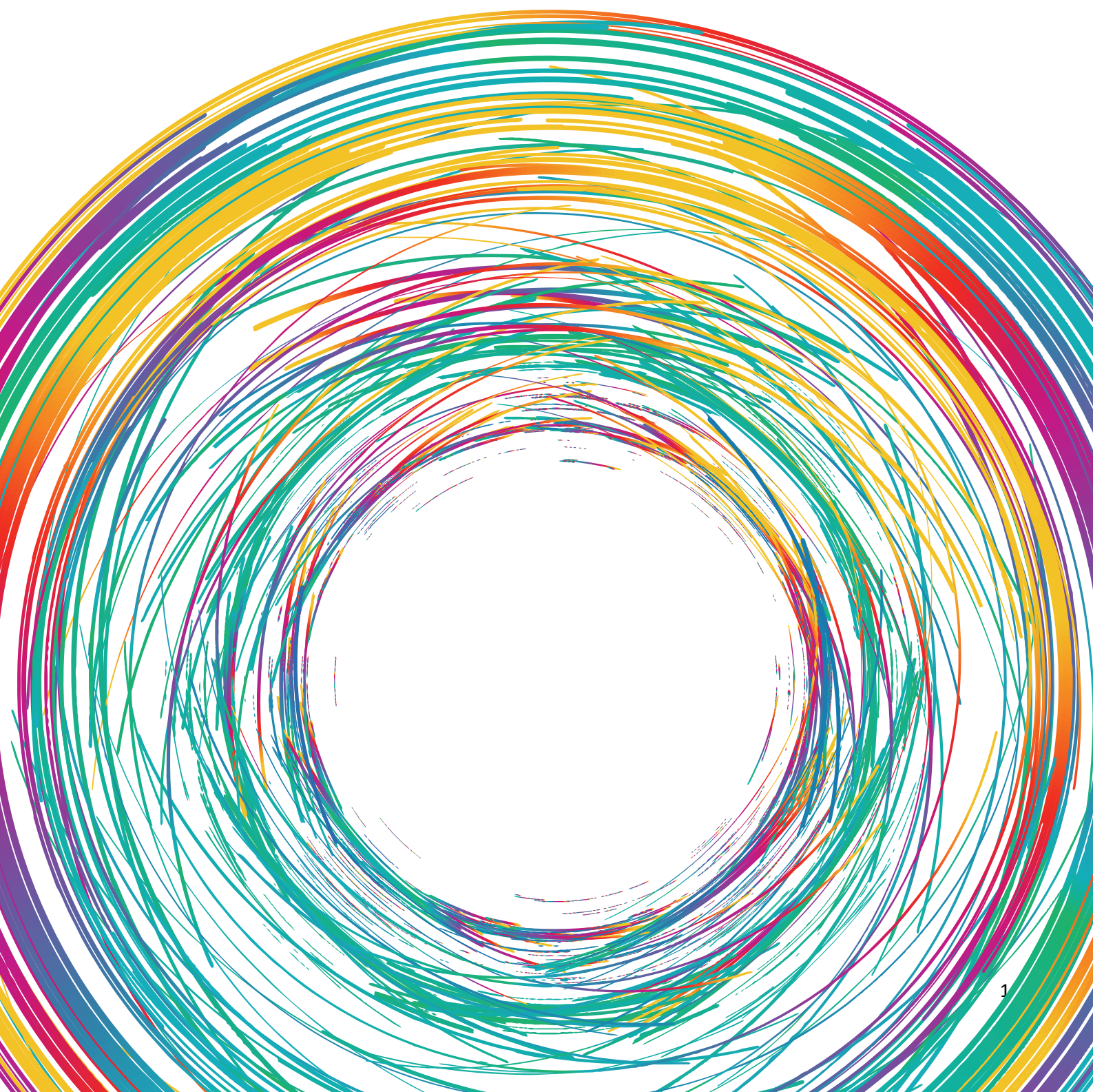




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APPG on Youth Affairs **Youth Work Inquiry**

Recommendations and Summary
October 2018



Interim Report: The Role and Sufficiency of Youth Work

Introduction

Help and investment in early years and for older people is well-recognised and reflected in public policies, but adolescence – the transition to adulthood – is also an important time for making significant life choices and decisions. Yet all too often public policy and services tend to view and define children and young people by their ‘deficits’ with a focus on having to tackle and overcome challenges and problems, rather than by recognising their ‘assets’ and the numerous opportunities available to them. This is most often characterised by society understanding ‘problems’ and ‘challenges’ in terms of moral panics over forms of popular culture and risk-taking amongst the young. There is, however, a disconnect between how the public perceive young people and the reality of their lives; for example, there are positive indications that much risky behaviour is declining amongst young people, especially drinking, smoking and illicit drug use.¹

Too often we look at the negatives and do not appreciate the positives of young people – a situation that leads to a larger disconnect with services for this group. This trend has been exacerbated by ‘austerity’ and cuts to youth services, which have been especially hard hit. Public spending within Children’s and Young People’s Services is increasingly distributed towards those statutory areas that focus on safeguarding risk and on short-term interventions targeted at vulnerable groups.² The reduction in universal (open-access) youth services, in turn, has a perverse effect, with lost opportunities for the identification of concerns and early help before issues become acute.

Overall, this inquiry presents an opportunity to shape youth policy and inform services that reflect the experiences and ambitions of young people. We explore the role, nature and

sufficiency of youth work as an essential part of the community fabric that supports young people – their sense of identity, place and belonging, supported in the present and ambitious for their future. This requires a shared understanding and clarity for the role of youth work and contribution of youth services. We conclude that, overall, to be effective, youth work needs to be (and be seen to be) transformational, harnessing skills of young people.

“It is self-evident that every generation should have better opportunities than the last. [Every] year we need to raise our sights higher and we need to reach wider to make sure we unlock the talent and potential in every child in our country”

Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP, Secretary of State for Education (October 2018)

Definitions

‘Youth’ is the developmental phase of adolescence between childhood and adulthood. Typically, this starts around the beginning of puberty and finishes in the late teens. But for many young people, dependent on personal, social and economic factors, it can start and/or finish much later, in particular for marginalised or vulnerable young people.

Critical stages of transition occur from eight years old and as young adults up to 25 years, but reflecting other contributing factors and interventions, such as primary schools and safeguarding; therefore, for the purposes of this report, the main contributions reflect secondary school ages, from 11 years old.

‘Youth work’ is a distinct educational process adapted across a variety of settings to support a young person’s personal and social development – their values, beliefs, ideas and skills – rather than to ‘fix a problem’. It engages with young people in a curriculum to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society to proactively bring about positive changes. Youth work supports a set of practical or technical skills and competencies, to help realise their full potential.

Contents

The inquiry remit	3
Key findings	4
The role of youth work	6
Is there sufficient youth work?	11
Conclusions and recommendations	17

The inquiry remit

“It is seven years since the last parliamentary inquiry into youth services and youth work. Over the years youth work has borne the brunt of significant spending cuts. Recent events and reports suggest the loss of youth work has had a negative impact on young people and communities.

In the face of rapid technological change and major economic and societal challenges we need to look again at what support young people need now and to meet their needs for the future.”

Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Affairs, Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP

The inquiry on the role and sufficiency of youth work was launched in May 2018. To help us understand the complexity of youth work, we issued a call for evidence and received over 100 submissions in answer to the following lines of enquiry:

- a) What is the role of youth work in addressing the needs and opportunities for young people?**
- b) Are the key issues and challenges faced by young people being addressed by current youth service provisions?**
- c) Are there sufficient youth workers to support youth services and other delivery models for good quality youth work?**
- d) What is the training and workforce development need to secure and sustain youth work?**

In addition, parliamentary hearings were held to take oral evidence and questions with leading organisations and representatives from the voluntary and statutory sectors, government and young people. This was supplemented by visits to local youth projects and services in the North, Midlands and South of England.

The body of evidence submitted and representation received by the APPG for Youth Affairs is reflected in this summary report to inform debate on youth policy and provision, following the Government’s Civil Society Strategy (June 2018). This summary report is published for further consultation and to include all responses in the full report on final publication by the end of 2018.

“Youth work can make a significant difference to the character, resilience and life skills of young people. There is a rich history and some great examples of youth work across the public sector, voluntary, community and faith organisations. This includes social action projects and national programmes supported by business and social enterprise.

Yet we lack a coherent approach to secure and sustain youth work, and a proper understanding of the levels and extent of youth work needed to achieve the best outcomes for young people.”

Vice-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Affairs, Gillian Keegan MP

The inquiry is part of the work of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Affairs, which is a cross party group. The National Youth Agency has agreed to coordinate the running of this one-off inquiry along with the ongoing support of the British Youth Council and YMCA England & Wales, who are the permanent secretariat for the APPG.

The APPG for Youth Affairs was established in 1998 to raise the profile of issues that affect and concern young people, encourage dialogue between parliamentarians, young people and youth services, and encourage a co-ordinated and coherent approach to youth policy making. [APPG Register of Members](#)

The National Youth Agency is the national body for youth work; for more information about youth work visit www.nya.org.uk

Key findings

“Without a clear policy statement, one which recognises the wider benefits of youth work, it continues to be ‘cast adrift’ from wider children’s services, including education.”

Association of Directors of Children’s Services

“Before Youth workers came in to our area we didn’t have these opportunities and some of our issues had developed and deteriorated which lead to consequences. Had youth workers been around the area for longer our issues wouldn’t have been so bad.”

Young People, Derbyshire County Council

There has been an implicit understanding (‘promise’) that each generation will leave the next generation better off. This may no longer hold true. In shaping a positive agenda, we need to address their lives as young people in the present, as well as being an investment for the future in the face of societal, technological and economic challenges. The underlying ideal was that each generation would enjoy and experience a better quality of life than the preceding one, due to the latter’s investment in society – something that has been dubbed an intergenerational contract.³

With some 85% of a young person’s waking hours spent outside of formal education, youth work has a key part to play:

“The Government recognises the transformational impact that youth services and trained youth workers can have, especially for young people facing multiple barriers or disadvantage.”

DCMS Civil Society strategy ‘Building a Future Society that Works for All’

It is essential that the government does all it can to build on the Civil Society Strategy commitments and to help bridge the intergenerational divides in outcomes by providing more opportunities for those young

people who need it most and in areas where they need it most.

We therefore need to provide a positive commitment from across government to our young people, encouraging the whole of society to invest in young people, their inclusion in decision-making and democratic engagement. This collective impact is key to ensuring no young person is ‘left behind’, with the skills, resilience and flexibility needed for a rapidly changing society and labour market.

There is a great heritage of voluntary provision, including faith and uniformed groups, and more recently social enterprise and youth social action. However, the nature of funding that predominantly exists, being short-term in the main, has caused a shift to short-term and targeted interventions. Open access or universal youth services have all but disappeared from some communities. Where the loss of such services has been pronounced, there are concerns for ‘overlooked’ young people who do not meet the threshold for agency or targeted interventions; this has gained coverage more recently in terms of mental health and loneliness but can apply to any aspect of a young person’s life.

We consider the role, nature and quality of youth work to support that approach – and ask if there is enough of it. This looks at the basic level of support that is required for investment in any area to sustain youth work over the longer term, in turn supporting an ‘eco-system’ of volunteers, social action, social enterprise and key relationships with other services including health, social care and education.

Within the debate and evidence for youth work, there are too many young people who do not necessarily have the family or social networks to support them and need somebody to help them. Further investment, research, and development is needed if youth work – universal (open-access), targeted or detached/street youth work – is to adapt to its new environments. We hope this initial report sets out the basis on which that further work can build and feed into.

Key findings include:

- i. Youth work is a distinct educational process, which supports the personal and social development of young people. It needs to be recognised as such and we recommend it is better placed within the Department for Education.
- ii. As we enter the next Comprehensive Spending Review and an 'end to austerity' we wish to see greater investment and commitment to support for youth services. We recommend that Government undertakes a review of spending on youth services, beginning by reinstating the local authority audit previously funded by Government and carried out by NYA.
- iii. To secure investment there needs to be a greater understanding of the role of youth work and impact of youth services. We call on the statutory and voluntary sector to form a compact with young people for a clear policy statement and guidance recognises the benefits of youth work.
- iv. We welcome the Government's commitment to review the statutory duty and we call on the youth sector and other bodies to fully engage in the consultation on the statutory duty. We recommend clear guidance on what is sufficient provision under the duty.
- v. Just as a local authority no longer necessarily directly runs schools in its area, it nonetheless has to plan for sufficient school places. We recommend there is a lead role for the local authority to ensure access to sufficient, quality youth work provision in an area.
- vi. Over the last decade, open-access or universal youth services have been especially hard hit, with the notable exception of the National Citizen Service, which provides a great experience for 16- and 17-year-olds but it is a time-limited programme and just one part of a broad youth offer to support year-round provision that meets the needs of young people locally. We call for clear guidance and investment in a base-line for local youth services that also allows an 'eco-system' of youth work provision to flourish in a community.
- vii. A coherent workforce strategy needs to be developed for the totality of the children's workforce and renewed national standards for youth work by 2020. We recommend all those supporting youth work adhere to national occupational standards and a curriculum for youth work training.
- viii. With youth work recognised as 'education' in its open access provision and in supporting vulnerable young people in its targeted provision, we recommend the reinstatement of the role of Ofsted as a driver for the quality of youth work and services.

The role of youth work

“One of the biggest roles youth work has is in prevention and early intervention, building the confidence, social networks and resilience of young people, identifying at an early stage changes in behaviours, understanding the issues they are facing and creating an honest non-judgemental space for young people to be heard and discuss.”

Onside Youth Zones

What is youth work?

Models and approaches for youth work are expressed as informal or non-formal education, with around 85% of young people's waking hours being spent outside formal education.⁴ This is underpinned by a curriculum that supports personal and social development, and enables young people to increase resilience and skills to be safe and secure in the present, and ambitious for their future.

The principles of youth work are supported by reflective practice and peer education, establishing and maintaining relationships with young people and community groups:

- Knowledge of how young people develop during adolescence and appropriate support
- Trusted relationships and voluntary engagement of young people
- Understanding how to establish boundaries, challenging behaviour and de-escalate conflict
- The importance of safeguarding in providing a safe environment for young people

Youth work takes place in a range of contexts and settings, most easily recognised in youth clubs, residential centres, activity-based

(community) projects, or street work enabling access to both universal (open-access) services and targeted support through safe spaces and activities that young people need, want and value. Through youth work, young people gain so-called 'soft skills':

- Confidence and self-efficacy; motivation and inspiration; self-determination and self-control; social confidence, interpersonal skills and teamwork
- Life skills (family and relationships; physical and mental health; digital and social media)
- Economic (engaged in education and employment; financial literacy)
- Social integration (community and decision-making; citizenship and anti-social behaviour)

Borne out of responses were the rich pedagogy of youth work, the history of its practice, and the evidence that shows youth work can help young people to overcome some of the latent inequalities by:

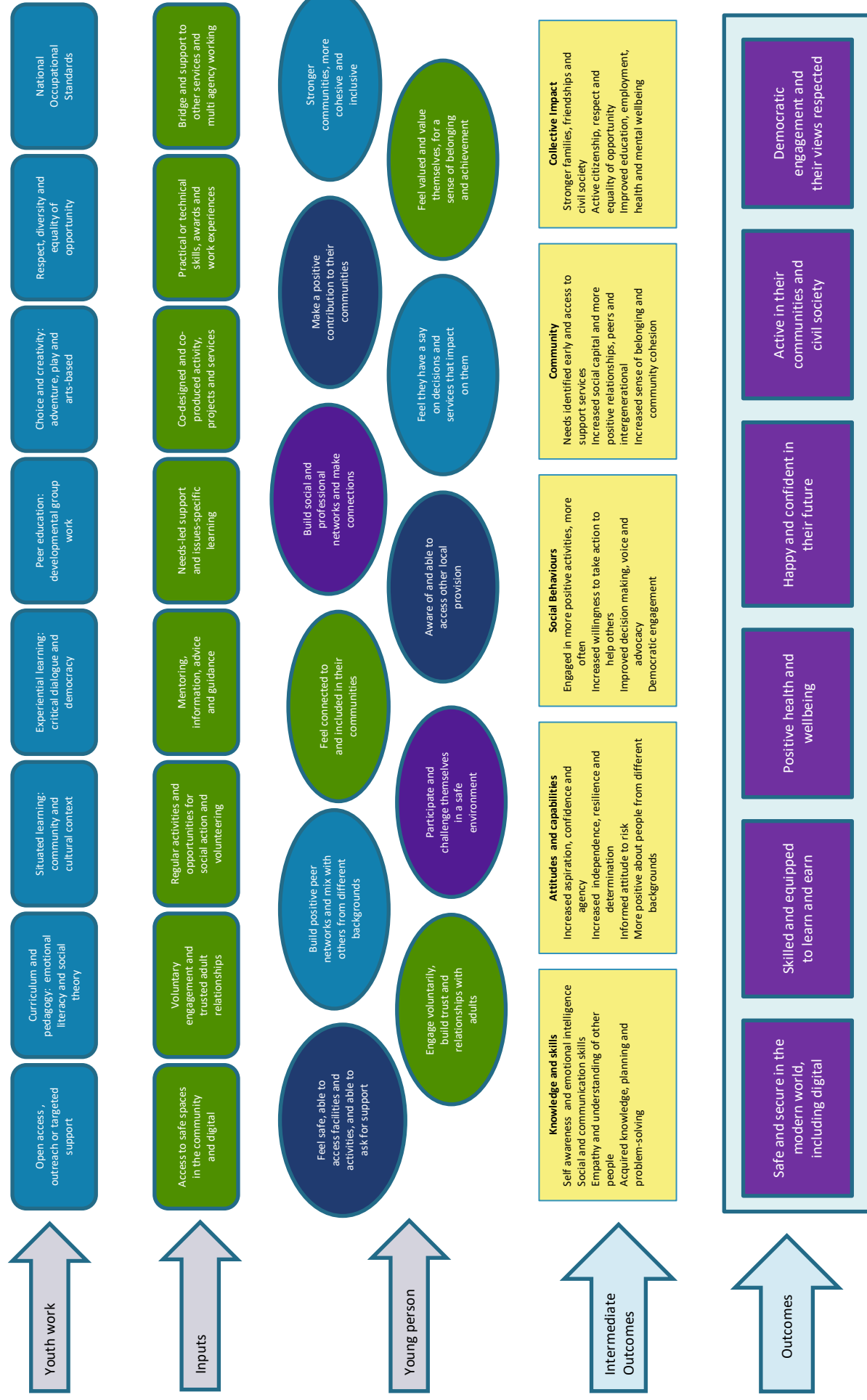
- Providing young people with the skills needed to learn about themselves and their strengths and assets, alongside learning about others and society
- Engaging young people in positive activities and networks, giving them the space in which they can overcome societal divisions
- Helping young people develop their own voice, influence, and place in society
- Providing opportunities for young people to acquire and develop practical and technical skills and competencies

Most importantly, the principles of good youth work do this by:

- Starting where young people are at; they do not need to meet a threshold or be in a certain location
- Being informed by young people, helping to bridge any disconnect

- between services and ensuring that youth work is relevant
- Being voluntary in its engagement, when young people choose to take part; this, along with the provision of a safe space and secure environment, helps build the trust between a youth worker and a young person
- Being asset-based, there are specialist and targeted forms of youth work but youth work deals with young people and their strengths and opportunities

The report therefore attempts to clarify the role and sufficiency of youth work without deviating from these principles.



Youth Services

“Youth work enables the early identification of concerns and allows youth workers to make positive and appropriate targeted social education and early help interventions before issues become acute.”

Nottinghamshire County Council

“Our primary concern would be around those children and young people who don’t meet the threshold for agency and need somebody who can give them a bit of help, and particularly need someone with whom they can develop a key relationship which has been shown to be crucial in developing resilience and the character traits which we really want to see all vulnerable young people be able to develop.”

Office of the Children’s Commissioners for England

Local authorities have statutory responsibilities to make sure, as far as possible, that there is sufficient provision of educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people. Youth workers can also bridge the gap in opportunities by helping more disadvantaged young people to access leisure activities and learning experiences from which they are otherwise excluded.

Equally, youth work in formal institutions – notably, schools, colleges, children’s services, youth offending teams (YOTs), counselling and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) – enables young people to take up the opportunities available to them, especially the most vulnerable young people. Youth workers also play an essential bridging role between families and services, building inclusive networks contributing to the wider development of services, multi-agency working and partnerships with community groups and, for example, housing associations. There are further examples of youth work in non-traditional settings, from health care (A&E and Cancer Units) to public spaces in shopping centres. By addressing contemporary issues of

the day, youth work has routinely adapted to new services and approaches such as Child Sexual Exploitation and across county lines for gang-related activities.

Recent analysis shows that over a long-term view, overall spending on young people has remained largely constant, with spending instead being redistributed in favour of protected statutory demanded services, meaning that across all spending ‘education’ has been largely protected, while within ‘Children’s Services’, the protection of increased demands on Looked After Children spending has come at the expense of big reductions in spending on non-statutory services for families with young children and programmes for young people.⁵

In this context, the reduction in youth services in recent years is well documented. Services to young people have been cut drastically as responsibility for spend has been shifted on to local authorities; from £1.028bn in 2008/09 to £0.388bn in 2016/17 – a nominal reduction of 62.25% (without accounting for inflation). As a result of the 2010 Spending Review, in 2010/11 many previously ring-fenced targeted funds were also abolished. Compounding these declining spends, the total population has grown and demand has increased for homelessness services and adult and children’s social care.

As we look to an ‘end to austerity’ from the 2019 Comprehensive Spending Review, it is not simply a case of investing more in youth services, but a clearer understanding for greater access to quality youth work provision. There are trends emerging that indicate that many local authorities are commissioning single bodies to oversee regional youth work offers with some success, and via a number of different funding and payment models. Eighty-one per cent of local authorities are considering establishing new models to streamline delivery and increase their revenue streams for their youth services – most commonly via partnerships with other organisations that have a track record of raising funds, setting up foundations or mutuals, and

through social impact bonds. However, while we include some examples, we simply do not know enough about these changes and their variations to make anything other than the broadest and most necessary recommendations in this report.

The reinstatement of the NYA audit that determined local authority provision would be key to trying to understand the picture at a national level (the last of these was published for 2007/08 figures), but the nature and shape of youth work has clearly changed – we do not know how the sector is balanced between private, public and voluntary sectors – and it is important to explore these changes, not just to aid our own understanding, but also to ensure an appropriate youth offer is in place.

Is there sufficient youth work?

“A consequence of funding reductions to local authorities has been a decrease in the infrastructure required to support good quality youth work. This can mean that even where there is a significant amount of provision available for young people in an area, this can be provided by a range of organisations including the voluntary sector, housing associations and community groups, and a lack of coordination can result in duplication, difficulties for young people and their families in finding out what is available, and limited training and support for providers. It is also difficult to know the quality of youth services available when there is limited understanding of the full range of provision across sectors.”

Local Government Association

“We currently do not operate a universal service. This means that young people who may well have worries, anxieties and support needs are not able to access early youth worker support ... [which] restricts and reduces the early help opportunities for young people. It makes appropriate services more inaccessible and takes away the voluntary engagement.”

Warwickshire County Council

- Targeted, specific and tailored specialist support for identified or complex needs

However, there is no consistent understanding of the level of service or data-sets available to answer the question of whether there is sufficient youth work. Many respondents highlighted the fact that with the combination of (a) a lack of a national infrastructure and (b) confusion surrounding the statutory obligations to provide youth services, youth work services are now geographically fragmented, and not sufficiently available in all communities and areas. Respondents also highlighted that where it was available, the offer was inconsistent with other areas.

This is due in part to the fact that the statutory duty of local authorities to provide a youth offer is open to misinterpretation; and there is no clear modern definition of what a minimum offer should look like, so such data does not exist. That each local authority has its own interpretation of the statutory duty has also seemingly led to large regional divergences of services and service types. A child in one postcode may receive a totally different youth offer to a child in a neighbouring postcode, with no accountability or strategy to try and ensure that this is not the case.

The APPG is therefore supportive of the commitment provided by Government in its recent Civil Society Strategy (July 2018), which states:

- The guidance which sets out the statutory duty on local authorities has not been revised since 2012. Much has happened to change the way these services are provided in the intervening years. The government will therefore review the guidance which sets out the statutory duty placed on local authorities to provide appropriate local youth services. We expect that the review will provide greater clarity of government’s expectations, including the value added by good youth work.⁶

Quantity and quality of provision

There are three forms or tiers of youth work:

- Open access (or universal) – allowing all young people to access youth services with informal check-ins as part of a group session
- One-to-one sessions or group social action with a youth worker to explore any issues and challenges the young person may have; this might include detached or street youth work

Respondents to the inquiry on the whole feel that the fundamental principles of youth work would allow good quality youth workers to be able to address issues and challenges faced by young people, but that current provisions are neither sufficient in number, quality, levels of expertise to address some of the most specialist needs of young people.

There were also numerous concerns regarding the breadth and depth of delivery models that focus on preventative and universal open-access services. There is resilience within the sector, however, and youth workers are continuing to champion young people and work with their strengths and assets to give them the best chance.

It is important to recognise that the effects on rural areas were highlighted as being disproportional to the whole:

“I have gone from managing a whole team of rural workers, who were helping to reduce the social isolation of rural young people, to now managing one zero-hour part-time youth worker.”

Youth Worker, Warwickshire County Council

Youth services and organisations should then be able to link into other regional sectors and organisations that work with young people. As a result of the funding and statutory shift of youth work away from central government there has been much regional variation, as local authorities have had to balance ever tighter budgets. This has led to a scenario whereby some are providing good quality youth work and have innovated with service delivery models, funding agreements and restructured workforces. However, too often, services are disjointed, both across and within regions, and it is the young person who suffers most. Adapting such services to local needs is therefore, we believe, essential.

The implementation and upkeep of a government-backed and regulated ‘register’ of youth workers should therefore also be explored, allowing those at a regional level to understand the nature of services available. We would furthermore support the reinstatement

of Ofsted’s role in overseeing and auditing the impact and quality of local authority and school-based youth services to support this investment.

Funding youth work

“It is critical that Local Authorities are better accountable on how spending on youth services is allocated, particularly in England where existing reporting requirements are extremely limited.”⁷

YMCA

“Charities spend their time bidding for funds that deliver specific targets in specific areas, only lasting for short periods of time.”

Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioners Office

“Even three years is just a window in a young persons’ development. We often wonder what funders think happens to, for example, the vulnerable 14-year old who you have worked with since s/he was 11 when the money runs out.”

Westminster House Youth Club

The nature of funding that does predominantly exist, being short-term in the main, has caused a shift to short-term and targeted interventions. This is one of the core reasons behind the current situation in which respondents feel that youth work is unable to properly address issues and challenges over a long enough period in an individual’s life. Open-access services operating from school-based facilities, mobile units, or dedicated youth centres have all but disappeared from some communities. Compounding this lack of early and preventative services were increasingly high ‘thresholds’, which prevented some from engaging with services due to not having a high enough ‘need’.

In some areas, voluntary organisations and others have sought to continue to provide locally accessible open-access youth work. Such provision is very dependent on local champions in provider and funding organisations, and can therefore be located with little reference to prioritising areas of high deprivation where

young people are less likely to be able to develop key capabilities without external support.

Most commonly, there was a call for greater provision of universal and open-access services over that of anything else. The exception is the National Citizen Service (NCS). While respondents recognised that the NCS is not intended to be an all-encompassing youth service, it is the most heavily funded service.

“Ninety-five per cent of all government spend on youth services goes onto the National Citizen Service. That really worries me, because actually without youth work and youth services in place in local areas, NCS does not stand a chance of making an impact.”

Partnership for Young London

“The NCS is a good programme that provides positive experiences for many who take part. We do however believe that some of this money should be devolved to councils to support year-round provision that meets the needs of young people locally. A time-limited programme of work cannot provide the trusted, longer-term relationships that are a valued element of youth work.”

Local Government Association

This report does not consider the merits of funding one programme or service over another, but supports a call for investment in a base-line of youth work provision to ensure access to sufficient, quality youth work from which an eco-system of additional opportunities can flourish.

In describing the need for a central body to oversee a youth work offer, it was stated that leaving the youth offer to a ‘market’ environment would largely affect ‘grassroots’ and other smaller youth organisations more. This was in part due to the increasing prevalence of short-term funding contracts. The NCS provides an example of centralised coordination, but with some regional autonomy:

“Each of NCS’s Regional Development Providers (RDPs) are responsible for delivering learning and development services to their staff to ensure they are able to deliver the programme ... each regional provider does this differently.”

NCS Trust

Refining this further, there was also a common strand that called for more services to be delivered from a young age to create a habit of participation and for earlier intervention. Again, this matched the main body of evidence, which argued for earlier, more lengthy provision of services. It was also noted that being ‘too old’ could be a hindrance for accessing a service too – a little-mentioned drawback of age-limited or targeted services.

Increasingly, the case to provide dedicated youth services and facilities is made locally at parish or town council and neighbourhood levels, as part of the community fabric and notably supported by the likes of housing associations with long-term commitments to the community.

“The case to provide dedicated youth buildings was led by Stroud District Youth Council and the respective local youth forum groups. The re-opening of five local youth centres subsequently followed ... with support mainly coming from parish or town councils alongside other investors.”

Stroud District Council

Youth workforce

“This issue is not simply about having youth workers to deliver youth work; the sector also requires good quality staff who understand youth work and can also effectively manage the delivery of youth work programmes.”

Youth Focus North East

“Increasingly those who have been funding this [youth work] are favouring short-term projects, that’s threatening the value, the sustainability and the quality of the youth workforce.” Professional Association for Lecturers in Youth and Community Work

“There are sufficient youth workers to deliver the activities and sessions that we want to offer young people. [However] we struggle with having enough youth workers who have had professional training to retain the high-quality youth work we wish to be known for.”

Portishead Youth Centre

While in some areas, voluntary organisations and others have continued to find funds to provide youth work, the evidence suggests that often the quality of this work is significantly reduced due to a shortage of suitably qualified and experienced youth workers and stretched workloads for current workers.

In attempting to quantify any changes to the sector, it has become clear during the progress of this report that we simply do not know how much of it there is, what forms it is taking, the make-up of the workforce, and where all this is going on; this should be addressed. Some data does exist to give us an indication as to how many youth workers there are, but there is little consistency between such sources. For example, looking across data-sets for 2011, the following number of youth workers is given (rounded to the nearest thousand):

- 50,000 from the Labour Force Survey
- 55,000 from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings
- 45,000 from the 2011 census

Comparing data across different years is problematic also as youth work experienced restructuring in training with the introduction of youth work national occupational standards and the introduction in 2010 of a degree-level profession. It is hard to determine whether a drop in total youth work numbers after this date is, therefore, due to a reduction in the number of posts or caused by the redefinition of title as requiring a degree-level qualification, or, if both, how proportional each has been. It is also unclear what proportion of the whole is youth support workers or managerial and administrative staff. It is also not clear who is currently a ‘professional youth worker’ or how youth workers are in other professional roles.

There was a clear indication that while much good practice was going on, there was little in the way of really joined-up working across regions, and that youth work was being increasingly pigeonholed into more restricted ways of working, affecting its efficacy and its unique attributes.

There are certain administrative and professional structures that should support such an eco-system, as made clear in the responses. These are for qualified workers to practice and oversee support workers, with volunteers and trainees supplementing this structure across a range of youth work organisations and services that best provide for young people – from universal, to targeted and specialist services.

Furthermore, training and development pathways are also fractured and declining in number, and the labour market for youth workers is so unfavourable that a lot of expertise and prior investment in skilled and qualified youth workers has been lost. There should be explorations around transferability of skills across professions. We were told throughout the responses that many youth workers have migrated into other occupations, especially social care positions, and it may therefore be possible for other professionals to transfer skills and qualifications across to youth work to ease their path in. Similarly, a more structured and cohesive pathway and training framework should be developed for volunteers, and the incredible amounts of work that many do to keep the system propped up.

National Occupational Standards (NOS) include the ability to support and develop a range of literacies, pedagogy and competencies and professional development. Validation of qualified youth workers is made through a national Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) and qualification programmes awarding professional qualified status for graduating practitioners. The process of validation ensures the scrutiny of programmes in line with the Requirements for Professional Validation of Higher Education programmes (NYA Education Training Standards, ETS).

“[The need for] a coherent workforce strategy for the totality of the children’s workforce as the need to recruit and retain the best staff for young people and their families, particularly the most vulnerable, is more pronounced than ever.”

Association of Directors of Children’s Services

There is a range of other professionals and volunteer roles that include youth work skills, and these are across statutory and voluntary sector services, social enterprises and community groups, business-led and corporate social responsibility programmes. Therefore, we need to invest in the diverse workforce to develop their skills:

- a) Supporting a qualifications ladder that enables volunteer or part-time session workers and that validates apprenticeships and higher education routes to become a professionally qualified youth worker
- b) Improving the quality of practice through clear and impactful quality standards and professional development, from sharing good practice and knowledge transfer across sectors, to ensure that continuous improvement is at the core of youth work practice

As a whole, the responses were clear that while the youth sector as it is could not maintain itself without volunteers’ support and activity, more experienced and qualified youth workers were needed to oversee and run the majority of provisions, and that volunteers should play a supporting rather than main role.

“In the main, provision run by qualified youth workers is of a higher standard than provision run by volunteers. That is not to say that all volunteer provision is poor and that all youth workers are fantastic; however, it is evident that professional youth workers have evidence-based work practices that support good quality provision.”

Kirklees Youth Alliance

“Whilst the energy and enthusiasm of volunteers is widely welcomed, it must be recognised that as the youth sector has transitioned from a largely statutory provision to a largely voluntary sector led service, the training, processes and oversight that was in place to ensure the safety and protection of beneficiaries has diminished.”

UK Youth

Many others voiced that training for volunteers and those non-qualified to degree level should be easier to access, in order to overcome shortfalls in knowledge, especially at the lower levels, with more local, part-time and online study options made available, especially for smaller providers.

In a similar way to schools having a clear structure of professional roles and ratios – of senior management, teachers, teaching assistants and supporting services such as specialist teachers and school counsellors, etc. – there should be standard expectations of the ratio of professional youth workers, volunteers and other professionals with youth work skills.

In so doing, a ‘protection of title’ for those who are suitably qualified to JNC standards could also be considered further, recognising the skills of the sector and raising their profile above others who provide forms of youth work. The implementation and upkeep of a ‘register’ of youth workers might also provide a simple, national solution that regional bodies could also implement.

Conclusions and recommendations

“When young people have a sense of belonging communities become stronger. We need to set a positive agenda and invest much more in quality services and youth work. This supports young people to develop independence and responsibility, where they deserve to be listened to and have their views heard and respected.”

National Youth Agency

“Many young people are now missing out on opportunities outside the school setting to engage in positive activities that support their learning and development, opportunities previous generations took for granted.”

YMCA

“We believe properly funded youth services and agencies aid young people in their personal development and their ability to function in society. We believe that youth services should have funding priority over new initiatives to ensure they are able to continue meeting the needs of young people.”

British Youth Council

1

Youth work is a distinct educational process which supports the personal and social development of young people. It needs to be recognised as such and we recommend it is better placed within the Department for Education.

Education policy has embraced related areas of character, resilience, mental and physical health, safeguarding and careers. Within education, youth work also plays an important bridging role for schools and colleges, and critically provides support and development where 85% of a young person's waking hours are spent outside formal education.

2

As we enter the next Comprehensive Spending Review and an ‘end to austerity’ we wish to see greater investment and commitment to support for youth services. We recommend that Government undertakes a review of spending on youth services, beginning by reinstating the local authority audit previously funded by Government and carried out by the NYA.

This should reflect the current form of local provision and help strengthen the case for youth work and services, which are currently non-statutory, when public spending within Children's and Young People's Services is otherwise distributed towards statutory areas that focus on safeguarding risk and on targeted interventions. The loss of ‘open access’ or universal youth services has been pronounced, which leads to significant costs – social and economic – in later years.

3

To secure investment there needs to be a greater understanding of the role of youth work and impact of youth services. We call on the statutory and voluntary sector to form a compact with young people for a clear policy statement and guidance which recognises the benefits of youth work.

We believe that such a shared understanding will provide much-needed clarity for policy makers, funders, practitioners and young people. This builds on the Government's Civil Society strategy ‘Building a Future Society that Works for All’, which “recognises the transformational impact that youth services and trained youth workers can have, especially for young people facing multiple barriers or disadvantage”. In so doing, we recognise the ‘theory of change’ from youth work defined by the NYA and drawing on evidence from other contributions to this inquiry.

4 We welcome the Government's commitment to review the statutory duty and we call on the youth sector and other bodies to fully engage in the consultation on the statutory duty. We recommend clear guidance on what is sufficient provision under the duty.

The Government has committed to review the statutory duty. To be effective, this must be sector-wide and across government. This is an opportunity to recognise youth work and we look to strengthened guidance. Local authorities have statutory responsibilities to make sure, as far as possible, that there is sufficient provision of youth work as “educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people”. However, the commitment to spending has not followed the duty when the regulations and guidance are relatively light-touch.

5 Just as a local authority no longer necessarily directly runs schools in its area, it nonetheless has to plan for sufficient school places. We recommend there is a lead role for the local authority to ensure access to sufficient, quality youth work provision in an area.

This still begs the question: what is a sufficient level of youth work and services? If we look at *what* is being delivered rather than the process of *how* it is delivered, i.e. the quality and level of youth work rather than the model of delivery, there needs to be:

- A high-level strategy supported by Government – ideally with ministerial responsibility, possibly at Cabinet level – on what we want and expect for young people; supported in the present and ambitious for their future

- A base-line of youth work provision that includes core funding for certain administrative and professional structures, for occupational standards that support youth services and an ‘eco-system’ of youth work provision to flourish in a community. This should be overseen by the equivalent of a Deputy Director for Children’s Services but responsible for young people
- In a similar way to schools having a clear structure of professional roles and ratios – of senior management, teachers, teaching assistants and supporting services such as specialist teachers and school counsellors, etc. – there should be standard expectations of the ratio of professional youth workers, volunteers and other professionals with youth work skills.

6 Over the last decade, open-access or universal youth services have been especially hard hit, with the notable exception of the National Citizen Service, which provides a great experience for 16- and 17-year-olds but it is a time-limited programme and just one part of a broad youth offer to support year-round provision that meets the needs of young people locally. We call for clear guidance and investment in a base-line for local youth services which also allows an ‘eco-system’ of youth work provision to flourish in a community.

In turn, this requires a strengthened evidence base on the outcomes from and value of youth work if we are to secure funding for youth services and not simply create a burden on local authorities. However, the business case needs to be made from investment over a sustained, longer period to measure ‘invisible’ outcomes – early help that prevents harm and changes a young person’s life course. Trends can be measured over time – for example, reductions in or avoidance of abuse, violence

or social care costs – and for increases in mental well-being, youth social action and democratic engagement. In the present, it is the access to and quality of the experience that will provide evidence of the value of youth work. To be effective, this requires a commitment sector-wide and across government to secure:

- Secure environments with opportunities for sport, recreation, social action and volunteering – to enjoy being young, take risks, forge relationships
- The inclusion of young people in decision-making and democratic engagement – to be listened to and have their views heard and respected

7

A coherent workforce strategy needs to be developed for the totality of the children's workforce and renewed national standards for youth work by 2020. We recommend all those supporting youth work adhere to national occupational standards and a curriculum for youth work training.

Training and development pathways are also fractured and declining in number, and the labour market for youth workers is so unfavourable that a lot of expertise and prior investment in skilled and qualified youth workers has been lost. The standards that the national JNC set are clearly supported throughout the sector and deemed fit for purpose for professional youth workers. However, by investing in and creating demand for more youth work, we recognise the need to open up pathways for apprenticeships and joined up training that explores youth work skills across professions.

Furthermore, we were told throughout the responses that many youth workers have migrated into other occupations, especially social care positions, as part of a wider

development of services, multi-agency-working and partnerships with community groups. It may therefore be possible for other professionals to access youth work qualifications; for example, where historically youth work could be found within initial teacher training as an access point for further advanced professional training and inter-play between the professions. Therefore, as part of the development of a youth workforce, we recommend further consideration of calls for the 'protected title' and national register for youth workers, but also to recognise that their role is supported by others in the delivery of youth work. All those supporting youth work should adhere to national occupational standards and a curriculum for youth work training and skills for volunteers, apprentices, youth workers and professionals requiring youth work skills.

8

With youth work recognised as 'education' in its open-access provision and in supporting vulnerable young people in its targeted provision, we recommend the reinstatement of the role of Ofsted as a driver for the quality of youth work and services.

This would be most effective when coupled with a duty on a local authority to secure a sufficient youth work offer, above. It could reflect the new proposals for Ofsted inspection of schools, announced in October 2018. "For a long time, our inspections have looked hardest at outcomes... The cumulative effect has been to deliver perfect data above all else" – Ofsted Chief Inspector.

- The new planned school judgement headings are: personal development; behaviour and attitudes; schools' leadership and management
- For youth work that might look to personal and social development in the quality of the experience in the present and building on

measures for resilience of the individual and community that contribute to longer outcomes

The final word must, as always, go to both those working in the sector and young people. Without their numerous and generous contributions to informing this report we would have ended up with a small piece of desk research that would not be responsive to their voice. We hope that the report does some justice in highlighting the contributions and transformative work that is being undertaken.

A final report and evidence submitted to the inquiry will be published and placed in the House of Commons Library by December 2018.

References

¹ Youth Drinking in Decline (ScHARR, University of Sheffield, 2018)

² Public Spending on Children in England 2000 to 2020 (Institute for Fiscal Studies, June 2018: Children's Commissioner for England)

³ Intergenerational Commission, A New Generational Contract (Resolution Foundation, 2018)

⁴ House of Commons Education Committee, Services for Young People: Third Report of Sessions 2010–12 Vol. 1 (2011)

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ HM Government, Civil Society Strategy: Building a Future that Works for Everyone (2018)

⁷ YMCA, Youth and Consequences: a report examining local authority expenditure on youth services in England & Wales (2018)