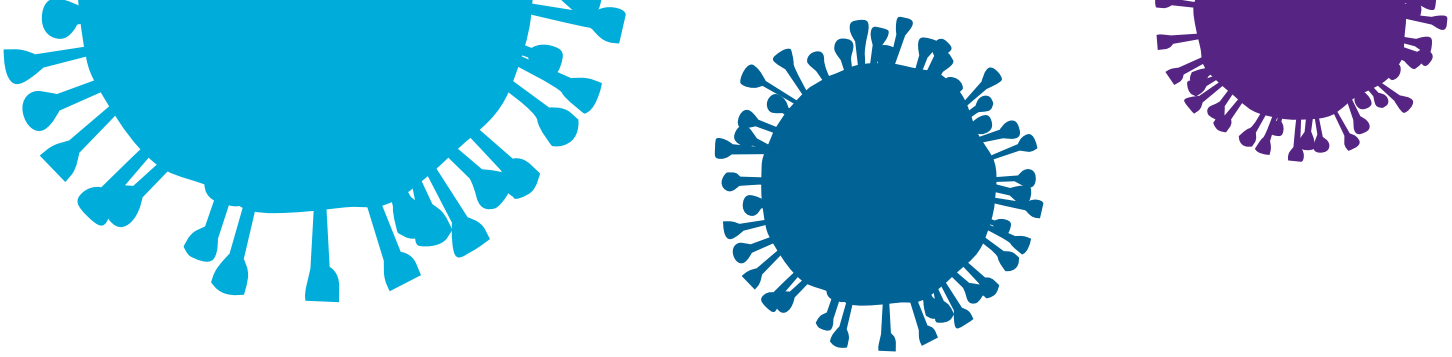


Time out

Re-imagining Schools:

A youth work response to COVID 19

June 2020

NYA
National Youth Agency

This paper builds on the insights from the 'Out of Sight?' research report, on the known and emerging needs of young people through COVID-19, published by the National Youth Agency (NYA) in April 2020. We explore the role of youth services and youth work in schools and colleges, and the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable young people, in particular. The report draws on valuable insights from our partners, based on their work with young people.

We wish to acknowledge the work and detailed analysis of other reports, produced in 2019–2020, notably those of the Centre for Education and Youth (CfEY) and the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England. Our thanks, in particular, to the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and for the support of a number of officials at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Education (DfE). We are also appreciative of the continued support of the Local Government Association (LGA). Finally, we are grateful for the insights and time contributed to this report by OnSide Youth Zones, Lancashire County Council, Ambitious about Autism and the NYA team of specialist youth workers.

Table of Contents

Summary and recommendations 6

Introduction 8

A return to school and college 9

A role for youth work 10

Vulnerable young people 12

A profile of youth work and schools 14

Re-imagining schools 17

Ensuring the quality of provision 19

Conclusion 21

Appendices 22

What the papers say 22

Youth work theory of change 23

A youth work curriculum 24

Youth work practice in schools and colleges 26

Foreword

The youth sector represents a rich and varied range of youth and community organisations, professional youth workers and volunteers. At its core, youth work is a distinctive form of education. It has its own curriculum, pedagogy and professional practice supporting a broader base of trusted adult volunteers. Yet too many youth workers have been redeployed or furloughed and volunteers self isolating during lockdown. Youth centres and a host of community-based activities have closed, with fears some may not re-open. However the role of youth work is largely absent from the national debate in support of our young people missing out on school.

A simple first step is to recognise youth services as an essential service and youth workers categorised as key workers. Then ready, when safe to do so, to open up youth centres to provide additional capacity as a safe space for young people to come together with friends, explore their identity and learn new skills. In turn youth services are a vital lifeline to many vulnerable or disadvantaged young people in particular, for early help and interventions that support their engagement at school, college or alternative provision.

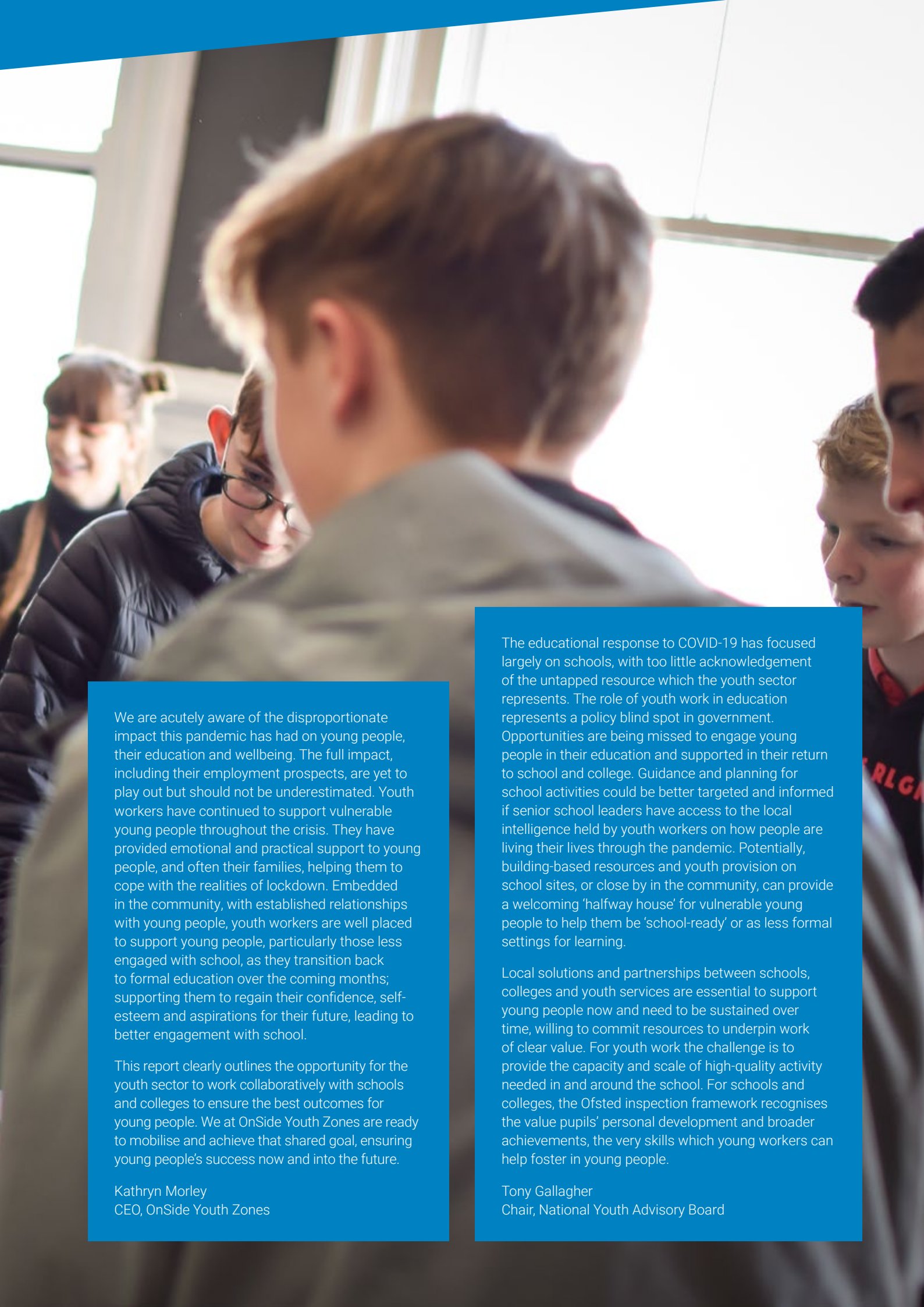
To meet the scale of need requires significant investment in training and stronger local partnerships. We need to be bold in our approach and mobilising youth work for summer activities and young people to be ready to return to school and college from September. We need to re-connect schools with youth work where this provides pastoral support, health and wellbeing. We need to re-imagine schools in partnership with youth services and in alternative provision for education that is engaging and accessible, and in opening up professional learning and career pathways in teaching and youth work.

Leigh Middleton
CEO, National Youth Agency

Most young people have been out of school for three months already, with another three months before they get back into the classroom. But it's not just 'learning' they have been missing out on. Young people's social, emotional and cognitive development all depends on socialisation – with their peers and a wider circle of adults – and without it, both their mental health and their ability to re-engage in the classroom in September will suffer.

As we emerge from lockdown, we need to look at how young people can benefit, and quickly. So let's open up and make the most of school buildings and the thousands of sports halls and specialist facilities that will otherwise be shut - starting this summer and running throughout the year. Let's support the youth workers and sports coaches to work with young people in and around schools, and let's make sure that those young people who are facing particular disadvantages and struggles have the help they need to recover and get ahead.

Anne Longfield
Children's Commissioner for England



We are acutely aware of the disproportionate impact this pandemic has had on young people, their education and wellbeing. The full impact, including their employment prospects, are yet to play out but should not be underestimated. Youth workers have continued to support vulnerable young people throughout the crisis. They have provided emotional and practical support to young people, and often their families, helping them to cope with the realities of lockdown. Embedded in the community, with established relationships with young people, youth workers are well placed to support young people, particularly those less engaged with school, as they transition back to formal education over the coming months; supporting them to regain their confidence, self-esteem and aspirations for their future, leading to better engagement with school.

This report clearly outlines the opportunity for the youth sector to work collaboratively with schools and colleges to ensure the best outcomes for young people. We at OnSide Youth Zones are ready to mobilise and achieve that shared goal, ensuring young people's success now and into the future.

Kathryn Morley
CEO, OnSide Youth Zones

The educational response to COVID-19 has focused largely on schools, with too little acknowledgement of the untapped resource which the youth sector represents. The role of youth work in education represents a policy blind spot in government. Opportunities are being missed to engage young people in their education and supported in their return to school and college. Guidance and planning for school activities could be better targeted and informed if senior school leaders have access to the local intelligence held by youth workers on how people are living their lives through the pandemic. Potentially, building-based resources and youth provision on school sites, or close by in the community, can provide a welcoming 'halfway house' for vulnerable young people to help them be 'school-ready' or as less formal settings for learning.

Local solutions and partnerships between schools, colleges and youth services are essential to support young people now and need to be sustained over time, willing to commit resources to underpin work of clear value. For youth work the challenge is to provide the capacity and scale of high-quality activity needed in and around the school. For schools and colleges, the Ofsted inspection framework recognises the value pupils' personal development and broader achievements, the very skills which young workers can help foster in young people.

Tony Gallagher
Chair, National Youth Advisory Board

Summary

1. The closure of schools to most children and the low number of vulnerable young people attending school or college since lockdown in March 2020 raises real fears for their education and wellbeing. For vulnerable young people 'off the radar', with little or no contact with formal and statutory services, there are concerns too for their safety. Although the country continues to emerge from the lockdown, it is unlikely that schools and colleges will fully re-open before September 2020 (at the earliest). The logistical constraints of social distancing and other measures may lead to a phased return to a 'normal' school day.

2. The future remains uncertain and significant challenges lie ahead. We must recover lost ground in teaching and learning at schools. Summer schools may be organised to assist young people in catching up their school lessons. Schools will also receive £1 billion in funding for the new school year, to assist in 'catch-up' efforts. Yet the disruption to the school-year, coming to an abrupt halt for so many, has created greater demands in support of young people and their education.

3. Time out from school can have a devastating effect, with the loss of structure to their day, friendship groups, limited contact with teachers and their thirst for learning that online resources and home-schooling cannot replace. This will only increase the gap in attainment, damaging the life-chances for vulnerable or disadvantaged young people. This is experienced most acutely by young people who are at key transitions in their school life. Their anxieties are heightened as they move from primary school to secondary school; enter critical years of education for their school exams; make life-changing decisions about their sixth form, college or university education; or face an uncertain future in the job market.

4. However not all young people will be ready to return to school or college. Some will need additional support to socialise after self-isolation and to cope with increased anxieties, trauma or bereavement. Others may have enjoyed their extended break away from school and struggle to conform or engage in the classroom, or see their needs as being better met through the digital and non-formal learning they have had since Easter. Over 700,000 were 'missing from education' before lockdown. Others will lay down the challenge, why bother?

5. The debate about the re-opening of schools and colleges must move beyond concerns about the curriculum and the logistical arrangements of social distancing and desk space. A more imaginative response is required, particularly in addressing the needs of young people, how to re-engage them in their education, and what their school day might look like.

6. Just as the pandemic has thrown into sharp relief the need for fully aligned health and social care services for older people, it has highlighted the need to bring formal education (schools and colleges) and non-formal education (youth work and youth services) together. Eighty-five percent of a young person's waking hours are spent outside of school during a normal year. The extended period away from school, due to COVID-19, amplifies this need to align formal and non-formal education.

7. Youth work is a form of education that engages young people and helps to ensure that no young person is 'left behind', developing the skills, resilience and social networks needed in a rapidly changing world. As we adjust to a 'new normal', post-pandemic, youth work can further help develop young people's voices, influence and be active in their communities.

8. The recommendations in this report are made to support young people in their education to:

- Catch-up through the summer months in response to lockdown and self isolation
- Prepare now and be sure-footed in the support needed when schools re-open fully
- Engage with and listen to young people, agile in our response to their needs, interests and concerns in a rapidly changing and uncertain world – to be confident in their futures

Recommendations

Catch-up

a) A clear lockdown exit and recovery strategy for young people. Youth services must be enabled, empowered and up-skilled to do more, not less. NYA calls for the following:

- Government guidance to mobilise youth workers as part of a clear plan to re-open schools and colleges, and support vulnerable young people, in particular.
- Youth services must be classified as an essential service and youth workers as key workers.
- Significant investment is needed for training and up-skilling in response to COVID-19, including safeguarding, trauma, bereavement and mental health support for young people.

b) An urgent package of support to deploy youth workers for summer schools, detached/ outreach youth work and activities in schools. In particular to support young people to catch-up and be school-ready for September, and for alternative provision (AP). NYA is calling for consideration of:

- Re-opening youth centres for additional capacity in line with social distancing and safety measures, and the use of school buildings for youth sector activities.
- Extending the Pupil Premium to include 17-18 year olds to help catch up in attainment, and providing free school meals extended through the summer to youth centres.

Sure-footed

c) A new Youth Premium to help put vulnerable young people and disadvantaged families on a surer footing; for youth work approaches that help to close the attainment gap.

- To act as an equivalent to the Pupil Premium for youth work opportunities designed to help vulnerable young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to get a better start in life.
- This would complement targeted services and help draw down funding from existing resources in wrap around support for an early help model of youth work in schools and colleges.

d) A national taskforce on the roles required and relationship between schools and youth services; comparable to previous reviews of social work and early years.

- Led by DCMS and Department for Education including NYA and Ofsted as regulatory bodies, Directors of Children's Services and Children's Commissioner for England.
- To include consideration of how distinct funding streams can be used to deliver an effective youth offer in schools, for early help and the development of local youth partnerships.
- For understanding and collaboration between the teaching and youth work professions from initial training, up-skilling and opening up career pathways, to include youth work bursaries, schools' apprenticeship levy and continued professional development.

Confident futures

e) A commitment as a nation for young people to be safe and secure, and treated fairly. At a time of crisis and great uncertainty, we need to support young people now and to be confident in their future.

- In response to COVID-19 and shaping the future we must seek out and hear young people's concerns, insights and challenges, with their voices heard and included in decision making.
- A Youth Covenant published by NYA calls for a commitment to young people from government, public services and community organisations; it provides a common language and accountability to support the collective impact of schools, colleges and youth services.

f) A Youth Service Guarantee to secure universal access to youth work; as a baseline on which a local youth offer from schools and community-based provision can flourish.

- NYA is calling for at least two qualified youth workers and a team of youth support workers and trained volunteers for each secondary school catchment area.
- A national census of current provision, statutory and voluntary, is required to establish its scale and to invest in youth work training for professionals and to up-skill volunteers.
- Ofsted should include youth work approaches in its training and development of inspection staff, to seek examples, ask about and respond to evidence of youth work practice in schools and colleges.

Introduction

Reduced face-to-face contact among teenagers and their friends during the pandemic could have damaging long-term consequences[1]. At a sensitive time in life, their brain development, behaviour and mental health could suffer.

Youth is the adolescent developmental phase between childhood and adulthood that brings significant physical and emotional changes. The brain undergoes huge physical changes during adolescence which impact on behaviour, self-image, social interactions and decision making. This period in a person's life is also significant time in terms of the important life decisions they are faced with, their increasingly complex social interactions, and how they deal with the online world. Specific skills are required to support young people during this important time – in making significant life choices, safely exploring risky impulses, forming new relationships and tackling new challenges.

Formal learning (schools and colleges) is organised and structured and intentional in its academic outcomes. Non-formal learning (youth work) uses practice-based methods to produce different but complementary outcomes, taking account of learning that takes place outside school from media, technology, environment and enterprise. As such youth work predominantly works with young people of secondary school age between 11 and 19 years, but is designed to support young people through adolescence, typically from 8 to 25 years of age.

Youth work grew from people developing schooling initiatives in the nineteenth century, often making use of classrooms and school premises in subsequent decades. The 1944 Education Act defined youth work provision as taking place in young people's leisure hours. This concept of educational leisure time has driven much of the policy agenda since, including the Education Act 1996 and subsequent legislation.

Therefore, youth services came to be seen as a discrete service, separate from, but sometimes complementary to, schools and colleges. Yet the sheer volume and scale of information technology and media challenges that divide, recognising too that 85% of a young person's waking hours throughout the year is spent outside of school. In the instability and uncertainty of the new normal, post-pandemic landscape and rapid changes in technology and the environment, the building blocks of personal identity may be more unstable for young people, too.

As we look forward youth work can play a significant part in young people engaging young people through COVID-19 and its aftermath, enabled to catch up on their education and return to school and college. However it is not sufficient to simply bolt on activities to the school day. There is a national debate on the relationship between health and social care (and how they can come together seamlessly). It is necessary for a similar debate to reimagine schools around the relationship between schools, colleges and youth services.

1 The Lancet: 'The effects of social deprivation on adolescent development and mental health', 2020

A return to school and college

During lockdown, 4 in 10 pupils in England have not been in regular contact with their teachers[2], amid fears that millions of children are falling behind or not doing their school work at all. Pupils in the most disadvantaged schools are least likely to be engaged in remote learning. As schools prepare for re-opening and a phased return of young people, the main challenge will be socialising young people in schools and colleges, engaging them in their education again and helping them to catch up on missed work. There will need to be continued support and provision for young people not yet returning to schools, or a partial return. A rich offer of subject-based learning and a youth work approach is required.

Many young people will have missed the social integration of school through the pandemic and some may be reluctant to return to the classroom. Youth work practice can help in areas of confidence and self-esteem and ways of learning to support engagement in schools, in particular for vulnerable young people. Youth work partnerships and projects can also support critical transitions for years 6 into 7, 11 into 12 and for those leaving school and college this year.

This includes the calls for summer schools for young people to re-engage and 'catch up' on their learning in 2020-21[3]. The disruption of the summer months (loss of family holidays, festivals and residential trips, and limited outdoor activities through social distancing) add to the destabilisation experienced by young people during the lockdown. Yet there are significant opportunities for, and many examples of, partnerships between schools and youth services, both for early help and to deliver extracurricular activities. This will help young people back into schools and learning in the autumn term.

Funding may be a stumbling block, with youth services depleted and voluntary sector provision fragmented in some areas. The funding regime for youth work tends towards inflexible or short-term funding. Schools may or may not use their Pupil Premium budgets for such purposes.

A COVID-19 response

Government guidance makes clear arrangements for schools to stay open for vulnerable young people and children of key workers during lockdown, and for a phased return of, or contact with, children and young people during the summer term, 2020. Significant logistical challenges remain in terms of summer activities and the full re-opening of schools and colleges from September 2020.

However, youth centres remain closed under emergency measures in response to COVID-19 and, for now at least, many areas have also ended outreach or street-based youth work. There are dire warnings that (nationally) one in five youth clubs will not re-open, with more remaining closed in some regions[4], and a threat hanging over non-statutory youth services should austerity measures return after the pandemic.

Current guidelines cause an unnecessary divide, with schools and colleges viewed as education, and youth work provision as leisure. Yet youth work has a strong educative value and in providing early help for vulnerable or disadvantaged young people.

There should be a twin-track approach and co-ordinated plan to re-open schools and colleges alongside youth centres and services, in line with social distancing and safety measures. This will support additional capacity during the school day and the use of school sites for youth-sector activities.

2 NFER: 'Schools responses to COVID-19: pupil engagement in remote learning', 2020
3 Department for Education, June 2020: £1bn fund to help England's children catch up on what they have missed while schools have been closed; the most disadvantaged pupils will have access to tutors through a £350m programme over the next academic year; primary and secondary schools will be given £650m to spend on one-to-one or group tuition for any pupils they think need it.
4 UK Youth, 'The impact of COVID-19 on young people & the youth sector': April 2020 ; Young Manchester survey: 49% of youth and play sector organisations at the risk of closure, April 2020

A role for youth work

Schools are duty bound to give consideration to a wide range of factors which contribute to their students' education and wellbeing. The pandemic has thrown into sharp relief that too narrow a focus on academic achievement and intensive testing in schools has too often squeezed out skills on how to empathise, think creatively and to collaborate. These skills are needed now, more than ever. There is a body of evidence that skills like motivation, self-esteem and concentration significantly impact the educational achievements of young people.[5]

The training, professional development and qualifications for youth work are supported by a curriculum and reflective practice when working with young people and community groups. Youth work includes:

Knowledge of how young people develop during adolescence, and appropriate support from rusted relationships and the voluntary engagement of young people;

Understanding how to establish boundaries, manage challenging behaviour and de-escalate conflict; and

The importance of contextualised safeguarding and providing a safe environment for young people.

The pandemic has brought to the fore priorities for education associated with youth work on character education, cultural identity, enterprise and the need to re-engage young people with formal education and the mainstream curriculum. There is an increased focus on employability and skills for future jobs, as we approach the challenges of an economic recession post-lockdown and in the face of societal, technological and environmental challenges.

Yet the COVID-19 guidance for schools and other settings largely focuses on the logistical considerations of securing a safe, phased return to school, initially targeted at certain year groups. Additional guidance is needed in partnership with youth services to support schools, in particular, for vulnerable young people who may struggle to return to school, even on a flexible basis, and for those who may struggle to comply with social distancing requirements when in school or at college.

Youth work has a clear role to play to support the return to schools and colleges, included within the £1 billion catch-up fund, announced by the government to engage young people in their education and to help close the attainment gap[6]:

1. As learning mentors[7] in one to one or small group tuition or interventions to support young people with low attainment or disengagement at school (see Appendix 4);

2. For summer activities and a carousel of activities in schools and youth centres, which can also focus on a wide range of outcomes, such as confidence and wellbeing[8];

3. As part of extended school time to provide pastoral support to particular groups of pupils after school; including participation activities and behaviour interventions[9].

In addition targeted youth services can provide additional wrap around support for early help and interventions; with the deployment of qualified youth workers in Alternative Provision (AP) and the secure estate as an essential part of a young person's education and learning; and to ensure to ensure all young people aged 16 and over have the choice of an education place, apprenticeship, or job opportunity.

A COVID-19 response

Government guidance needs to classify youth services as an essential service and mobilise youth workers as part of a clear plan to re-open schools and colleges, and to support vulnerable young people, in particular. Such a plan would include summer school activities[10] and in-school support for young people, to ensure they are school-ready and re-engaged in their education.

For vulnerable or disadvantaged young people, further consideration should be given to extending the 'catch-up funding' and Pupil Premium to 17- and 18-year-olds, and providing free school meals through the summer (in both schools and youth centres).

Rather than a one-off, quick fix a national taskforce should be established on the roles required and relationship of youth services and schools, which recognises youth work as a form of education not simply leisure-time activities.

5 NYA and Fabian Society: 'The contribution of non-formal learning to young people's life chances', 2008
6 Department for Education, 19th June 2020
7 Education Endowment Foundation (EEF): COVID-19 support guide for schools, June 2020
Tuition: delivered by tutors, teaching assistants or trained volunteers; the most disadvantaged pupils will have access to tutors over the next academic year; Interventions might focus on other aspects of learning, such as behaviour or pupils' social and emotional needs;
Summer programmes include a wide range of activities such as sports, music and drama.
8 Ibid
9 EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit
10 Centre for Education and Youth: Can summer schools help disadvantaged pupils bounce back from lockdown?, May 2020

10
8
9
7
5
6
4
2
3
1
START

Vulnerable young people

The pandemic has amplified vulnerabilities and exposed more young people. Over one million young people come from a 'vulnerable family background'; 360,000 receive formal support; 411,000 receive unclear support but will be known to teachers and youth workers; and nearly 450,000 are unknown to formal or statutory services but are likely to be known by youth workers[11].

A multi-agency approach can support young people through sometimes chaotic lives or fractured education. A youth work approach is complementary to supporting and sustaining relationships, strengthening support networks and acting as 'a trusted adult' to bridge specialist services. Where schools are closed or limited to specific years and smaller groups, and young people are unable to access school, there is both a need and potential to engage with outreach youth workers, to reduce the risk of social isolation and alienation.

The table below shows the scale and prevalence of vulnerabilities in education:

Missing from education

With schools, colleges and youth centres closed, many young people are now in potentially unsafe environments. This adds to the 700,000 young people[12] (aged 8–19) who are persistently absent from school or not in education, employment or training, and who will need sustained support after the lockdown.

School instability

Nearly 200,000 children (aged 0–17) have at least one term fixed-period exclusion during the school year[13]. School exclusions and low attendance at alternative provision (AP) increases the risk of more young people going missing from education and of disrupted schooling. The impact of mid-year transfers and frequent changes, moving between schools and areas, can be traumatic for a young person (due to lost social ties and academic setback).

Family instability

Family conflict, separation and divorce can lead to young people withdrawing from school, misbehaving at school or finding it difficult to concentrate. Over one million children (aged 0–17) live in two-parent households, reporting distressed relationship[14].

Nearly 100,000 people have children in need of support, with the primary need relating to acute distress or having a dysfunctional family[15]. Meanwhile, young people also go missing from home often in unsafe environments; some go missing for short periods but are not reported.

Housing instability

Cramped living conditions can negatively affect children's education and cause depression, stress and anxiety, with no space to do homework or safe space for confidential conversations or disclosures. There are 83,000 young people living in temporary accommodation, while a further 380,000 are homeless or at risk of homelessness; some frequently sofa-surf, moving between friends and extended family.

Child protection

Bereavement, abuse, neglect and mental ill health are adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and risk factors for young people. Self-harm has become further normalised as a way to cope with emotional distress, and as an indicator of an increase in future suicides. Over a million young people have self-reported mental health issues[16]. Further, over one million young people face risks from any of the so-called 'toxic trio', living in households with addiction, poor mental health and domestic abuse[17]. Yet during COVID-19, child protection referrals have plummeted by 50% in some areas.

11 NYA, 'Out of Sight? Vulnerable young people, COVID-19 response', April 2020
12 NYA 'Out of Sight?, 2020: 133,000 NEETs (16-17) 573,624 persistently absent (8-19, age adjusted data) DfE Absence and NEETs statistics (2019)
13 Children's Commissioner for England: Department for Education statistics, 2018
14 Children's Commissioner for England: 1,263,290 children, Alma Economics - using estimates from DWP's "Improving Lives: Helping Workless Families" based on data from Understanding Society, 2017
15 Children's Commissioner for England, 'Characteristics of Children in Need', 2018: 98,340 (0-17) in 2017

There is also a range of other factors to consider.

Looked-after children

There are over 80,000 children in care or in semi-independent accommodation (aged 0–17 years)[18], with recent rises in young people aged 13 or over, and a decrease in children aged 5 or under[19]. More than half of the children in care have moved homes at least once in three years, while one in ten have moved homes four or more times.[20] Compared with children in the general population, looked-after children tend to have poorer outcomes in a number of areas, including educational attainment, although looked-after children who were continuously in care in England had better educational attainment than children in need[21].

SEND

There are over 800,000 young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).[22] Current thinking is that we will need at least a two-year programme to support the disadvantaged and SEND children to even begin to catch up with their peers. Schools and colleges are better placed to provide support in mainstream education or special school than community-based youth work, and there can be problems around meeting the additional needs of young people with SEND from inexperienced youth workers or unskilled volunteers. Appropriate adjustments need to be made in all settings where young people are supported. One-to-one youth work support can complement formal education and the potential benefits in school for young people, including those without statements; however, more professional SEND training is needed, overall, for the youth workforce.

Young carers

A young carer is a person under 18 who looks after someone who is ill disabled or who misuses drugs or alcohol. 39% of young carers say that nobody in their school is aware of their caring responsibilities.[23] There are over 90,000[24] young carers, aged 8–19 years, approximately one-third of which are supported by local authorities.[25]

Disadvantage and deprivation

An estimated 2.8 million children are living in severe poverty because their family income is below 50% of the median household, and 3.7 million children are living in absolute poverty, meaning that their families cannot afford basic needs like food and clothing.[26] Over one million young people[27] come from a 'vulnerable family background', of which nearly 450,000[28] are unknown to formal or statutory services but are likely to be known by youth workers. The digital divide adds to the problem – approximately one million young people and their families do not have adequate access to a device or connectivity at home.

16 1,062,475 8–19 year olds; age adjusted data, source – prevalence data NHS England MH survey (2017)
17 1.16m young people (8-17) are in a household affected by any of the 'toxic trio' issues - 'Estimating the prevalence of the toxic trio' Vulnerability Report Children's Commissioner (2018).
18 Children's Commissioner for England: Department for Education statistics, 2020
19 Children's Commissioner for England: 'Stability Index', 2019
20 Ibid
21 NSPCC Learning, 2020: children and families at risk; looked after children
22 NYA 'Out of Sight?, 2020: DfE statistics 2018/19, age-range data adjusted to 826,829 (aged 8-19 years)
23 Children's Society: Carers' Week, 2020; 27% children 11-15 miss school, 39% of young carers said schools is not aware of their caring role
24 NYA 'Out of Sight?' 2020: 91903 (8-19) age-range data adjusted, Family Resources Survey 2017/18
25 30,184 Children's Commissioner for England, Young Carers Report, 2016
26 Department for Work and Pensions: Households below average income (HBAI) [Data], 2019.
27 Children's Commissioner for England: 1.24 million children (8–17) in a 'vulnerable family background', 2019
28 Ibid

A profile of youth work and schools

Youth work takes place in schools and colleges in a variety of ways. Typical examples include: drop-in programmes, participation work and one-to-one support for attendance and behaviour; personal, social and health education (PHSE); relationships and sex education (RSE); information, advice and guidance (IAG); the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE), cadets and similar schemes.

In many cases there is widespread misunderstanding of the role of youth work and what it can offer. There are wider themes complementary to formal education:

- Life skills (family and relationships, physical and mental health, digital and social media);
- Economic (engaged in education and employment, financial literacy, social mobility); and
- Social integration (community and decision making, social action, anti-social behaviour).

The majority of current youth work provision in and around schools and colleges is targeted at the most vulnerable young people. However, there is a broad range of activities and opportunities for schools and youth work:

1. In school

Youth work provision in schools is most effective when it is considered part of the core ethos of the school. The nature of the school curriculum and of timetabling can create obstacles for youth work practice and the delivery of youth services during the school day. However, a youth work approach can be embedded into certain lessons, and school breaks and safe spaces in schools can be used for youth work purposes.

Curriculum enhancement: citizenship, PHSE, character education, arts and media, outdoor education and tutorial groups

2. After school

There are no absolute conclusions about the use of school premises to deliver youth work. Community-based youth services are valued by young people who prefer to be away from school, and the negative associations that school may have for some. However while venue is a consideration it is not necessarily a barrier.

Extra curricula support: enterprise, mentoring, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, NCS and social action

3. Outreach from school

Youth work can provide pastoral support where the youth worker is a trusted adult, not seen as an authority figure (like a teacher or parent), in particular for risky behaviours, persistent absence and exclusions, identifying early help to wrap around the school provision, and linked to families and multi agencies. Youth work can also be part of an alternative curriculum and extended community links for work experience, placements and non-formal learning opportunities.

Community development: family support, broad behavioural support, alternative curriculum, one-to-one support, work experience and vocational learning/ apprenticeships

4. Specialist support

Youth workers also play an essential bridging role between families and services, building inclusive networks and community groups.

Examples include: Special Educational Needs (SEND), youth offending, gangs work, resilience strategies, young carers, looked-after children, faith and LGBTQ+

Youth voice

An important role of youth work is supporting and enabling young people's voices, in particular for vulnerable young people who need more opportunities to identify what is important to them and to influence their own care and education. This support can be provided in schools, colleges, youth groups and forums, where youth work can be used to connect the voices and lived experiences of young people to relevant professionals and institutions.

School councils and participation, citizenship, democratic engagement, youth social action and campaigns

Pen portraits

Early Help: Lancashire County Council

As an integrated part of 'shaping the future of early help' Lancashire County Council is closely aligning support from the local authority's early help service as a team around the school. This will allow youth workers to deliver targeted, evidence based programmes of support to a geographical school cluster where the need for personal and social development is identified.

There is also a range of voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) services delivering youth work, tailored to emotional health and wellbeing, mental health support, aspirations and financial inclusion, for example. There is further potential for Outdoor Education teams to support the youth service by offering groups activities at their centres, such as DofE, and inclusive facilities for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Alternative Provision: OnSide Youth Zones

Six Youth Zones host Alternative Provision, and Progress Schools are currently based in Youth Zones at Wigan, The Hive in Wirral and Inspire in Chorley. The co-location brings great benefits to the school and the pupils who benefit from the range of learning spaces the facilities offer, and from the skills of the Youth Zone team, to broaden their curriculum offer. The Youth Zone is able to support the pupils with a wrap-around service though their universal and targeted offer supporting individual personal development and ensuring they are ready to learn. In a recent inspection, Ofsted noted the partnership as outstanding and beneficial to the young people.

In addition to an AP curriculum offer and enrichment programmes for the development of specific skills (for example, physical education, financial literacy, employability) Youth Zones provide reintegration support for pupils on the verge of exclusions to help improve attitudes to learning, behaviour and attendance. This includes a strong focus on personal development and aspiration building such as the programme 'Me, myself and I' delivered primarily to Key Stage 3 pupils and 'Changing Futures' for Key Stage 4 pupils to develop the skills and experience needed to improve their resilience, confidence and self-esteem, prepare for employment and reduce the risk of social exclusion.

Secure Estate: Kinetic Youth

Kinetic provide a bespoke Youth Service including positive constructive activities, evening and weekend provision, skill development and experiential learning, 121 support, accreditation and awards, youth council development, generic and specific social clubs/groups, focused workshops and community projects to support release on temporary license and resettlement back into the community. The voluntary relationship with youth workers supports young people to learn and grow through their engagement. With this learning, growth and support from a youth worker, they can better understand their world, engage more positively, and access vital support services required to enhance their resettlement.

Youth workers have been instrumental and essential in supporting education consistent in our delivery with established relationships with young people during COVID-19. Through strong collaborative working with youth workers team, the education team changed their practice to provide more tailored work packs and their engagement has increased as a result. These young people struggle to engage with education when they're in a classroom or even one to one, so it's very difficult for many of them to try and engage with work on their own in their cells with no direct support. Therefore, the small things really matter during this time, not providing what young people 'should be learning', but to listen to young people and what their needs are and respond to those.

SEND: Ambitious about Autism

Pupils and learners are involved in decisions about their learning, support and future: "For many pupils, communication can be difficult, so we invest skills and resources in enabling their participation in a variety of ways." Extra-curricular activities and youth groups are an extremely important part of young people's lives. They allow young people to make new friends, be part of a community, develop skills and have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing. However, there are significant challenges in accessing other youth provision, due to inaccessibility and misunderstanding of autism. The Include Autism toolkit is based on how the Ambitious about Autism Youth Council creates an inclusive, physical, communicative and respectful environment for autistic young people.

Partnerships: Falinge Park High School, Rochdale

Through 18 months of working in partnership with the Youth Service and Early Break (social enterprise for the protection and support of vulnerable young people), there has been a 50% reduction in violent incidents across the school and in the community and stark results with a dramatic reduction in fixed term exclusions, verbal abuse and defiance incidents at school. Youth workers proactively come in and out of school, access alternative provision led by the youth service, support work in school on issues between groups (which had divided along racial lines) as one of the exacerbating factors for youth violence. An ambitious project with Early Break works with young people in Year 6 over the summer and continuing the specific support throughout Year 7.

On School Site: The Garage, Nottinghamshire

The Garage is a youth centre on the site of Garibaldi School in Mansfield, but is run separately by Nottinghamshire County Council youth service. However, use of those facilities after school hours and close to school premises is key, as it is often immediately after school hours that exploiters would target children walking home from school. Also, because the youth centre is attached to a school in which the young people all had been or still are attending, they and their friends have shared experiences. The young people clearly felt that the centre provided a sense of community and identified strongly with it. Indeed the young people had all successfully campaigned and fundraised £100,000 to transform it from a restricted space with various walled sections into an open plan floor allowing for increased flexibility of potential activities (including sports and performing arts).However, due to reduced funding the open-access offer had been limited to a term-time only calendar.

Youth Work In School: North Oxfordshire Academy

Youth work and clubs in school create a positive culture and environment in the school that is inspiring and fun. Having activities and facilities in school compensates in part for a lack of provision outside, where the youth services are based in a hub and focus on early intervention/prevention. The academy employs a youth worker (pastoral and enrichment leader) to make provision in the school; this has been built incrementally, starting with small steps, to shape and develop the current curriculum-based offer and holistic approach to youth work. The youth worker organises placements for students who are keen to develop skills within a primary school environment and improves confidence in working with youths in the community, and promotes volunteering in the academy community.

Youth work is not a 'bolt-on' to the school; it is embedded in the curriculum offer to students and offers a wraparound approach. The academy provides a youth work course at years 12/13, where students are learning on the job and act as mentors to younger students too.

Peer mentors are taken from the 6th form Youth Work team to act as mentors and buddies to KS3 students or any vulnerable students identified by the school as needing a mentor. This group receives mentoring training and meets with their mentees during tutor time. This training is completed in school and accredited through a L3 Youth Work qualification, and 'Team 14' is students who return to school in year 14 on youth work apprenticeships. The youth clubs provide friendship and social networks to break down barriers.

Re-imagining schools

As schools return and as we adjust to a post-pandemic world, schools will need to make adjustments to ensure that emotional health and wellbeing is at the forefront of delivery and that young people are equipped for the challenges of, and opportunities in, an uncertain world. This includes changes to the curriculum, the nature of the school day, policies and practice.

Curriculum development will need to include citizenship, life skills and enterprise, and in helping young people to refocus on self-belief and aspirations for the future. This should extend to colleges and other education providers, inclusive of young people with a range of special educational needs, learning difficulties, and emotional and mental health needs.

The split between formal and non-formal education is part of the problem.

Bolting on youth work or schools simply buying-in youth services falls short of the changes needed to meet the challenges and opportunities of the post-pandemic world. The challenge is for a broad and rich curriculum that includes prescribed subject-based curricula as well as other areas of work negotiated with young people. This is not a dichotomy of academic versus vocational. Rather, it is recognition of a knowledge based society in a rapidly changing and uncertain world. As such youth work is an educative process flexible to the needs, interests and concerns of young people.

To embed a youth work approach in schools will need a change in culture for senior managers, teachers and youth workers. Leadership and governance will be crucial to make such changes.

A partnership programme

In the 1990s, the National Assembly of Wales launched its Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme with the aim of supporting young people to raise their levels of achievement and attendance at school and to help improve attitudes towards learning[29]. The programme recognised that youth work is delivered in a voluntary relationship with young people and the trusted adult, and that voluntary arrangement may be difficult when considering youth work in schools.

However, a degree of flexibility was achieved within the youth work and school boundaries, by consulting with young people and allowing them to determine aspects of the programme. Collaboration can lead to a more appropriate curriculum for young people and more choice for young people in schools. With that said, their core skills and the requirements of the National Curriculum should not be neglected.

It is important for teachers and youth workers to have strong partnerships. Practical measures include:

- Collaborating, and sharing tools and resources (in complementary approaches);
- Preparation time for teachers to co-plan programmes of work with youth workers; and
- Discussion of outcomes at the beginning of a programme of work, to ensure clear and consistent expectations from that work

This involves a combination of behaviours, attitudes and methods: flexible and accessible to the needs and experiences of young people; learning opportunities, goal setting and recognition of achievements; safe, supportive environments able to make mistakes, and have fun.

There is also a range of other factors to consider.

Digital and online learning

Schools, colleges and various youth services adapted to the lockdown by moving learning activities and contact online. Much of the digitised youth work will remain online after the pandemic, as a preferred form of contact for some young people and to complement face-to-face activities.

The sheer volume of information and the scale of influence from modern media will grow exponentially as technological advances continue. This will require greater levels of co-ordination between, and understanding from, teachers and youth workers as they determine different means of engaging young people in learning, different digital platforms, what works well online, how to provide guidance and safeguard young people.

Education and delivery of services will inevitably use digital and online resources. A long-term plan is needed to address digital exclusion and to ensure up-skilling for the delivery of certain projects and courses. This also creates opportunities for collaboration and for connections to be made between formal and non-formal education, schools and youth workers.

29 Wales Youth Agency: 'Social Inclusion and the Youth Service in Wales – a submission to the House of Commons Committee on Welsh Affairs', 2000

Safeguarding

Identifying young people at personal risk and in risky situations with others through detached and digital youth work; using existing relationships with trusted adults (youth workers) to provide support, informal education and protective behaviours. However, during lockdown and at home there remain concerns for confidentiality and private spaces from which young people can confide, disclose or simply study; and where there are safeguarding concerns for suitability of digital alternative services (especially or those under the age of 13).

Autonomy

Financial realities come into play at a time when schools and colleges are faced with additional policy developments, allied to the greater autonomy afforded to academies. The path forward is based on three principles:

- Effective professional practice that prioritises vulnerable young people and focuses on quality outcomes;
- A diversity of provision and service providers that support the best value for money; and
- Promoting a positive and active role for young people and strengthening local communities.

Up-skilling

Schools currently employ or engage with very few youth workers in school, but there is a range of practitioners who use or could benefit from youth work practice. This includes teaching assistants, inclusion unit staff, family workers, support workers and learning mentors who work in areas such as:

- School corridors, play areas and common rooms, equivalent to detached youth work;
- Homework and study support groups;
- Pastoral support and advice in personal development;
- After-school and holiday provision;
- Work with young people experiencing difficulties at school, in learning and socialisation;
- Alternative Provision (AP); and
- School councils and youth voice initiatives, volunteering and social action.

A Youth Premium

Education policies need to consider the whole system. Layering multiple interventions onto teachers or simply sign-posting to other constituent parts of the system risks diluting the education offer overall. Further consideration is needed on how distinct funding streams can be used to deliver an effective youth offer in schools.

This should include a new Youth Premium[30] to access youth work provision and approaches that help close the attainment gap, putting vulnerable young people and disadvantaged families on a surer footing. This would complement targeted services and wrap around support for an early help model of youth work in schools and colleges.

30 NYA 'Hi 5 – A manifesto for young people and youth work', 2019

Ensuring the quality of provision

While schools and colleges have the institutional frameworks to demonstrate their outcomes (exams), their quality (Ofsted) and their capacity to benchmark (including statistical neighbours from comparable areas), youth sector activities do not.

However, most youth clubs and services involve some form of structured learning – from homework clubs to sports or arts qualifications, employability and skills, and social action projects. Yet schools benefit from year-on-year funding, premised on the school curriculum and measures that generally enjoy public consent, whereas youth work often receives short-term funding. As a consequence, youth work is often misunderstood and undervalued.

The Ofsted Education Inspection Framework, 2019 provides one way forward, as it includes personal development beyond the academic, technical or vocational. This can be seen where youth work practice helps attendance and behaviour in school. An additional opportunity is to help the school's understanding of the needs, challenges and wider interests of young people, and of the broader opportunities to engage with young people and recognise their achievements.

For schools and colleges the challenge and opportunity from youth work is as much about the institution's ethos, what can be taught or what is modelled within schools and colleges, as it is about young people's attendance and behaviour. Where, for example, it is difficult to capture the impact of aspiration and social skills when outcomes may not be evident until leaving school, youth work can have demonstrable impact on character traits such as resilience, self-confidence and self-belief. Some talk of character education and four areas of virtue – intellectual, performance, moral and civic[31] in that regard.

For youth work the challenge is to provide capacity to respond to areas of need within the school and the potential to support the school improvement priorities through delivering tailored interventions, for example. Crucially, youth work practice can support parental engagement, connect families and communities in school education and a range of learning options for young people. A standardised, national system should be in place to evaluate the sufficiency of youth services and the quality of youth work provision. A cross-party inquiry[32] has recommended new inspection arrangements for youth provision through the local authority and local youth partnerships. This could, for example, restore Ofsted's role in youth services and self-evaluation, with 'light touch' inspection of youth provision akin to the current arrangements for childcare inspections.

31 N Morgan' Taught, Not Caught: Educating for 21st Century Character', 2017; citing University of Birmingham, Jubilee Centre
32 All Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Affairs: Youth Work Inquiry, 2019

Skills and training

This approach requires significant investment in training and a much stronger understanding of, and collaboration between, the teaching and youth work professions – in initial training and to open up career pathways. The digitalisation of training is an important step within this strategy. Blended learning routes provide engaging, flexible, accessible and affordable means of building knowledge and developing skills. Government bursaries for youth work and innovative use of the apprenticeship levy by schools and colleges provide a starting point.

Teaching assistants and other support staff who currently provide some functions that can be identified as youth work related can be trained in youth work. Similarly, young people or school leavers can be up-skilled and trained as peer educators and youth support workers.

Youth work practice and pedagogy should be reinstated as a module within initial teacher training, with further opportunities for continued professional development to include the development of a diploma in youth work.

There is also a need to invest in the recruitment and training of youth workers. Training should be equivalent to teaching/social work programmes (Teach First/Frontline). This could help fast-track youth workers in schools on the basis of graduate training and placements guaranteed in schools.

Further, by opening up career pathways between professions, schools, colleges and youth services are in a better position to recruit, motivate and retain a dedicated workforce. Bold moves are needed during this time of low recruitment, reduced employment opportunities for youth work, and high levels of attrition in teaching (with one in three teachers leaving the teaching profession within the first five years). Many teachers may desire a new career or might move to a similar vocation for a period of time. Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) may benefit from having broader career experience before entering the classroom. Youth workers might choose from a wider range of career options, as their qualifications are recognised across education and social care.

A Youth Service Guarantee

NYA is calling for at least two qualified youth workers and a team of youth support workers and trained volunteers for each secondary school catchment area. This is needed to secure universal access to youth work and used as a baseline on which a local youth offer from schools and community-based provision can flourish.

For youth work, a national census of current provision, statutory and voluntary, is required to establish the scale of provision, to invest in youth work training for professionals and to up-skill volunteers. For schools, Ofsted should include youth work approaches in its training and development of inspection staff – to seek examples, ask about and respond to evidence of youth work practice in schools and colleges.

Conclusion

A return to school and college

COVID-19 and the lockdown have created a need for young people to catch up on the education over the summer and throughout the school year. To this end, we need to encourage local engagement of youth workers and deploy them alongside schools. School sites should be used for youth work during the school day and after hours. Youth centres provide additional capacity for engaging and hosting young people. Summer schools should include youth work activities. This will require will require quality/ assurance and safeguarding, and specifically to up-skill youth workers, volunteers and teaching support staff.

A role for youth work

As we adapt to a 'new normal' youth work can unlock young people's potential, helping them develop their skills, voice, influence and their place in an uncertain and rapidly changing world. Through youth work, support can be offered to vulnerable young people as part of a joined-up approach with schools and colleges. While each profession and practice has its own distinctive approach, it is important for schools and youth services to come together seamlessly, to offer new ways of working to engage young people in education and learning.

Confident futures

A Youth Covenant published by NYA calls for a commitment to young people from government, public services and community organisations; it provides a common language and accountability to support the collective impact of schools, colleges and youth services. At a time of crisis and great uncertainty, we need to support young people now and to be confident in their future. In shaping that future we must seek out and hear young people's concerns, insights and challenges, with their voices heard and included in decision-making.

Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB)

As the national body for youth work in England (PSRB), NYA is responsible for qualifications and training, contextual practice, advice and guidance, and will publish a new curriculum for youth work in the summer of 2020.

A Ten Year Vision for youth work is to be published by NYA in 2020–21 supported by revised guidance on what is 'sufficient' youth work, newly framed in the context of COVID-19 as we emerge from the pandemic.

Appendix 1

What the papers say: research and reports

1. **Schools Responses to Covid-19: Pupil Engagement in Remote Learning**
   NFER, June 2020

   Four in 10 pupils in England are not in regular contact with their teachers, a study has found, amid mounting evidence of wide disparities in the provision of schoolwork during lockdown and fears that millions of children are doing little or nothing at all.

   A third of pupils were not engaged with their lessons, fewer than half (42%) had bothered to return their work, and pupils in the most disadvantaged schools were the least likely to be engaged with remote learning.

2. **Schoolwork in lockdown: new evidence on the epidemic of educational poverty**
   University College London (UCL) Institute of Education, June 2020

   As concerns grow about the impact of learning loss on a generation of children locked out of school the study estimated that two million pupils in the UK – around one in five – had done no schoolwork or managed less than an hour a day.

3. **Reduced face-to-face contact among teenagers and their friends during the pandemic could have damaging long-term consequences** The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health: the effects of social deprivation on adolescent development and mental health, June 2020.

   Combined with major hormonal and biological changes, [adolescence] is a key time for the development of the brain. It's also the period in life when mental-health problems are mostly likely to develop.

   - At a sensitive time in life, their brain development, behaviour and mental health could suffer.
   - Using social media might make up for some negative effects of social distancing.
   - Schools [should] reopen for young people as a priority when safe.
   - Adolescence is defined by the scientists as between 10 and 24.

4. **Can summer schools help disadvantaged pupils bounce back from lockdown?**
   Centre for Education and Youth, May 2020

   Schools going ahead with summer activities should balance a focus on academic outcomes with support for pupils' social and emotional wellbeing. 'Summer camps' should open activities to all pupils but they should prioritise the most vulnerable young people, as they are likely to have suffered the most during closures. Working in partnership with children's services and the youth sector may help schools to reach those who are most in need without it feeling like a punishment.

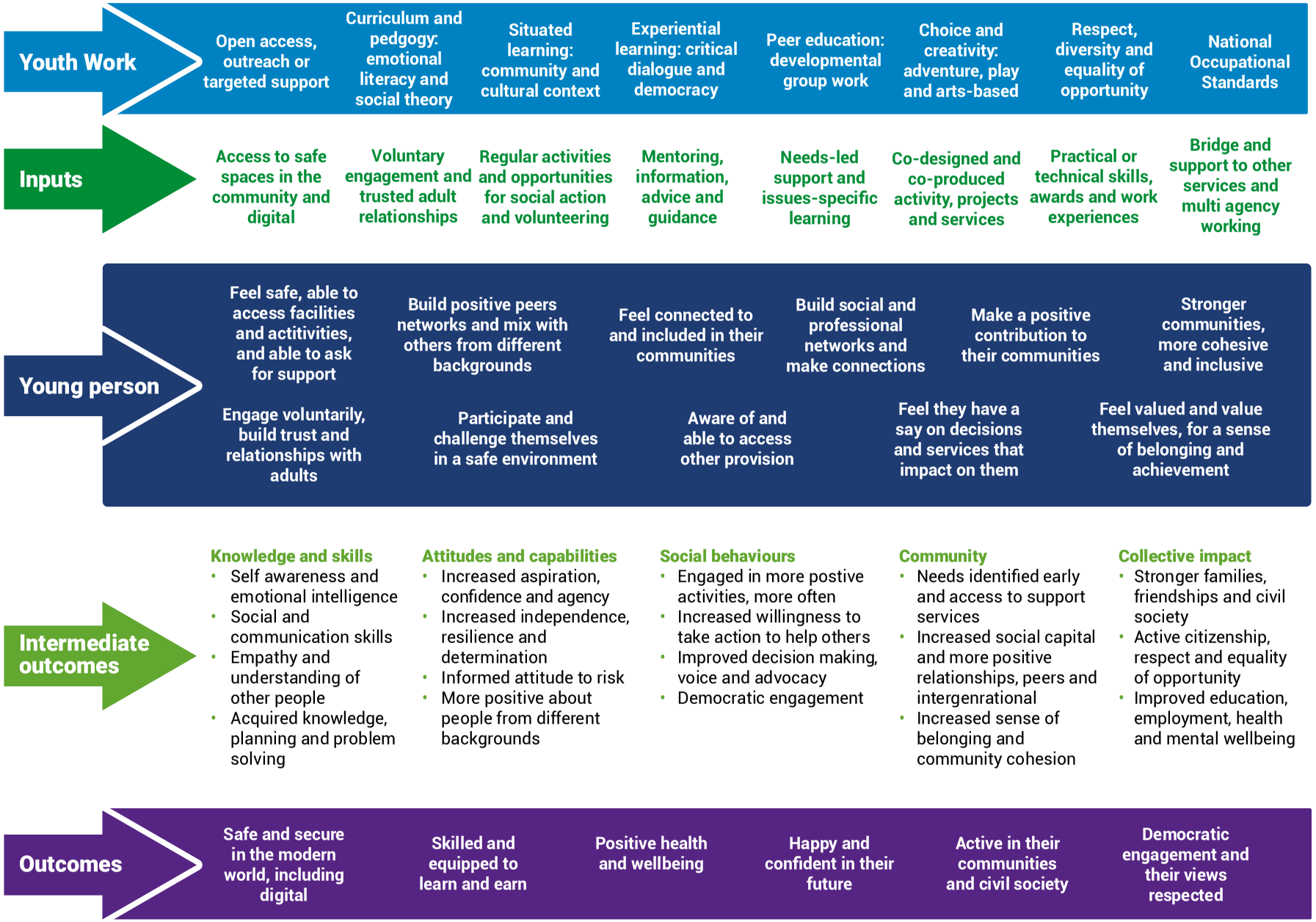
5. **Young people are missing out on youth work services**
   Centre for Youth Impact, June 2020

   A new standard survey showed that at least 300,000 young people from 177 youth organisations have not been reached by youth services since lockdown measures were introduced in March. However this figure could be much higher across all youth organisations; scale up to encompass the sector as a whole [it is] likely to be over seven figures.

6. **Opportunities Guarantee**
   Youth Futures Foundation, June 2020

   Calls for an Opportunity Guarantee, including to secure opportunities for young people by ensuring that all have the choice of an education place, apprenticeship, or job.

Theory of Change | **Youth Work**



© NYA 2018

Appendix 2

Appendix 3

A youth work curriculum

Youth work is underpinned by a clear set of values and takes an asset-based approach in considering the strengths and needs of young people. It is a distinct educational process, adapted across a variety of settings to support the personal, social and educational development of young people:

- To explore their values, beliefs, ideas and issues;
- To develop their voice, influence and place in society; and
- To acquire a set of practical or technical skills and competencies, to realise their full potential.

Curriculum themes	Issues
Skills development Youth work helps young people to communicate clearly, make decisions, work together and contribute to a group, planning, problem solving and organisation.	Youth work offers opportunities for young people to learn specific skills which, in turn, develop personal and social skills over time. It provides opportunities for them to apply and develop their interests (such as arts, cookery, music production and sports). Youth workers may offer opportunities that challenge and stretch young people, for example: the DofE scheme and outward bound residential activities.
Health and wellbeing Youth workers support young people to make informed choices about how they live, approach risk and take responsibility for their own behaviour in relation to their lifestyle	Health and wellbeing are not just about an individual's physical, mental or emotional health but also about how these affect a young person's ability to achieve their goals or to contribute to their community or society.
Healthy relationships Youth workers support young people to make informed choices about how they live, to assess risks and to take responsibility for their own behaviour in relation to their lifestyle.	Health and wellbeing are not just about an individual's physical, mental or emotional health but also about how these affect a young person's ability to achieve their goals or to contribute to their community or society.
Financial literacy Youth work provides financial literacy education, for example, and access to further opportunities for study and employment.	Financial literacy and the transferrable skills of teamwork, decision making, reflection and critical thinking support young people in all aspects of their lives, including (future) employment.
Identity and belonging Youth workers support young people as they explore their own identity and how they find a sense of belonging, and guide them to additional support, if required.	Identity (who we are, how we think about ourselves and the characteristics that define us and make us different from others) is not fixed. It is expressed through everyday interactions, how we relate to others and the role models who we look up to. During adolescence, the process of identity formation often involves conflicts and contradictions as neurological developments add an extra layer of complexity.

Leadership and participation Youth work supports leadership, civic engagement and participation by ensuring that young people's voices are heard in discussions and by encouraging confidence and public speaking, organisational, campaigning and leadership skills.	The engagement of young people in democratic processes is essential. It fosters a sense of belonging and ensures that communities are strengthened. This engagement can be achieved through volunteer work; social action; leadership programmes; and progression to other groups, such as youth councils, for democratic engagement.
Global citizenship Youth work can support young people to explore how local communities and everyday choices have global links and influences; and to access opportunities to volunteer and work abroad.	Advances in travel and technology have fostered many different ideas and influences, bringing about constant change. Youth workers can support young people to reflect and develop their understanding of their place in society, locally and globally.
Environment and sustainable development Youth work can support young people to consider their impact on their environment and to develop creative responses in areas of interest and in community groups.	The environment and issues of sustainability concern many young people. Many feel called to take action in this regard and to make lifestyle choices that promote sustainability. At a local level, young people may organise peer education, volunteering and various forms of social action.
Arts, culture and heritage Youth work supports young people to explore cultural diversity and commonalities to overcome the barriers to participation in arts, culture and heritage.	Many young people desire better representation of their own culture and heritage and opportunities to learn about the cultures of other groups within their society and beyond. Yet many forms of culture and heritage can often seem closed to young people through lack of exposure or access.
Creativity and fun Youth work provides spaces where young people can meet their friends and participate in activities that they enjoy.	When a person develops their creativity and critical thinking skills, they are able to view things differently and find it easier to generate new ideas and to understand how to apply knowledge in different circumstances. The fostering of creativity and critical thinking skills can be achieved through activities for both individuals and groups. Group activities can be fun while encouraging critical thinking and creative skills, open-mindedness, teamwork and decision making.

Appendix 4

Youth work practice in schools and colleges

Professional competencies and development include the ability to make informed judgments about complex ethical and professional issues, underpinned by targeted learning and including:

- Knowledge of physiological and psychological development, including self-identity;
- Situated learning (location of practice), including community and culturally sensitive practice;
- Experiential learning, including critical dialogue, citizenship, democracy and power relations;
- Group work, including peer education and co-production with young people.

The table below illustrates youth work practice in response to characteristics that may be associated with low attainment or disengagement at school.

Characteristics	Youth work practice: asset-based approach
Lack of confidence or self-esteem	Positive self-image/role models/language/identity
Low educational attainment	Value placed on personal achievement/social action opportunities/youth participation/youth voice
Socially isolated/poor social skills	Inclusive communication, opportunities to develop a diverse range of social skills/peer mentors/group work
Lack of motivation	Learning coach/peer mentor/diverse opportunities and group work/ accredited awards/volunteer/social action/youth voice
Self-harm, depression, victim or bullying behaviour	Coping strategies/school culture/policies/peer mentors/social action/ Mental Health First Aid/accredited training
Aggression and behaviour	Self-control, de-escalation, conflict management, older mentors with lived experience
Addiction and risky behaviours (alcohol, drugs, gambling, offending)	Interventions/early help/peer mentors/peer education/awareness/group work
Dysfunctional family or breakdown of family relationships or homelessness	Family support/education of basic rights/young carers support/referrals and role models
Inability to concentrate within lessons	Emotional assessment of needs (self-assessment Outcomes Star for instance) support, referrals mentors/alternative access to activities with addition of accredited learning
Undiagnosed difficulty (ADHD, dyslexia, hearing loss)	Emotional assessment of needs (self-assessment Outcomes Star for instance), anti-discriminatory practice, reducing stigma, mentors, referrals
Racism	Emotional support, referrals, language and school environment, training, positive role models/social action, young people's voices, co-design, targeted group work, awareness raising throughout (not only in the short term)
Sexism	Emotional support, referrals, language and school environment, training, positive role models/social action, young people's voices, co-design, targeted group work and awareness raising, targeted work for all genders
Sexuality, gender identity/transphobia/ homophobia	Emotional support, referrals, language and school environment, training, positive role models/social action, young people's voices, co-design, targeted group work and awareness raising, Pride Month celebrations

About National Youth Agency

NYA is the national body for youth work in England (Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body), as the lead partner for Government, Local Government Association, national youth organisations and non-government bodies (teaching, policing, social care).

We offer contextualised advice and guidance to support youth work in response to COVID-19 and publish regular updates - https://youthworksupport.co.uk (in partnership with UK Youth and the Federation of Detached Youth Work).

NYA Youth Covenant is 'a promise from the nation' for all young people to be safe and secure in the modern world, and treated fairly; supporting young people in the present and ambitious for their future:

- Skilled and equipped to learn and earn
- Positive health and wellbeing
- Active members of their communities
- Happy and confident in their future.

More from NYA

a) Quality Mark – built on the National Occupational Standards for youth work

b) Generic guidance for youth work

c) Detached youth work guidance

d) Safeguarding online youth work

e) Introduction to Detached Youth Work during COVID-19

f) Out of Sight? – Vulnerable young people: COVID-19 response

e) Hidden In Plain Sight – A youth work response to gangs and exploitation during COVID-19

f) Managing youth sector activities and spaces during COVID-19 – Guidance and toolkit

National Youth Agency

www.nya.org.uk

@natyouthagency
nya@nya.org.uk
0116 242 7350

Registration No. 2912597 | Charity No. 1035804
National Youth Agency, 9 Newarke Steet, Leicester LE1 5SN