to prepare and cook food for his peers in the youth centre, using the kitchen training facilities. This helped him experience how a restaurant kitchen would work. It also provided him with an understanding of the benefits of working with others and gaining different skills from the team. He created his own portfolio of evidence for his award work, which he shared with his teacher, thereby connecting his informal and formal educational learning. The process helped him learn about himself while encouraging him in his GCSE studies. The informal learning program kept RM motivated and enthused with his formal learning.

RM attended the sessions regularly, building up relationships with his peers and youth workers. Through the awards programme, RM was able to form friendships with young people with similar interests. Youth work has played a key role in helping promote RM's personal and social development, bridging the gap between his formal and non-formal education.

RM has now applied to Army College and is hoping to train as an army chef.

### 3.3. Education and wellbeing

As schools know, young people's wellbeing has been on a downward trend<sup>9</sup> over the last 10 years. Teenagers in England have one of the lowest levels of life satisfaction in the world<sup>10</sup> and anxiety levels are at a 12-year high<sup>11</sup>. Mental health problems among young people have been increasing and Covid has exacerbated the situation<sup>12</sup>.

73% of head teachers support the aim to embed mental health and wellbeing across the curriculum in a whole-school approach. This includes social and emotional skills, which eight in 10 teachers say is just as important as academic attainment. Additionally, six in 10 teachers want mental health and wellbeing incorporated into the curriculum. A further 37% of head teachers already plan to embed life skills into their school curriculum over the next two years<sup>13</sup>. The return of personal development as a component of Ofsted's guidance and inspection framework is important in this respect.

However, capturing youth work provision has proven difficult to establish within Ofsted inspections unless the school values what the youth work intervention brings.

Our review uncovered a range of youth work practice to support young people's wellbeing and whole-school approaches to wellbeing, which can be adapted to young people's individual needs as illustrated in the table on page 21.

“

We've moved away from the narrow focus on exams to whether children are getting a broadened curriculum, but also on their wellbeing. We're capturing the wellbeing points now in our inspections.

Chris Jones, Ofsted,  
oral evidence session

”

“

...even in our settings, often we have to kind of lobby to get the youth workers or the community team in front of Ofsted because it's not a natural fit. Even though we know and we believe the impact it has, it doesn't sit within a typical inspection, so how do we evidence that? And how do we show that?

Often if we do actually manage to get some of our community team in front of an Ofsted inspector it really improves how the inspection goes for an Academy, but, if it doesn't sit naturally, we have to kind of shoehorn it in so anything that can help to kind of provide a way where you can naturally talk about the impact youth work and community work within an inspection would absolutely help.

Oasis Community Partnerships,  
oral evidence session

”

| <b>Youth work in practice: wellbeing<sup>14</sup></b>  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Personal, social, health &amp; economic education (PSHE) and information, advice and guidance (IAG)</b> | The principal focus of youth work is to improve wellbeing. This is not just about an individual's physical, mental or emotional health because it also considers the surrounding contextual influences that affect a young person's ability to achieve their goals. PSHE topics or themes could include exploring what healthy relationships look like and/or learning about how to manage their money to improve financial literacy. Youth workers can use the National Youth Work Curriculum to support the delivery of topics with the understanding of young people's needs.  |
| <b>Social and emotional competencies</b>   | Youth work supports young people to explore how they view the world and how they react to it. Emotional and social literacy are important for supporting self-regulated learning and agency of young people – where a young person can 'stop, think, then act' to inform healthy choices. These skills can be developed in group environments to support planning, problem solving and organisation, as well as in individual settings.   |
| <b>Mentoring and coaching</b>  | Youth work is most readily identified by a school for behavioural support, Alternative Provision, one-to-one support and vocational learning. It is therefore often associated with vulnerable young people from youth offending and child criminal exploitation, as well as looked-after children and/or those with protected characteristics. A youth worker can deliver targeted approaches to help young people who have complex challenges meet their needs. They can also communicate with other statutory agencies to deliver joined-up working and measurable progress. Examples include peer mentoring with support and training given to older young people to mentor younger year groups.  |
| <b>Identity and belonging and arts, culture and heritage</b>   | During adolescence, the process of identity formation often involves conflicts and contradictions as neurological developments add an extra layer of complexity. Youth workers can support young people to reflect and develop their understanding of their place in society, their culture and their heritage, and how they find a sense of belonging and guide them to additional support. Identity covers a wide range of topics including race, sexuality, disability and sex, as well as the contextual factors influencing a young person's assumptions and stereotypes from religion and background to family and friends, and from the local community to wider society, the media and government, all of which influence culture, values and principles. |



| <b>Youth work in practice: wellbeing<sup>14</sup></b>                      |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Citizenship and participation</b>                                       | School councils and projects connect the voices and lived experiences of young people with schools and teaching. Students run school clubs and councils, and they can be mentors for each other and younger age groups with the support of youth workers. The benefits youth work can have on a young person range from confidence building to leadership skills. Young people feel more responsible when youth participation is done well and they can see the difference they are making in their school and community.   |
| <b>Attendance, persistent absence and exclusions</b>                       | Youth workers are trusted adults who can provide a safe space in school or out of school for young people to engage voluntarily when challenges arise that are harming their wellbeing. Working alongside pastoral support, youth workers can bring long-term help to a young person who is identified to be missing school and/or who has displayed behavioural changes that are harming them. This involves exploring contextual factors that school staff may not have the skills or time to explore. This is especially important at transition stages such as moving house, family breakdown (divorce), bereavement, changing social worker or placement, or adjusting to other new circumstances that have affected their lives and impacted their attendance and behaviour at school. Youth workers can communicate with other statutory services to help meet needs and reduce persistent absences and exclusions before issues escalate. |
| <b>Holiday Activities and Food programme, and out-of-school activities</b> | Sustained support and engagement with youth workers helps young people through the longer summer holidays, weekends and evenings. It also helps to create opportunities that connect their interests and experiences outside of school with the Youth Work Curriculum and learning in school. Youth violence peaks during weekdays and later afternoon/early evening between 3pm and 7pm, so after-school activities and holiday programmes can be lifelines for young people. <sup>15</sup>  |
| <b>Volunteering, enterprise and social action</b>                          | Typically viewed as enrichment activities, youth work takes place alongside sports, arts and cultural activities. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) and National Citizen Service (NCS) are branded programmes supported by DfE and DCMS that deliver in and out of schools to encourage young people to develop life skills while volunteering for their local community and further afield.   |
| <b>Digital space and social media</b>                                      | As well as resources and communication, by extending safe spaces across a community, youth workers can be present online and through social media in ways that teachers cannot. These digital spaces can increase accessibility for young people who find it difficult to engage in person and/or who cannot get to events or certain spaces because of affordability.  |



## Case study

# Aldridge Foundation

### An example of a targeted youth work wellbeing programme from the Aldridge Foundation

**Bright Futures** is for young people who are facing challenges and need extra support to remain productively engaged in education and on the best path to fulfil their potential.

The programme has been designed by the Aldridge Foundation for young people aged 13 to 15 who are lacking confidence, experiencing personal challenges such as social anxiety, or who are at risk of disengaging with education.

The programme, delivered by youth workers, includes:

- Regular in-school coaching sessions to build confidence.
- Expeditions and outdoor experiences.
- Sessions to build on the skills developed through experiences and set goals for their continued education and wider lives.

In 2021/2022, 30 young people from schools in deprived communities in inner London and Lancashire participated in Bright Futures. It had the following outcomes:

- All of the young people reported an improvement in their social and life skills.
- Together, they set targets for the new academic year to help keep them focused on learning and coping well with life as they prepared for exams, further education and beyond.



## Case study

# The Mix

The Mix Stowmarket, local youth organisation

We work closely with two local high schools and have youth workers covering four days a week in each school. We have a partnership agreement with the school that enables us to work safely and have transparency in our work, which has been a huge enabler in our work. We have spent three years working within schools and our youth work has doubled in schools in that time.

Barriers have included communication with senior leadership, particularly at the top of a School Trust, as they struggled to understand our work and its impact. Once we sat down with them, explained our processes and combined this with what the school needed from us, it has been working brilliantly. We also send them reports each term so they can track our work and growth.

Across both schools this term alone, we have provided regular one-to-one coaching/mentoring support to 48 students, given 183 one-off support sessions, run two wellbeing groups and delivered assemblies to over 700 students. We also provide crisis support when students are struggling most. In one school, from the 25 students we have worked with so far this term, our most impactful average improvement by a student saw a 57% increase in their wellbeing score using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS).

Case Study – Student A was a school refuser and struggling with the concept of exams leading up to the end of the year. Student A used our Oasis space in Stowmarket to discuss revision techniques and have a quiet space to work because they were not able to do this at home. By working with their head of year, we were able to instil confidence and positive communication to highlight key steps before mock exams. Student A was able to share their fantastic mock results and how they could not have completed their studies without having a supportive adult away from the main school building to provide a welcoming space..

### 3.4. School absenteeism: the need for engagement



Persistent absence from school harms academic attainment and emotional development, and it is concerning that attendance continues to be lower than before the pandemic. A huge amount of support has disappeared, and efforts from schools to improve attendance will require help from parents and local authorities and significant government investment if they are to truly succeed.

Association of School and College Leaders



Family liaison workers, attendance officers, and pastoral staff may struggle to tackle persistent absenteeism within a school setting.

We would like to see a support plan of action co-developed with a qualified youth worker, the family, and the young person to meet their needs and ensure they can attend school<sup>16</sup>. The youth worker can deliver holistic wrap-around support for a young person (not focusing on attendance alone).

Safeguarding referrals have increased in schools, with schools being the main hub for referrals to social care services especially after the school holidays<sup>17</sup>. The review heard evidence about the importance of early intervention and schools working with targeted and community youth services to prevent negative outcomes such as absenteeism.

#### Number of persistent absentees (50% missed) in a school year

| Autumn term  | 2019–20       | 2020–21       | 2021–22       |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Year 7       | 3,000         | 5,000         | 5,000         |
| Year 8       | 5,000         | 9,000         | 10,000        |
| Year 9       | 8,000         | 11,000        | 14,000        |
| Year 10      | 10,000        | 12,000        | 16,000        |
| Year 11      | 11,000        | 13,000        | 18,000        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>38,000</b> | <b>50,000</b> | <b>63,000</b> |



“

We found that on transition [to secondary school], on attendance and on exclusion data [youth work] is having an impact. Much of this is put in place through a trained youth worker, or other people applying youth work principles. Over the last 18 months we've worked with a cohort of about 60 children making their transition from primary to secondary school. These were children who may have experienced a suspension at primary school and who were most at risk of disengaging as they transitioned to secondary school. So far, we've seen a very small number of suspensions and no exclusions.

Opportunity Area, North Yorkshire,  
oral evidence

”

“

Not waiting for a label to be attached to a young person before support is embedded (waiting times for support to be given) and then the young person goes downhill whilst waiting for support.

As a school, who could I call on to provide the support to a young person who has fallen behind? What roles do targeted and community youth services have in this? How do we make sure young people have support now rather than three months down the line?

Deputy Director in Department of Education  
on AP reforms, oversight of SAFE and AP  
Taskforces – oral evidence session

”



### 3.5. Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme

HAF and other after-school and holiday clubs can be run by, or with, youth work organisations to support engagement with, and attendance at, school. Nearly half (44%) of all HAF clubs are run by VSCOs with a number of these being youth organisations<sup>18</sup>. For some schools, this has proved to be the first successful engagement with, and understanding of, youth work. In turn, HAF has been a source of funding to support engagement with schools that can be sustained beyond the holiday period.

The confidence of young people increases before going back to school due to social connections formed in the local community<sup>19</sup>. This cuts the number of school absences that could be linked to social anxiety and moving schools, particularly in transitions from Year 6 (primary) to Year 7 (secondary). It maintains young people's interest and engagement with learning opportunities across the holidays. Youth services across the country have seen an increase in the number of children needing food, with youth organisations using budgets allocated for other activities to provide food at special sessions to avoid the stigma.<sup>20</sup>

The benefits from and measures incorporated into HAF include:

- ✓ Taking part in fun and engaging activities that support young people's development.
- ✓ Feeling safe and secure.
- ✓ Getting access to the right support services.
- ✓ Returning to school feeling engaged and ready to learn.
- ✓ Maintaining a healthy level of physical activity and nutrition.

The government's evaluation of the HAF programme has illustrated that areas with focused HAF provision have reported a reduction in antisocial behaviour, while others have reported increases in the levels of assurance among parents and families that their children and young people are safe and secure when attending a HAF programme<sup>21</sup>.

#### Case study



### Street Games

StreetGames supported the delivery of HAF programmes in Birmingham (Bring it on Brum) and Derbyshire (It's about me) in 2022. Both programmes showed supportive partnerships with local community organisations that provided effective programmes for the benefit of young people and the community. 'Bring it on Brum' showed that parents thought :

- Their child was safer at the provision (80%) than in their local neighbourhood (51%).
- The provision reduced their child's involvement in antisocial behaviour (74%).
- They identified increased confidence (76%), wellbeing (76%), school readiness (63%) and enjoyment (85%) in their child.



Providing a HAF programme that can accommodate everyone across the secondary school age range can be challenging, although this is where youth services and organisations like StreetGames have the skills to support. Youth and community consultation and co-development is crucial to understanding the type of provision that young people want to engage with. School venues can be less popular, but StreetGames shows that youth clubs, local community centres or pop-up provision in parks and city centres can be highly effective.



### 3.6. Enrichment

Research and data suggest that improved character attributes lead to better school attendance, behaviour and attainment<sup>22</sup>. The Education Inspection Framework recognises the importance of an inner curriculum, a set of virtues or attributes that support achievement and success<sup>23</sup>. Life-skill building projects such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) and National Citizen Service (NCS) have demonstrated their impact on social cohesion, self-confidence, and developing new skills and networking.

The Education Inspection Framework's Personal Development includes judgments on how schools are developing pupils' character, the set of positive personal traits, dispositions and virtues that inform their motivation and guide their conduct, so that they reflect wisely, learn eagerly, behave with integrity and cooperate consistently with others. Polling shows there is an appetite among children, parents and teachers for extra-curricular enrichment activities to be more integral to the school day<sup>24</sup>.

We know there is a positive relationship between disadvantaged young people's access to youth work and their educational resilience. Engaging in volunteering and mentoring has been shown to have a positive impact on learning. Vulnerable adolescents who take part are more likely to engage in school and reach reading and numeracy benchmarks, while others are more likely to go to university.<sup>25</sup>

Yet to offer opportunities out of school takes time and resources. It comes with risk when the schools are also primarily judged on attainment. However, when done well, this transforms young people as learners and leads to healthier, happier schools.

Schools can act as hubs and facilitators of enrichment activities rather than delivering them all themselves. Some schools and Academy Trusts have enrichment coordinators or partnership managers. Youth and community link workers help identify and secure learning opportunities outside school communities. The National Youth Sector Census has been established to map the range and capacity of youth work and out-of-school activities<sup>26</sup>, which can alert schools to the range of activities available in their areas. Youth workers can support organisations offering an opportunity to upskill their workforce in safeguarding, youth participation and engaging young people. They can also link in young people with whom they've built trusted relationships to provide them with additional provision in their area.

Young people, families and teachers should be able to choose what they want to do and who they aspire to be – we believe funding should be attached to the young person as an elective premium. The government's National Youth Guarantee for regular out-of-school activities, with supportive mapping from the Sector Census, can help facilitate delivery of enrichment activities both in and out of school. The Pupil Premium can support participation for more disadvantaged young people, with the enrichment premium supporting the roll-out of activities with parity of access and entitlement.



**Polling YouGov ran between us and the Scouts said that 76% of teachers wanted specialist youth services in the delivery of this type of content. Over 60% of teachers thought it should be given to young people in these spaces... with specialists brought in and collaborated to do this.**

**Naim Moukarvel, NCS Trust – oral evidence session**



“

We recently set up a youth project on Thursday nights. We have [definitely] benefited from [youth workers'] expertise. We would have gone into the idea thinking about what it should look like, but [youth workers] explored participation with us and what youth-led means. The incorporation of youth voice and participation services has led to a design that will have better outcomes.

We wanted as many people to access the programme as possible as we want to keep it running off grant funding. It's not my choice on what I think young people want to do! The feedback loop with young people has been so valuable for the programme.

[The youth workers] see the forest programmes as an extra provision of support for young people.

We're running a pilot for a year. We've done two sessions so far and 78 young people turned up to the last one.

**Paula Hancock, Director of The Sherwood Forest Education Partnership CIC**

”

## Case study

# Challenger Trust



The Challenger Trust has delivered extra-curricular activities impacting over 200,000 young people for over 20 years. Their My Journey programme aims to help every young person access enrichment programmes outside of school, which students choose based on their aspirations, goals and interests to support the development of life skills and their career. This focuses on the active participation of young people to mould their own journey and experiences. To ensure young people can access these opportunities, the Challenger Trust Academies set up character partnerships with organisations that can offer provision without being a burden on a single teacher, reducing the risk of a teacher moving on and that opportunity being lost.

The scheme is universally inclusive, in so far as any opportunity, regardless of whether it is offered within or by the school, can be engaged: HAF, NCS, uniformed organisations and local clubs outside school. Even family-operated trips and visits can be assimilated, with the development of character measured against criteria that are set by the trusts or schools individually.

Charlie Rigby, Chief Executive of The Challenger Trust, explained: “Our fundamental concern is that the delivery mechanism for youth services with schools is entirely supply-driven, whereas giving control to schools and children themselves would both rationalise and revolutionise the sector. It is the next generation of youth voice.”

### 3.7. Local youth partnerships and multiagency working: a clear point of contact



Where you get good partnerships between schools and local authorities and youth services, that's the kind of glue that can form those trusted relationships with children, and identify need.

Children's Commissioners Office,  
oral evidence session



A lack of awareness and knowledge by teachers of youth work approaches means that in many cases it is left to youth workers to initiate the relationship with the school and rely on building relationships with school leaders to establish a presence in school settings. High teacher workload and limited resources mean that youth work programmes are difficult to establish and to deliver in tandem with the school day. Long-term relationships that exist from planning through to delivery show the value and worth of youth work programmes.

The development of local youth partnerships will provide a clear point of contact and a network of partners and providers, as well as maintaining a diverse and rich range of experiences and learning opportunities matched to young people's interests and aligned to schools' values.

#### Case study



### Young People's Foundation Trust

The Young People's Foundation Trust is supporting the development of local youth partnerships throughout England. Each local youth partnership is uniquely formed and co-developed by local community youth organisations to address the needs of young people in their area through place-based partnership and delivery. The pilot scheme ran in 10 areas in England, including Blackburn with Darwen, Cornwall, Peterborough, Southampton, Sunderland, Stockton-on-Tees, Medway, Warrington, Wiltshire/Swindon and East Riding.

There are hopes that local youth partnerships will continue to develop throughout England, providing a joined-up patchwork of youth provision to support the youth sector and also to engage the other allied sectors (education, justice, social care and health) in provision and activities available to young people in their area.

Alongside the positive development of youth partnerships, the youth sector and the other allied sectors of education, justice, social care and health need to address how they will link into other multiagency government initiatives that aim to support young people and their families. There have been positive developments in some Violence Reduction Units (VRU) in recognising youth work and youth workers in supporting young people and linking services and opportunities in and out of schools. However, we did identify some doubts about the role of police officers in schools.





“

The ability for someone to link into the community from the school – once you’ve got the trusted relationship with a young person, everything else can happen. This needs to be embedded in the school approach. A youth worker within the school is able to think about what sits around the school and the opportunities that they can take up. There’s something in the role that the school plays with everything else surrounding this.

Lib Peck, Director of London VRU

”

“

We have more of a control culture where, increasingly, policing is going into schools and I don’t need to tell people here about the horrors of Child Q [who was strip-searched by the Metropolitan police]. But we are quite concerned that we probably have more police officers in schools than youth workers. We want to make sure that we get more work with youth workers who can really help and support and nurture pupils through difficult times. And, increasingly, young people are dealing with their sexuality, their identity, their belonging and what it means to be a citizen in the face of increasing discrimination and hate crime.

National Education Union,  
oral evidence session

”

Family Hubs act as a multiagency information and support service for local communities, specifically addressing the challenges for those aged from birth to 19 along with their families. The wide age range has left some Family Hubs finding it difficult to deliver for older children and teenagers because staff have been trained to work with younger people and parents.<sup>27</sup>

There is an opportunity for the youth sector and local authorities to work collaboratively to develop and deliver Family Hubs through local youth partnerships. This could provide an additional support service for young people across the allied sectors (including education) to ensure they are linked into local youth provision that can help and support them.

## Case study



## Family Hubs: a bridge to youth provision

In England, around two million young people engage with a youth service at least once a week. This equates to 35% of young people in secondary school and further education (aged 11 to 19). Most youth provision is place-based and focused on delivering support within a specific community or neighbourhood. A considerable number of opportunities for relationship-building with young people, and with their parents, carers and wider family, would become apparent if all these interactions took place within a Family Hub system.

Family Hubs provide a bridge to youth provision, including open access youth clubs, detached youth work, sport, arts, and drop-in early-intervention mental health hubs. They also provide access to employment support and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), substance-use services, youth-offending services (YOS) and other statutory services. This approach supports more points of connection and engagement with parents, carers and whole families, more opportunities for early intervention, and more options for delivery models that improve access to services.

## 3.8. Ways of working between schools and youth organisations

### Teachers and youth workers: breaking down silos

Young people perceive youth workers as separate from school. Youth workers engage in a different way to the teaching staff/pastoral team, and they can be seen out and about in the community. This helps to build bridges between families and the community, providing support that cannot be carried out in or by a school.

Sustained support and engagement with youth workers helps young people through the longer summer holidays, which can have a positive impact on attendance, behaviour and engagement on their return to school. This has benefits at key transition points. Issues, insights and opportunities can also be shared between schools and professions.

Teaching and youth work are two distinct professions, but we believe there are more points of similarity than difference. Education training providers need to work more closely together, including the exploration of joint training sessions and transferable skills through initial teacher training, youth work training and continued professional development. Greater professional understanding, with youth work providing a distinct but complementary approach, will help break down silos.



“

Most teachers start their careers in training, wanting to help young people and wanting to be young people-centred, but they get pulled into all sorts of directions. [Put] the young person at the heart [of initiatives] and pick up from the Youth Work Curriculum as a kind of core competency set in the initial teacher education curriculum and then CPD.

National Education Union, oral evidence

”



“

What happens when you blend those youth work principles into teaching? You get thoughts about interdisciplinary teaching, about teaching that connects into the wider community that might work through projects that have a driving question that relates to a real issue in the world or connects to a community organisation.

Similarly, if you blend in the youth work principles to careers guidance, you get less of employers just standing in assemblies and get something much more young-person centred, helping them think about their future, helping them think about how that connects to them and then... gives them the excitement about their learning because they know where they're going.

Olly Newton, Edge Foundation

”

There are some staff that youth workers may work alongside on a regular basis, including those in pastoral roles such as heads of year or house, safeguarding officers, those in leadership roles (often an assistant head teacher), pastoral assistants, education welfare officers, school nurses and school counsellors. The school's focus is on educating the young person to reach their potential through attainment. But youth work focuses on supporting a young person to reach their potential in emotional, social, personal and educational development. The approaches complement each other: early whole-school and targeted interventions from youth workers reduce the strain of late interventions on school staff while making the most of limited resources.

“

“Having worked as a teacher for 53 years and in the youth voluntary sector for 25 years, it's clear to me that schools are inadequately staffed and the facilities they do have are not used to support youth services: schools see youth services as an income stream. Youth services cannot afford to pay. Education and youth services are on different planets and in silos. They need to be on equal footing with equal status. Success in education depends on what youth services can provide.

South East Harlow Sports & Youth Association,  
online submission

”

“

Schools are just too busy and pressurised, it seems, to even consider new or innovative approaches to youth work in schools. I don't think it's down to lack of will or desire from staff; they just don't have the time or the inclination to think outside the box.

As a youth worker in schools for nearly 20 years, it still feels like we only scratch the surface of early-stage intervention with students. This essential work, carried out by youth workers, could provide the necessary support for students and prevent more targeted and expensive intervention further down the line.

I remain convinced young people need adults they can relate to who don't have to constantly tell them off, or badger them for homework, or correct their uniform. Adults should devote time to building trust and relationships and be there primarily to LISTEN.

Qualified Youth Worker, Brookside Church,  
online evidence submission

”

Professionally qualified youth workers (JNC recognised) may have moved into job roles in schools that didn't class them as a youth worker, such as in the pastoral or attendance team. They have the same skills and approach as a youth worker, but their job role has changed to fit in with school policy and Ofsted guidance.

“

After 2013, my workplace employed youth work staff, most of whom were JNC recognised. In 2021, the job title and qualification requirements were downgraded from essential youth work criteria to 'relevant experience' and the job title changed to student wellbeing officers. However, pay (never on the JNC pay scale) remained the same, but additional duties such as attendance and intervention were added to the new wellbeing role... the title of youth workers was changed to wellbeing officers to 'fit in' with Ofsted criteria.

It would be nice for JNC status to be respected and to include this in the post/job title as the basis of the work is very much youth work and relies on voluntary participation of students and advocacy even in a formal education setting.

Anonymous professionally qualified youth worker (JNC), online submission

”

There has been a call to recruit 10,000 youth practitioners by 2027, with youth work qualifications, status and parity on a par with education<sup>28</sup>. This sits as part of a wider youth workforce strategy that seeks to grow the base and capacity of qualified youth workers and the youth work skills of support workers and volunteers<sup>29</sup>. Opportunities are opening up with youth work apprenticeships and further CPD, and for the education sector a new teaching apprenticeship could open up career pathways for more professionals<sup>30</sup>.





## Case study

# School within School: the value of having youth work embedded into the school structure

The School within School (SWS) was created for Kensington Aldridge Academy (KAA) by Louis Levin, a senior youth worker with the Aldridge Foundation, in January 2018 after the Grenfell Tower tragedy. In 2021, the SWS was replicated and tailored to embrace the needs of the local community at Duke's Aldridge Academy in Tottenham.

The remit for SWS is to provide in-school Alternative Provision. Its key aim is to reduce exclusion rates through a targeted early-intervention programme, providing specialist support for students at risk of disengaging from their education. A key principle is that SWS is not seen as a behaviour unit or a punishment but as a positive and progressive intervention. It is available not only for those struggling with behaviour, but also for those with low attendance and engagement or for those coming out of a crisis, such as suffering a bereavement, family breakdown, or mental and emotional health concerns.

Led by a senior youth worker, SWS provides a structured six-week-plus programme of learning support and mentoring outside the mainstream curriculum. The SWS aims to provide youth-worker-led sessions and mentoring to help students identify and challenge themselves and to equip them with the necessary tools to make a positive return to mainstream lessons.

Louis Levin, Senior Youth Worker, discusses the SWS initiative: "We have the teachers coming in to teach the core subjects, but we also have youth workers in there who are connected to the community, including QPR football club and the local youth centres. We bring in some of the community and youth work savviness to meetings, with the flexibility and fluidity to match with the schools' academic rigidity and the need for a teacher just to be able to teach. We also work with the parents and external agencies and speak to the children in a sort of language and in a way that they're more likely to go through things with us. It's about having those little bridges. That's why we think there's the value of having youth work embedded into the school structure. Youth workers meet young people out in the community or at youth centres, and they get young people to turn up by being embedded in the school. We're now on Cohort 18 of SWS."

## Case study


## Football Beyond Borders: changing narratives within peer groups



Football Beyond Borders (FBB) delivers a long-term (minimum two years), intensive (weekly) and targeted social and emotional learning intervention for vulnerable young people in schools. It teaches self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills and responsible decision-making through a gender-bespoke curriculum.

Youth workers and practitioners with lived experiences are recruited from the communities to develop strong relationships with the young people. The difference between teaching staff and a tracksuit-wearing practitioner complements the work schools do to bridge the divide between the young person, home, their school and their community.

The programme includes trips and visits where FBB practitioners use youth work approaches to help young people explore their identity and individuality while finding achievement in their activities and school work. This changes narratives within peer groups, increasing the likelihood of engagement and attendance.



### A model approach: points to consider

In most areas, local youth services have diminished, with less open-access provision and a greater focus on targeted interventions or programme-led funding. But youth work commissioned locally by a group of schools, or employed directly by a multi-academy trust or community partnership and deployed locally, can help increase capacity and scale up youth work in schools and the community.

#### Open access

Open access youth work can act as hub for holiday activities while strengthening links to local communities through social action and community activities. Youth work supports activities with schools that are open to all students for equitable access and community links without stigma. This can provide the basis of known and shared experiences, as well as social time with others outside immediate friendship groups, which carries through into the classroom and out into the community. Open access youth work can act as a hub for holiday activities, and strengthen links to, and identity of, local communities through social action and community activities.

#### Safe space

By offering out-of-school activities, youth work acts as a separate space for young people that is designed by them and for them on their own terms. However, this can be supported by an onsite presence at school, when young people can interact with the youth worker and ask for support or connections with opportunities in the community. In particular, young people with challenging home and school lives can find it difficult to learn without the support of youth workers helping them with any emotional and social challenges they are going through.



### Informed policy

Policy and systems must think about the whole child and the influences outside the school gates that shape future learning, challenges and achievements. The Children's Commissioner for England has set out six ambitions – created from listening to young people absent from school – that ensure every child is accounted for, can access school safely and can learn for their future. The majority of these six ambitions mirror youth work principles.<sup>31</sup>

### Elective premium

The recent Times Education Commission supports an elective premium to be spent on extra-curricular activities for young people and to ensure that every child has the opportunity to take part in the National Citizen Service and outdoor expeditions mirroring the National Youth Guarantee from DCMS.<sup>32</sup>

### Community facilities

There is demand to open up school buildings and facilities to youth work, although there is recognition that young people will still want off-site access to youth clubs and community activities.<sup>33</sup>

### Quality provision

New Ofsted frameworks offer a unique chance for schools to be supported in youth work. The inspectorate could provide further measures and metrics for personal development in schools.<sup>34</sup>

### Youth participation

Young people's active roles and participation in schools and their communities can be supported by embedding youth work led by young people into the school day.

### Professional development

Greater youth worker/teacher inter-professional understanding is needed. We believe that joint training sessions and continuing professional development for transferable skills that respect the distinct roles of each profession would be valuable.





## Case study

# Oasis Academy South Bank and Oasis Hub Waterloo, London

Oasis Community Learning is one multi-academy trust with 52 academies across five regions of England. Oasis Academy South Bank enjoys the unique advantage of having Oasis Hub Waterloo linked into the school. The hub houses a food bank and library, partners with an urban farm, delivers sports sessions, runs an advice centre and works alongside primary and secondary schools while also housing their own early-years centre. A school and community worker at Oasis describes their day:

“The role of a school and community youth worker can be a mixture of planned activities alongside the need to work flexibly with situations that present themselves.

My day starts with mentoring. There are a number of young people who have been referred or have self-referred for mentoring in school for a variety of reasons, but those who engage do so voluntarily. There are even some students who were refusing to attend school until they started working with a youth worker. This morning I am meeting up with a student in Year 10 who has been having difficulties at home and in school; most recently, they have been walking out of lessons.

They have told me that they are feeling very unsettled due to arguments at home, so we make a plan to meet with their Head of Year where we will discuss strategies to support the student when they are feeling overwhelmed, as well as how to support any conversations between the family and school.

After mentoring, it is break time. This is when I allocate time to simply being around – for example, having a presence in the communal parts of the building where students can come to check in and share details about their days. Every student is different and some can find school difficult at times, so a friendly face helps them get through the day. Others enjoy being able to discuss extra opportunities available to them, such as volunteering or work experience. During some breaks, the students can engage in games and activities, which can be a great conduit for discussion.

In the afternoon, I work alongside one of the teaching assistants to run a cooking session with a group of students who were considered at risk of exclusion. We work with the students to plan a meal that is within our budget, then we go shopping for ingredients. When we get back on site, they cook the meal and the bit everyone enjoys most, eating it!



After school today, I am going to provide support at a basketball tournament organised by a group of students who are big fans of the sport but had been unable to access coaching. We arranged a meeting to get support from the Head of PE and they then planned the whole event, including prizes for the winning team. They are hoping to find funding to bring in a basketball coach and this is a great way to find out the level of interest among other students.

Next it is on to after-school club, which is always a busy session. The young people come straight out of school into the youth centre where they can spend time with other young people running through the events of the day and often being very physically active. Another benefit is that we become aware of any potential conflict and support young people to resolve their issues rather than them escalating into school, onto the streets, or online.”

### 3.9. Building an evidence base: what works



Building the evidence long term is needed to understand the outcomes for young people. We need long-term funding to see this happen. This needs to focus upstream not just on the consequences of school exclusions if, for example, we’re trying to build the evidence around supporting young people, their wellbeing and being engaged in school.

**Jamila Boughelaf, Education Endowment Fund**



There is a need for a clearer articulation and stronger evidence base for youth work and schools. This should be supported by a theory of change, or prospectus, setting out how youth work skills and activities can achieve these objectives, and common metrics to measure the impact of youth work.

Nationally, there is scope to look for evidence of what works to build on the relational approach of youth work to education, with the Education Endowment Foundation and Youth Endowment Foundation.

Locally, each school and area will have different priorities and issues to meet the needs of young people and their communities. Success looks different at each stage of development. There needs to be a consistent approach to what works and, for senior school leaders, the extent to which youth work engages or re-engages young people in education. This can be seen in terms of time keeping, attendance and behaviour management in school, or skills and interests of the young person supported outside the classroom setting.

To build and sustain an evidence base, longitudinal research is required on, for example, how youth work engenders a positive sense of learning (engagement) at key transition stages. This can include destination and progress measures that link to the government's focus on attendance, skills and employability. This would benefit from a fuller review of the role and contribution of youth work, in the same way that Ofsted is undertaking a thematic review of early years education. Ofsted research will look at what is currently in place across schools, which could be included in Section 8 inspections around personal and social development, as well as character education.<sup>35</sup>

There are no datasets to refer to when considering the outcomes gained from youth work within schools. Youth work is measured by short-term outcomes – or outputs – from project funding and programmes. Youth services rely on surveys and outcome stars for assessment of health and wellbeing, typically used in family and social care. Referral forms for youth work with schools do include issues and data on attendance, behaviour and exclusions. There is an opportunity, especially in the case of vulnerable young people, to look to data on levels of engagement and re-engagement in schools, as well as post-16 destinations.

“

There's a particular evidence gap around what good youth work in schools looks like, and I think that would be a really important thing to find out. What does best practice look like, and also what are the barriers to that happening in schools?

Abi Angus, Centre for Education and Youth

Why are we not valuing the wider outcomes that are available? Should we not actually be considering instead the longer-term impacts of youth work that can support greater independence, reductions in crime, increased access to further and higher education etc. to drive an inclusive ethos and culture that can develop the whole child so that we're not just thinking about supporting performance indicators of the present, but we're actually building citizens of the future.

Dr Nic Crossley, ASCL

”

Measures that can be used include:

- ✓ Benefits – attendance and engagement; enterprise and employability; creativity; sports and physical health; expeditionary learning; and coaching (social anxiety and friendships).
- ✓ Attributes – problem solving; creativity; determination; passion; risk-taking; teamwork.
- ✓ Impact – reduced exclusions; improved skills and progression; wider community engagement.
- ✓ Outcomes – skills, employability; long-term destinations; measures of improved wellbeing and life chances.

## Use of data

Improved evidence requires greater consistency in use of data with a key role for commissioners – whether school, academy trust, local authority, agency or funder – to share data to measure long-term outcomes.

Inadequate sharing of information of what works across education, health and children's services limits the expansion of good practice and proven approaches. Not least, different government departments record individual data for different purposes and data sets are not consistently joined up nationally or locally.

Schools and youth workers use different safeguarding software, which makes it harder to share information. Policy and resources are needed to address this challenge through Department for Education guidance and training for teachers and youth workers to be able to form plans together.

“

Some data work is being done in DWP that would be more directly related to this [youth work provision] and ties employment outcomes back to particular interventions that are done with young people at a slightly older age group.

Olly Newton, Edge Foundation

”



## 3.10. Insights from beyond England

### Scotland

In Scotland, youth work has been part of a broader community learning and development (CLD) context since the 1970s. This primarily covers youth work, community-based adult learning, and community development. The statutory requirement places CLD and youth work as part of the education system, but a lack of parity with other parts of the education system has often been highlighted, although the Scottish Government has committed to reviewing and strengthening these regulations.

Youth work and schools both deliver a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), with the shared purpose of supporting all learners to develop skills for learning, life and work. Youth work delivers CfE learning opportunities across schools and communities. It is increasingly recognised as contributing to improving readiness to learn, health and wellbeing and educational outcomes for children and young people alongside schools.

The review of national agencies and qualifications has seen positive engagement with youth work, including acknowledging the need for education to recognise and value young people's skills and achievements through youth work alongside formal learning and qualifications.

YouthLink Scotland, the national agency for youth work, has worked with the sector and key bodies to develop the National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework to help the sector provide evidence of its impact and connect to key policy drivers. The framework also helps youth workers support young people to recognise, articulate and demonstrate their learning and skills development. Skills development has proved to be a useful shared language to strengthen collaboration with schools.

“

There has been good collaboration between youth work, CLD and schools over many years. In particular, youth work's role in tackling the poverty-related attainment gap is recognised. YouthLink Scotland's Youth Work and Schools national programme is funded by the Scottish Government as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Through this work, we are strengthening inter-professional understanding and building capacity for collaboration between youth work and schools across all levels of the system.

Youth Link Scotland

”





## Wales

Youth work is recognised and valued in Wales for its contribution to supporting and developing young people aged 11 to 25. Wales is going through a period of huge education reform, with the introduction of a once-in-a-generation new Curriculum for Wales. While this has been developed alongside, rather than with, youth work, the four purposes of the new curriculum closely reflect a youth work approach.

But there is more to be done to promote inter-professional understanding and the design of a complementary role with schools and colleges. Youth work is part of the National Academy for Education Leadership (NAEL), with a leadership and management training programme currently being rolled out across the sector. In recognising youth work as an education provider, practising youth workers (Level 6 and above) and youth support workers (Level 2 & 3) are required to register with the Education Workforce Council (EWC) alongside teachers, further education staff and work-based learning staff.

The Welsh Government is currently consulting on a refresh of the criteria for the accreditation of initial teacher education and the youth work sector is responding to this by calling for closer working arrangements and a better understanding between teaching and youth work both at initial training level and for continuing professional development (CPD).

Following a review of youth work in the Welsh Parliament (the Senedd), the Welsh Government invested in an Interim Youth Work Board, 2018, which made a number of recommendations. Three priorities were carried forward by the subsequent Youth Work Strategy Implementation Board: youth work funding, legislation and a potential national/representative body. However, youth work is currently unable to access £28m in funding made available for a National Professional Learning Entitlement for education professionals, which supports the roll-out of Curriculum for Wales. This suggests that there is still some way to go until youth work is recognised as an integral part of the country's education system.



**Whilst teaching and youth work are different educational approaches, they deliver their greatest impact where they both embrace and understand each other as being complementary. Successful partnerships are based on a mutual understanding of roles and are found where youth workers are an integral part of the school team.**

**Wales Principal Youth Officers' Group**





# 4. Conclusion and recommendations

## If not now, when?

Those who worked on this report have found it a fascinating and highly rewarding experience. Gathering evidence from such a wide range of contributors – practitioners, providers, policymakers and, crucially, young people themselves – has given us an unrivalled insight into the reality of youth work today.

We have been privileged to see the extraordinary achievements of youth workers who devise and run projects up and down the country. In many cases, the outcomes are truly remarkable. These dedicated people are the flag-bearers of the profession, demonstrating the life-changing impact of youth work on young people who face challenges and barriers that might otherwise derail their lives.

Below, we detail what we believe are the key changes we need to support and develop the profession still further and place it at the heart of every facet of policy that impacts the lives of young people.

We urge politicians, policymakers, schools and the youth work sector to take heed.

The price of failure is simply too high. Our young people deserve better.

“

The work of a youth worker in school can complement and enhance the more structured aims of education across multiple areas. It isn't about defining problems or deficits, it's about providing an open and inclusive space where young people can explore and articulate their needs and wishes. Youth work in school is not just about being there at times of crisis but also about building positive relationships and trust. It provides a supportive function that seeks to prevent some of those crisis situations from ever reaching that point.

School and Community Youth Worker, Oasis Waterloo Hub

”

## Recommendations

### Recommendations for National Government

#### 1. Clear leadership: Youth Minister

**An over-arching cross-department youth policy with oversight by a dedicated Youth Minister at the Department for Education with a remit and authority across departments.** This will rebalance responsibilities and accountability in government. There is currently a Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing (DfE) and a Minister for Civil Society and Youth (DCMS), each with a broader range of responsibilities. A Youth Minister within education, or a dual role held at DfE and DCMS to chair a cross-departmental committee, will support education and wellbeing objectives.

#### 2. Clear strategy: National Youth Strategy

**A cross-departmental National Youth Strategy that prevents young people from falling between the gaps created by departmental silos.** We are one of the few countries without a National Youth Strategy. Australia, Canada, France, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, the United States and many others all have strategies to support the lives of young people growing up in their country<sup>37</sup>. This strategy should consider work from a range of departments including youth services and provision (DCMS), education, skills and employment (DfE and DWP), health and substance misuse (DH&SC, DfE, OHI&D), social care and those in need (DfE and DH&SC), justice and safety (HO and MoJ), and community life, opportunities and living environments (DLUHC).

#### 3. Funding and accountability: Stable and joined-up funding and strengthened guidance

**Dedicated, stable and joined-up funding is required. It should be supported by greater accountability from strengthened statutory guidance at national and local levels to put youth work on a surer footing with schools and facilitate more cross-sector working.** This will put an end to over-reliance on projects or short-term funding. Local authorities have a statutory duty to plan and secure sufficient youth work provision alongside securing sufficient school places in the local areas, as well as a new duty for academy trusts as part of the civic structure<sup>38</sup>.

#### 4. Enhanced opportunity: Elective Premium

**An Elective Premium for increased learning opportunities in and outside school settings so that all young people can benefit from enrichment activities.** Formal guidance must be strengthened to include personal and social development with schools<sup>39</sup>. This should include clear expectations on, and the readiness of, schools to engage with youth work and deliver enrichment activities.

#### 5. Teacher training and CPD: Youth work values and curriculum

**Integrating youth work values and approaches into initial teacher training and CPD training to support the cross-collaboration and understanding between school staff and youth workers.**

## **6. Workforce: Transition route from teaching to youth work**

**Offering a transition pathway to become a youth worker through a youth work qualification to reduce wasted talent.** As of November 2021, 12.5% of newly qualified teachers were not working as a teacher one year after qualifying, and 17.3% were not working as a teacher two years later<sup>40</sup>. Many recently qualified teachers leave the profession because they feel unable to support young people in the way that they had hoped. Offering the opportunity for teachers leaving the profession to transition from teaching to youth work could reduce this wasted talent. Professionals who understand teaching approaches and youth work approaches could bridge the gap between formal and informal education.

## **7. Mobilisation: National taskforce**

**Focused on workforce planning across education and youth services, comparable to previous reviews of social work and early years.** This will include use of distinct funding streams to deliver an effective youth offer with schools. With the recognition of youth workers and youth work in multiagency approaches, fast-track recruitment and training of youth workers could increase capacity. It would also offer the potential to deploy youth work in a community of schools or a multi-academy trust while supporting local government initiatives such as family hubs, antisocial behaviour plans, the National Youth Guarantee and local youth partnerships<sup>41</sup>. We back the call for 10,000 youth practitioners with youth work qualifications and both salary and status on a par with education<sup>42</sup>. We need bold plans to make this happen.

## **8. Holidays and Food Programme: becomes Activities and Food Programme**

**Delivered throughout the year and provided by the youth sector to engage older teenagers.** The youth sector is well placed to engage older teenagers and address some of the stigma surrounding HAF.

## **Recommendation for Ofsted**

### **9. Quality of external interventions and partnerships: Ofsted Inspection Framework**

**An enhanced inspection framework with further measures and metrics to assess quality, consistency and longevity of external partnerships that aim to support the personal wellbeing of young people.** We believe this would increase the quality of youth work provision in schools and ensure provision is delivered over the long term to create meaningful, trusting relationships with young people.

## Recommendation for school leaders

### 10. Partnership working

**Support for, and encouragement of, partnership working with the youth service and local youth and community organisations to benefit young people's wellbeing.** We believe school leaders could achieve this by:

- Addressing the social and emotional development of young people and contextual factors affecting their lives in their school and what variety of youth work provision could support need.
- Exploring the youth service offer and the youth and community organisations in your area to understand what links between support and provision are possible.
- Commissioning youth work provision for the benefit of young people, the school and the local community, and working together in long-term partnerships with organisations to create frameworks and outcome measures that can provide evidence of impact.
- Encouraging collaboration with the local community in terms of facilities and resources to build trust, a sense of belonging and community support.

## Recommendations for all stakeholders – national and local government, MATs, schools and the youth sector

### 11. Evidence: building the case for youth work with schools

**Development of common metrics for measuring impact and investment in longitudinal research to demonstrate how youth work can support key educational outcomes, such as attendance, skills and employability.** Greater consistency in collecting and sharing data across providers, and across sectors, at a local and national level, would also enable us to identify and share what works to embed good practice and proven approaches more widely.

### 12. A model approach

**Review our model approach to youth work with schools to embed cost-effective support for young people's wellbeing and education in school, in the local community and in other early help services (see p.38)**

## Appendix One

### Definitions of youth work – for the purposes of this review

1. Our starting point is the definition of youth work as used by the 2013 NYA Commission inquiry:

“Youth work promotes young people’s personal and social development, helping them learn about themselves, others and society through non-formal educational activities that combine enjoyment, challenge and learning.”

The 2013 commission report considered those aged 11 to 16. Since 2015, the age of compulsory participation in education or training has increased to 18, so the 2022 panel review will consider those aged 11 to 18 inclusive as being of secondary school age.

- Youth is the adolescent developmental phase between childhood and adulthood that brings significant physical, neurological and emotional changes. These changes impact life chances related to making healthy choices, participating in risky behaviours, forming new relationships and tackling new challenges.
- Formal learning (schools and colleges) is organised and structured and intentional in its academic outcomes. This is supported by the National Curriculum ([gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum)).
- Non-formal learning (youth work) uses an asset-based approach and practice to develop skills for life and work such as resilience and social networks. This is supported by the Youth Work Curriculum (<https://www.nya.org.uk/quality/curriculum/>).

- Youth work predominantly works with young people of secondary school age (11 to 19), but it is also designed to support young people through adolescence (typically from age eight to 25).
2. Skills and competencies from youth work with formal education. Underlying skills and competencies gained can help improve life chances (early help) and young people’s agency (healthy choices) from the age of eight to 25, although youth services are predominantly funded for secondary school (11 to 18). The skills and competencies that can positively impact later life are:
- Social control<sup>43</sup>/self-regulation<sup>44</sup> where a young person can ‘stop, think, then act’, as well as delayed gratification to inform healthy choices. Childhood self-control predicts physical health, substance dependence, personal finances, and criminal offending outcomes.
  - Social competence/ empathy, where a young person cooperates with peers, is helpful to others, understands their feelings, and resolves problems on their own<sup>45</sup>. Children with high social competence were far more likely to earn a college degree and have a full-time job by the age of 25 than those with limited social skills<sup>46</sup>.
  - Self-regulated learning/agency<sup>47</sup> and the extent to which learners are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, the strategies they use to learn, and to motivate themselves to engage in learning.



## Appendix Two

### List of witnesses, visits and submissions

#### Online hearings: oral evidence

Tim Frew, Youth Link Scotland  
 Tim Opie, Wales Local Government Association  
 Tony Gallagher, National Youth Sector Advisory Board, England  
 Lee Davis, North Oxfordshire Academy Trust (United Learning Trust)  
 Year 12 and 13 students, North Oxfordshire Academy Trust  
 Shona Nichols, Aldridge Foundation  
 Louis Levin, Aldridge Education  
 Jamila Boughelaf, Education Endowment Foundation  
 Paul Twocock, Youth Endowment Fund  
 Beth Prescott, Centre for Social Justice  
 Ruth Marvel, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award  
 Natalie Bennett-Swift, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Violence Reduction Unit  
 Lib Peck, London Violence Reduction Unit  
 Kelly Madden, Sheffield Inclusion Centre  
 Anne Longfield, Commission on Young Lives  
 Steve Chalke, Oasis Academy Trust  
 Andrew Smyth, Oasis Community Partnerships  
 Nik Harwood, Young Somerset  
 Helen Taylor, OnSide  
 Naim Moukarvel, NCS Trust  
 Karen Chouhan, National Education Union  
 Nicola Crossley, Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)  
 Sir Jon Coles, United Learning  
 Leora Cruddas, Confederation of School Trusts  
 Olly Newton, Edge Foundation  
 Richard Benstead, Opportunity Area, North Yorkshire Coast  
 Abi Angus, Centre for Education and Youth  
 Emily Frith, Office of the Children's Commissioner for England  
 Leigh Middleton, National Youth Agency  
 Officials from the Department for Education and from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Civil Society and Youth Policy) and from Ofsted

Young people led by Amplifi (National Youth Agency)  
 Youth practitioners hosted by London Youth (in-person workshop)  
 Youth sector leaders, convened by National Youth Sector Advisory Board (presentation)

#### Additional: written submissions

Aldridge Foundation  
 Centre for Education and Youth  
 Challenger Trust  
 Dame Kelly Holmes Trust  
 Doncaster Metropolitan County Council  
 Duke of Edinburgh's Award  
 Falinge Park High School, Rochdale  
 Football Beyond Borders  
 National Citizen Service Trust (NCS)  
 Nottinghamshire County Council  
 Oasis Academy Trust  
 Onside  
 Scouts  
 The Sid Youth CIC, Worthing  
 University of Huddersfield, Dr Andrew Mycock  
 Wales Principal Youth Officers Group  
 Wales Local Government Association  
 Young Somerset  
 Youth Link Scotland

#### Site visits

Doncaster: Doncaster Young Advisers and Edington Victoria School  
 London: Oasis Academy South Bank, Waterloo  
 Nottinghamshire: Dukeries Young People's Centre and Selston High School  
 Oldham: Springboard Project, The New Bridge Academy Trust  
 Stoke on Trent: The Challenger Trust and Alpha Academies Trust  
 Worthing: The Sid Youth CIC and St Andrew's School

### Online review submissions

Captiva Learning Ltd  
Young People Taking Action  
The Black and Minority Ethnic Young People's Project  
Millpond Independent Church  
Fun Club Hub  
Off The Record (Bath and North-East Somerset)  
Reaching Higher  
Zone Youth Club, Targeted Youth Support - London Borough of Islington  
NHS Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group  
Community Youth Project  
Girlguiding  
Worcester Community Trust  
The Hangleton & Knoll Project  
Tyneside Outdoors  
Wakefield College  
Schools Ministry Billericay  
YMCA St Paul's Group  
Gateshead Youth Council  
Shropshire Council  
Streetwise Young People's Project  
Surrey Fire and Rescue Service  
Phoenix Detached Youth Project  
Park Community School  
YMCA Northumberland  
Health Services in Schools (Youth Workers), Wirral Council  
South East Harlow Sports & Youth Association  
The Prince's Trust  
Thirst Youth Hub  
Harborough District Children and Young People's Charity  
Hartcliffe Club for Young People  
People and Drugs Ltd (Silx Teen Bar Youth Project)  
Magic Club  
Robert Shaw Primary and Nursery School  
St Marys Thakeham Youth Group  
KAOS youth club  
Participation Works NW  
The Washington Group  
Britwell Youth and Community Project  
Southend YMCA

Grand Union Housing Group  
Sporting Communities CIC  
Trowbridge Future  
LCC Targeted Youth Support  
Special School - anonymous  
The Forest Academy  
The Wave Youth and Children's Ministry  
Positive Futures Liverpool  
Lincolnshire Youth Assn / Boys and Girls Clubs/ YoungLincolnshireLCVYS  
Power2  
The Hebe Foundation  
Conwy Youth Service  
OnSide  
Beckfoot Trust  
Burton Youth for Christ  
Kingsteignton Youth Centre  
Dame Kelly Holmes Trust  
Local Authority Maintained School (anonymous)  
Locking Castle Church  
Leeds Playhouse / Leeds City College  
Warrington Borough Council Targeted Youth Service  
Falinge Park High School  
AuSENDS  
Leeds Youth Service  
No Wrong Door Youth Project  
Oriel High School  
Bath Youth for Christ at St Mark's C of E Secondary School  
Wilmslow Youth  
United Learning Academy  
Cambridge & District Youth for Christ XLP  
Woodrush high school  
Reaching Higher  
Berkshire Youth  
St John's Stoke  
The Foxtan Centre  
Soulscape  
Spotlight  
Christ Church Bexleyheath  
Diocese of Bath and Wells - Education Chaplaincy Network  
Purbeck Youth & Community Foundation  
The Souster Youth Trust  
Aik Saath - Together As One

|  |  |
|--|--|
| SMS, Failsworth                                  | The Youth Net                              |
| The Living Room                                  | Silx Youth Project                         |
| Futura learning Trust                            | City of Leeds Youth Service/ Outer south   |
| Preston Impact Youth Group                       | Leeds City Council                         |
| Woodstock Youth Work Trust                       | The Trust for Developing Communities       |
| Portishead Youth Centre                          | Swan Youth Project                         |
| KDYT Kidderminster and District Youth Trust      | Girlguiding                                |
| North Oxfordshire Academy                        | Staffordshire Youth Offending              |
| Youth Fed  | Brathay Trust                              |
| The Mix Stowmarket                               | Medway Youth service                       |
| Future Roots                                     | London Borough of Newham Youth             |
| The Market Place Leeds                           | Empowerment Service                        |
| Alford House                                     | Brandon Carrside Youth and Community       |
| Warwickshire                                     | Project                                    |
| North of England Activities and Training         | Liberty Jamboree                           |
| Woodlanders FC                                   | 4th Chester-Le-Street Scouts               |
| DYS Space  | Ellowes Hall                               |
| Streetwise                                       | 1st Benson Guides                          |
| Army Welfare Service                             | The Park School                            |
| North East Youth for Christ                      | Central Bedfordshire Youth Support Service |
| Wales High School                                | 1st Clacton Girlguiding Units              |
| Cheshire Young Carers                            | Wolvercote Young People's Club             |
| Cedars Short Stay School                         | NE Youth                                   |
| St Wilfrid's                                     | 1st Castleford Guides                      |
| Out Loud Music                                   | Hull Youth Development Service             |
| Purbeck Youth & Community Foundation             | Pegasus Explorer Scout Unit                |
| Safer London                                     | Passion                                    |
| ERVAS  | Surrey County Council                      |
| Auckland youth and community centre              | WYP  |
| Richard O'Neill, Alternative Education           | Changing the future                        |
| Consultant                                       | Targeted Youth Support                     |
| Beacon center                                    | Brookside Church                           |
| The Pythian Club CIC                             | Eastern Ravens trust                       |
| Army welfare services                            |  |
| Friends of Victoria park Stretford Youth council |  |
| The 393 Club                                     |  |
| The Eikon Charity                                |  |
| Islington Council                                |  |
| Gordano Valley Church                            |  |
| Bromsgrove Youth and Community Hub,              |  |
| Bromsgrove Baptist Church                        |  |
| Epping forest Youth Council                      |  |
| Loughborough Leggo Youth Group                   |  |
| Amble Youth Project                              |  |
| Salford Youth Service                            |  |
| Litherland Youth and Community Centre            |  |
| Success4All                                      |  |

---

## Appendix Three

### Call for evidence

Across education in the wake of the pandemic there is a diversity of needs, challenges and opportunities with young people.

#### **What is the role and contribution of youth work with schools to engage young people in education and learning, and for their mental wellbeing?**

Lines of enquiry:

As we adapt post-pandemic, there is a policy focus on academic catch-up alongside young people's mental health, wellbeing and employability. This forms part of the government's agenda for levelling up opportunities through 'skills for life and work' and 'mental and physical wellbeing' (DCMS); alongside policy drivers for schools on attendance, attainment and enrichment (DfE).

#### **Review, 2013 findings and progress**

While teaching and youth work professions and practice have their own distinctive approach, what is the role for, and capacity of, youth work with schools and academy trusts?

- (i) Complementary to schools
- (ii) Successfully applied in schools
- (iii) Quality & inspections

### Priorities, 2022 with young people

What is the extent of collaboration between schools and youth work, as well as its benefits and barriers?

- (i) Priorities & outcomes with young people
- (ii) Pedagogy & curriculum, professional understanding

What are the challenges we face when meeting young people's needs and opportunities?

- (i) School improvement and partnerships
- (ii) Effective funding
- (iii) Shared outcomes and inclusivity

### Online survey – youth practitioners

Respondents by types of organisation: 72 voluntary and community sector, 13 private sector, 17 local authority youth service.

Nearly all worked with Key Stage 3 (ages 11 to 14) and Key Stage 4 (ages 14 to 16); 9 in 10 worked with Key Stage 5 (ages 16 to 18).

75% of respondents stated that they provided some level of youth work with schools on at least a weekly (22%) or daily (53%) basis.

Youth sector providers who were involved with youth work with schools were most likely to be providing health and wellbeing-related services (70%), and least likely to be providing other learning that was a part of the school curriculum.

Respondents were asked to state how far they agreed or disagreed that youth work with schools would contribute to a selection of personal and social capabilities in young people. The highest capability is confidence and agency (82% strongly agree) followed by managing feelings, resilience and determination, relationships and leadership, and communication.

Over 80% of respondents strongly agreed that youth work with schools would contribute to better happiness, wellbeing and mental health. Fewer than 60% strongly agreed that youth work with schools would contribute to better employment or civic participation outcomes.

The more related the outcome to improving attainment or quality of the formal curriculum, the less likely a respondent was to say that it would be improved by the contribution of youth work with schools. However, for every factor there was a net agreement that youth work has a positive impact.

95% of respondents either strongly agreed (68%) or agreed (27%) that the provisions of youth work with schools would benefit pupil-to-pupil relationships.

There is no discernible pattern to what respondents agreed would be barriers to the contribution of youth work with schools, but the responses point to most respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing there was a paucity of understanding (84%) and evidence (69%) of the contribution of youth work with schools.

Professional barriers include training (50%), the availability or capacity of skilled or qualified workers (64%), or brokering access and engagement with schools (81%).



## Appendix Four

### Youth work principles

Active participation and empowerment of young people: youth work should be informed by the lived experiences of each young person, starting from where young people are in relation to their own feelings, values, views and principles. It recognises that young people have strengths and abilities and goes beyond the point where young people start, encouraging them to actively participate and take ownership, and to be critical and creative in their responses to their experiences, needs and the world around them.

Voluntary engagement by young people: young people can choose to be involved, to relax, to meet friends, to form new relationships, to have fun and to find support. Youth work recognises each young person as a partner in their learning process, which enables them to fulfil their potential. It requires the establishment of trusting relationships between young people and youth workers built on mutual respect.

Non-formal education and informal learning: youth work takes place across a range of settings. It is a rights' based informal education process and an asset-based empowerment approach that responds to young people's feelings, values, views, principles and needs. It enables the acquisition of new skills, creates the spaces and opportunities for young people to develop a broad set of social skills and encourages young people's autonomous agency and political voice, recognising young people as decision makers and leaders.

Equality, equity, diversity and inclusion: youth work treats young people with respect, valuing differences and promoting the acceptance and understanding of others. It is underpinned by the principles of social justice, equality and rights, and embraces and celebrates diversity and interdependence. It recognises the value of the collective identities and inclusivity, fostering positive collective action, a sense of belonging, and a sense of community by challenging oppressive behaviours.

### National Youth Work Curriculum

The Youth Work Curriculum sets out the educational process that underpins good youth work. It contains framed national standards for quality education, outcomes and workforce development, and the UN rights of the child. It is set in the context of youth work values, principles and ethics. It is a framework to support and develop practices that are a catalyst for learning.

Youth work focuses on the young person and their needs, whether as an individual or within a group. It is founded on four cornerstones, which describe the broad aims of youth work:

- Education – Youth work offers informal learning opportunities that can complement formal learning in schools and colleges. It gives young people the opportunity to learn about themselves, about others, about issues they care about or that concern them, and about society and how to engage in their communities.
- Empowerment – Youth work helps young people develop the skills and confidence to make decisions and act on issues that affect their own lives, the lives of others, their communities and society. This enables young people to take control, have a voice and get involved as advocates.

— Equality – Youth work is for all young people. It respects differences and builds connections between different groups and individuals. It recognises and promotes human rights, social justice and anti-oppressive practices, supporting and challenging young people to reflect on their understanding of themselves and their behaviour towards others.

— Participation – Youth work supports young people and works with them to become partners and leaders in their own learning, helping them gain influence over issues they are concerned about and engaging them with democratic processes.

[www.nya.org.uk/quality/curriculum/](http://www.nya.org.uk/quality/curriculum/)

## National Youth Work Curriculum



## Endnotes

- 1 YMCA England and Wales, 2022: estimates a 77% reduction in real-terms local authority expenditure since 2010/11. See also, NYA, 2020: for every £16 cut from public services, £1 has been cut from youth work.
- 2 University of Cambridge, teacher education and development and pedagogical innovation at the TES 22 Feb 2023: “If there is a disconnect between espoused values around wellbeing and statutory guidance for education, it is the latter that tends to drive practice and underpin school culture.”
- 3 Children’s Society: The Good Childhood Report, 2022
- 4 NYA (2013), Commission on youth work in education – National Youth Agency, [s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/assets.nya2.joltrouter.net/wp-content/uploads/20210421112744/Commission-into-the-role-of-youth-work-in-formal-education.pdf](https://s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/assets.nya2.joltrouter.net/wp-content/uploads/20210421112744/Commission-into-the-role-of-youth-work-in-formal-education.pdf)
- 5 Under Section 507B of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, there is a statutory duty for local authorities to secure sufficient youth work (educational and recreational leisure time). However, when the statutory guidance was reviewed in 2012 this was required only when ‘reasonably practicable’, which was described as ‘depending on the specific circumstances of the local authority’, including ‘its resources, capabilities and other priorities’.
- 6 Estyn, 2021: Understanding the value of youth work and youth workers
- 7 This includes pastoral work and support within alternative provision and SEND: trusted relationships and meaningful engagement (learning outcomes which are planned and intended)
- 8 This includes PSHE and Careers; supported by the government’s National Youth Guarantee for out of school activities, outdoor learning and an inclusive approach to Alternative Provision and SEND
- 9 Children’s Society: The Good Childhood Report, 2022
- 10 Children’s Society: The Good Childhood Report, 2020
- 11 Prince’s Trust, Prince’s Trust Tesco Youth Index 2021, January 2021
- 12 NFER, (2022), Children and young people’s wellbeing and mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic
- 13 Pearson, (2022), School Report: Schools Today, Schools Tomorrow
- 14 National Youth Agency: professional, statutory and regulatory body for youth work in England
- 15 MOPAC Evidence and Insight, (2022), A problem profile of violence, gangs and young people, [london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-10/Serious%20youth%20violence%20problem%20profile.pdf](https://london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-10/Serious%20youth%20violence%20problem%20profile.pdf)
- 16 See also, Centre for Social Justice (2022), Lost but not forgotten: the reality of severe absence in schools post-lockdown
- 17 Department of Education (2022), Source of referrals in the year to 31 March, Characteristics of children in need, Reporting year 2022 – Explore education statistics, [explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/characteristics-of-children-in-need](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/characteristics-of-children-in-need)
- 18 Department of Education, (2022), Evaluation of the 2021 holiday activities and food programme, Evaluation of the 2021 holiday activities and food programme, [gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-2021-holiday-activities-and-food-programme](https://gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-2021-holiday-activities-and-food-programme)
- 19 Department of Education, (2022), Evaluation of the 2021 holiday activities and food programme, Evaluation of the 2021 holiday activities and food programme, [gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-2021-holiday-activities-and-food-programme](https://gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-2021-holiday-activities-and-food-programme)
- 20 London Youth (2022), London Challenge Poverty Week and the Youth Sector
- 21 Department for Education, 2022; Guidance – holiday activities and food programme 2023
- 22 The Sutton Trust, 2017: Life Lessons
- 23 See also The Jubilee Centre and Birmingham University research-evidence on character education: intellectual, moral, civic and performance virtues
- 24 The Centre for Youth and Education and NCS Trust, 2021; Enriching Education Recovery
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 National Youth Agency, 2021-23: national youth sector census
- 27 Department of Education (2022), Family Hubs Innovation Fund Evaluation Interim research report [Online], available at: Family hubs evaluation innovation fund: interim report, [gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-family-hubs](https://gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-family-hubs)
- 28 Commission On Young Lives, ‘Hidden In Plain Sight’ (2022)
- 29 National Youth Agency, National Workforce Strategy (2022)
- 30 Times Education Commission (2022), Bringing out the best

- 31 Children's Commissioner's Office 2022, Voices of England's Missing Children
- 32 Times Education Commission (2022), Bringing out the best
- 33 NCS (2021), Enriching Education Recovery
- 34 NCS (2021), Enriching Education Recovery
- 35 Gatsby benchmark: a framework for improvement in careers provision
- 36 OECD (2021), What have countries done to support young people in the COVID-19 crisis? What have countries done to support young people in the COVID-19 crisis? - OECD, [oecd-ilibrary.org](https://oecd-ilibrary.org)
- 37 OECD (2021), What have countries done to support young people in the COVID-19 crisis? What have countries done to support young people in the COVID-19 crisis? - OECD, [oecd-ilibrary.org](https://oecd-ilibrary.org)
- 38 Confederation of School Trusts, 2022; Community Anchoring – School Trusts as Anchor Institutions
- 39 Education Inspections Framework, 2019: includes personal development beyond the academic, technical or vocational achievement
- 40 House of Commons Library, (2022), Teacher recruitment and retention in England, CBP-7222.pdf, [parliament.uk](https://parliament.uk)
- 41 There are equivalent training schemes for teachers and social work, such as Teach First and Frontline; there is potential also for academy trust to use the apprenticeship levy to train new youth work apprentices
- 42 Commission On Young Lives, 2022
- 43 A gradient of childhood self-control predicts health, wealth, and public safety, 2011; Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) peer reviewed journal
- 44 Walter Mischel, marshmallow test
- 45 Education Endowment Foundation and Cabinet Office, 2013, The impact of non-cognitive skills on outcomes for young people
- 46 AJHP 2015, Early Social-Emotional Functioning and Public Health
- 47 Education Endowment Foundation, 2020, Meta-cognition and Self Regulation: evidence base

**National Youth Agency**

9 Newarke Street, Leicester LE1 5SN

Company registration no. 2912597

Registered charity in England and Wales no. 1035804

[nya.org.uk](http://nya.org.uk)