



APPG on Youth Affairs

Youth Work Inquiry

Final Report
Including Recommendations and Summary

April 2019



All-Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Affairs

Report from the Inquiry into the Role and Sufficiency of Youth Work

The inquiry is part of the work of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Youth Affairs, a cross-party group. The National Youth Agency co-ordinated the running of this one-off inquiry with the ongoing support of the British Youth Council and YMCA England & Wales, whose representatives comprise the permanent secretariat for the APPG for Youth Affairs.

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

www.appgyouthaffairs.wordpress.com

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

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Life as a young person today

Several reports in recent years have drawn attention to the breakdown of the widely held assumption that children and young people should grow up to enjoy greater opportunities and a better quality of life than their parents and grandparents.

Whilst it may still hold true for some families, for many young people this 'contract' has broken down due to long-standing structural shifts in the economy and housing market, coupled with cuts in public spending following the financial crash of 2008. A recent survey indicates that most people now believe young people today will not fare better than previous generations.¹

Many young people are embarking on their transition to adulthood from a lower material base level. There are also significant geographical differences in the opportunities available to young people.² Other markers of disadvantage relating to gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity are not within the scope of this report; however, we include such inequalities where they were referred to in the submitted evidence.

Many of the young people and others who contributed to our inquiry were positive that if young people are given the right support, they will be able to make the most of the opportunities available to them and to support their community and society.

The clear message came across in our research that youth work remains an important element of the support wanted and needed by young people today, and that by engaging with young people and working responsively in a way that other services may struggle to achieve, youth work can provide children and young people with the life skills, resilience and aspirations to overcome adversity. Youth services can respond not just to young people as individuals, but also to their communities. For example, the 'Safer Lives Survey' in the interim report of the Youth Violence Commission asked: **'If there was one thing you could change that you think would make young people safer, what would it be?'** Over 2,200 young people responded, with the most popular response highlighting 'the provision of more youth centres, sports clubs and other youth activities in their local areas'.³

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. Fulfilling this role will require a shared understanding of, and clarity in, the role of youth work and contribution of youth services. We conclude that to be effective, youth work needs to be (and be seen to be) transformational, harnessing the skills of young people.



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



Leigh Middleton
CEO, National Youth Agency

¹ See: Hannah Shrimpton, Gideon Skinner and Suzanne Hall, *The Millennial Bug: Public Attitudes on the Living Standards of Different Generations* (Resolution Foundation & Intergenerational Commission, 2017); Social Mobility Commission, *Social Mobility Barometer: Public Attitudes to Social Mobility in the UK* (2017)

² Social Mobility Commission, *State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility in Great Britain* (2017)

³ The Youth Violence Commission, *Interim Report* (2018)



Introduction

The inquiry

The APPG for Youth Affairs agreed to conduct an inquiry into the state of youth work, as the first such inquiry in seven years. It was agreed to look at a broad overview of the role and sufficiency of youth work. We are extremely grateful to the National Youth Agency (NYA) and everyone who gave their valuable time to contribute to this inquiry, and we hope that this report does justice to the issues raised. Although views differed on some questions, a number of dominant themes emerged, which we explore in depth later in this report. We have endeavoured to take into account all the views expressed in a fair and balanced way.

All respondents had experience of the youth sector (voluntary and public) and included representatives of national, regional and local youth organisations, youth centres and local councils, local youth services development managers, youth workers and those in training, academics, representatives of army welfare services and police bodies, and young people themselves. Both written and oral responses were received from across all regions.

The diversity of respondents exemplifies the breadth of the sector and the varied nature of youth work. The number of responses, and indeed the depth of some, demonstrates the willingness of the sector to engage with initiatives like this inquiry. This is important, as much has changed in the seven years since the last parliamentary inquiry into youth services and youth work.

The inquiry benefited from being an iterative process, including desk research, written evidence, oral hearings and site visits, with each stage enabling us to test emerging messages and refine our understanding of the issues, especially where conflicting views were expressed. However, it is important to acknowledge some important gaps in the evidence. For example, we do not know how many youth workers there are across the country, as data is no longer collected and the costs of carrying out a robust survey were prohibitive. This gap informed our recommendation for the government to reinstate the local authority audit of youth services in local areas, previously undertaken by the NYA.

We hope that this wide-ranging inquiry will provide a useful foundation on which to build, identifying important issues that require urgent policy attention and priorities for further research.

Date	Event
25 May 2018–27 June 2018	Invitation to Submit Evidence
4 July 2018	Oral hearing with young people
11 July 2018	Oral hearing with national organisations
24 July 2018	Oral hearing with grassroots organisations
30 August 2018	Site visit to Nottinghamshire County Council
11 September 2018	Oral hearing with National Citizen Service and Centre for Youth Impact
17 September	Site visit to Brighton Youth Collective
24 September	Site visit to Merseyside Youth Association
31 October	NYA Youth Work Summit: panel Q&A Initial findings and recommendations
7 November	National Advisory Board – Youth Services (voluntary and statutory youth services)
8 November	Site visit to Lincolnshire Youth Association
11 December	APPG youth forum Response to inquiry findings by young people
1 April 2019	Final report: publication

Lines of inquiry

'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, depending on personal, social and economic factors, it can start and/or finish much later. This may especially be the case for marginalised or vulnerable young people. In this report, the main contributions relate to children of secondary-school age, i.e. from 11 years old.

The importance of providing support and investment for very young children and older people is well recognised and reflected in public policies, but adolescence is also an important time, involving 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 challenges and problems they have to tackle and overcome, rather than recognising their 'assets' and the numerous opportunities available to them. Often, society understands 'problems' and 'challenges' in terms of risk-taking amongst young people, influenced by moral panic emerging from popular culture.

There is a disconnect between how the public perceives 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.⁴ Too often, we look at the negatives and do not appreciate the positives in relation to young people, a situation which leads to a larger disconnect with services for young people (SYP).

Therefore, this inquiry considers the role of 'youth work' as a distinct educational process adapted across a variety of settings to support young people's personal and social development – their values, beliefs, ideas and skills. It explores the extent to which youth work supports a set of practical or technical skills and competencies for young people, and develops their voice, influence and place in society to bring about positive changes.

We further consider the impact of youth work within children's and young people's services. 'Youth services' have been hit especially hard by austerity, with public spending distributed increasingly towards statutory areas that focus on safeguarding risk or short-term interventions targeted at vulnerable groups.⁵ There has been a sharp reduction in open-access ('universal') youth services, impacting also on voluntary sector provision, and opportunities have been lost to increase early help for young people before issues become acute.

Our call for evidence therefore asked:

- a) What is the role of youth work in addressing the needs and opportunities of 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 are the training and workforce development needs to secure and sustain youth work?

⁴ Youth Drinking in Decline (ScHARR, University of Sheffield, 2018).

⁵ Public Spending on Children in England 2000 to 2020 (Institute for Fiscal Studies, June 2018: Children's Commissioner for England).

Recommendations

1. **There should be a minister responsible who has a portfolio focussed on young people**

- We recommend a Cabinet Minister is accountable to Parliament and within Government for youth policy and high-level reporting
- We call for a single Minister responsible for young people and youth work within that ministerial team; and suggest this portfolio lies within the Department for Education
- To be effective this role would give greater priority to youth work and youth services, and support cross-departmental co-ordination on related policy areas for young people

2. **There needs to be greater investment in youth work and commitment to support for youth services in the next Comprehensive Spending Review.**

- We recommend that Government undertakes a review of spending on youth services and reinstates the local authority audit previously carried out by NYA.
- We call for further research to determine the cost-benefit of investing in preventative services and open-access youth work, to help secure long term funding.
- To be effective this must be sector-wide and include an objective assessment of National Citizen Service as part of a wider eco-system of all services to young people.

3. **The Government should introduce a clear statutory duty and guidance that defines a minimum and protected level of youth service.**

- We recommend guidance include a definition of a sufficient or minimum level of youth services on a per-head of youth population basis, to be scalable across different areas.
- We call on the statutory and voluntary sectors to form a compact with young people for a clear policy statement and guidance that recognises the benefits of youth work.
- To be effective there needs to be a strengthened national body for youth work to oversee the implementation of the duty and core funding for local authorities to secure provision.

4. **There should be a lead role confirmed in each local authority responsible for discharging the statutory duty.**

- We recommend there is the equivalent of a Deputy Director for Children's Services for each upper-tier local authority responsible for young people and accountable for the duty.
- We call for the duty to incorporate young people into decision-making and consultation.
- To be effective the local authority must be required to work with local youth partnerships of voluntary and community organisations providing services and support in the area.

5. **The Government should develop a workforce strategy including expectations for the ratio of professional youth workers, trainees and volunteers.**

- We recommend renewed national occupational standards, training curriculum and qualifications for youth work by 2020.
- We call for clear pathways for apprenticeships and career opportunities in youth work, and greater infrastructure support for the voluntary sector training and of volunteers.
- To be effective a register of youth workers should be developed and support both professional development and a probationary period similar to NQT status for teachers.

6. **There needs to be a standardised and national system for evaluating the sufficiency and suitability of youth services and quality of youth work provision.**

- We recommend establishing a clear baseline of youth work provision and core funding to ensure access to quality youth services in a local authority area.
- We call for Ofsted or other agency, supported by the national body for youth work, to put in place new inspection arrangements.
- To be effective this would include self-evaluation and 'light touch' inspection of youth provision through the local authority and local youth partnerships.

Further investment, research and development is needed to understand how youth work and associated services adapt to new environments; but we hope this initial report provides a valuable foundation on which to build.

'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**

'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

'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

Key findings

1. Long-term strategy

Numerous respondents to the inquiry made the case for a national youth policy and long-term strategy for youth services which recognises the key role of youth work in the 'eco-system' of Services for Young People – working with and alongside education, health and well-being services, social care and youth justice. A more coherent and joined-up approach nationally could help reduce complexity at local level in trying to meet the needs of those requiring a multi-agency response – benefiting local agencies, service providers and, most importantly, young people and their families.⁶

Some observed an increasing tendency to see schools as the universal service for interventions and support; but we should not forget that 85% of a young person's waking hours (in the school years) are spent outside of school,⁷ and there are increasing numbers of excluded and home-educated children.⁸ Her Majesty's Chief Inspector has warned, 'schools are sometimes under pressure to be the silver bullet solution to all society's problems.'⁹ Moreover, school may not be the place where young people want to engage; the vast majority of young people who choose to do extra-curricular activities, do so outside of school hours.¹⁰

Significantly, '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' (2018).

2. Youth work

Youth work provides non-formal education that focuses on the personal and social development of participants. Uniquely, it does this through engagement with young people's culture and community, and its asset-based approach develops the strengths of the individual and furthers the opportunities available to them.

To provide a comprehensive eco-system of support and opportunity for young people, youth work needs to play a key role. Many young people are prepared to engage with youth work because it feels different from school and social services; it is therefore capable of reaching individuals and communities who may otherwise remain inaccessible. Youth work is complementary to formal education, helping to prevent the need emerging for more costly intervention services for children and young people.

3. Youth services

One result of funding cuts has been a reduction in the quantity of youth work provided through local authority youth services, with a knock-on effect also for funding of related services provided by the voluntary sector. It is clear that rural universal services have suffered the most; furthermore, there is much regional variation as local authorities have had to balance ever-tighter budgets, with youth services having no clear statutory protection. Many respondents expressed concerns that youth services have been eroded; although not unique in having experienced significant budget cuts, analysis shows that youth services have been hit disproportionately hard.

It is clear that youth services have slipped down the list of priorities for policy makers and commissioners. However, there are some examples of local areas which have managed to sustain good-quality youth work via innovation with service delivery models, funding agreements and restructured workforces – often working in partnership with the voluntary sector. For example, some local authorities are commissioning single bodies to oversee local youth work, with some success.

4. Trusted relationships

Our inquiry determined that whilst many young people are able to navigate their youth and the transition to adulthood by themselves, and with the support of family, friends and their school or college, for many others, local youth services play a critical role. Key aspects of the contribution of such services include trusted, non-judgemental and long-term relationships with responsible adults, safe spaces, positive activities and social action, and assistance to access further support where necessary.

⁶ See: Children's Commissioner, *Constructing a Definition of Vulnerability – Attempts to Define and Measure* (2017); Collaborate, *A Whole New World: Funding and Commissioning in Complexity* (2017)

⁷ House of Commons Education Committee, *Services for Young People: Third Report of the Session 2010-12* (2011).

⁸ Children's Commissioner, *Briefing: Falling through the Gaps in Education* (2017).

⁹ Ofsted, *Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services & Skills 2017/18* (2018).

¹⁰ Department for Education, *Omnibus Survey of Pupils and their Parents/Carers: Research Report Wave 4* (HM Government, 2018).

5. Summary of evidence

- i. Youth work provides young people with trusted relationships and safe spaces within which learning, and personal and social development can take place. It also plays an important bridging role for schools and colleges,¹¹ and – critically – provides support and development outside formal education, i.e. where 85% of a young person's waking hours are spent. As a distinct part of the education process, youth work has a curriculum, pedagogy and professional qualifications to degree level.
- ii. 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, commitment to spending has not followed, as regulations and guidance are relatively light-touch and there is a lack of clarity on what is a sufficient level of youth work and services. The government has committed to review the statutory duty in this area (see appendices). There is an opportunity here to afford youth work greater recognition, and we look forward to strengthened guidance.
- iii. Looking at the quality and level of youth work rather than the model of delivery, there is a need for a baseline of youth work provision, and for core funding which supports local youth services and helps grow an 'eco-system' of youth work in a community. Similarly to the clear structure of professional roles and ratios found in schools – senior management, teachers, teaching assistants and supporting services such as specialist teachers and school counsellors, etc. – there should be standard expectations regarding ratios of professional youth workers, volunteers and other professionals with youth work skills.
- iv. If youth work and services are to secure investment, there needs to be a greater understanding of their role and impact, to provide much-needed clarity for policy makers, funders, practitioners and young people. In this regard, we recognise the 'theory of change' supported by the NYA (see appendices) and draw on evidence from other contributions to this inquiry.
- v. Recent analysis shows that in the long term, overall spending on young people has remained largely constant, but has been redistributed in favour of protected statutory services. Education spending has largely been protected, whilst within children's services increased demand for spending on looked-after children has come at the cost of big reductions in spending on non-statutory services for families with young children and programmes for young people.¹²
- vi. The evidence submitted consistently indicated a clear reduction in youth services, especially publicly funded youth services, with the voluntary and community sectors extending their role to fill some of the gaps left by the loss of local authority services. Key concerns expressed by respondents included:
 - a large overall reduction in youth work, with much regional variation
 - a strong trend moving away from open-access services
 - a loss of qualified and experienced youth workers
 - increasing reliance on short-term funding, sometimes limited in focus.
- vii. The fact that each local authority has its own interpretation of the statutory duty has seemingly led to large regional divergences in services and service types, with no accountability or strategy to ensure an appropriate youth offer across all areas. The reinstatement of the national audit that determined local authority provision would be key to understanding the picture at a national level, recognising that the nature and shape of youth work has changed; it is important to explore these changes and ensure an appropriate youth offer is in place for the future.
- viii. There appears to be a trend towards local authorities commissioning single bodies to oversee regional youth work offers, via a number of different funding and payment models, with some success. Some 81% of local authorities are considering establishing new models to streamline delivery and increase their revenue streams for their youth services¹³ – most commonly through partnerships with other organisations that have a track record of raising funds, setting up foundations or mutuals, and mobilising social impact bonds. Whilst we include some examples, we do not know enough about these changes and their variations to make anything other than the broadest recommendations here.

11 NYA, *National Youth Agency Commission into the Role of Youth Work Within Education* (2013).

12 Elaine Kelly, Tom Lee, Luke Sibieta and Tom Waters, *Public Spending on Children in England: 2000 to 2020* (IFS and Children's Commissioner, 2018).

13 OnSide Youth Zone, *The Way Forward for Youth Provision: Local Authority Decision Makers Views on the Future of Universal Youth Services* (2017)

- ix. A common thread across submissions to this inquiry was a call for universal provision of open-access services. Increasingly, the case to provide local youth services and dedicated facilities is made at a parish, town council and neighbourhood level, supported by housing associations and other parties with long-term commitments to the community. The exception is the National Citizen Service. Currently, 95% of all government spending on youth services goes to the NCS. Whilst this inquiry does not consider the merits of funding one programme or service over another, the evidence supports a call for investment in a base-line of youth work provision to ensure access to sufficient, quality youth work, out of which an eco-system of additional opportunities can flourish.
- x. Many responses drew attention to the expanding role of the voluntary sector in youth work, and community volunteers in particular. We need to invest in the skills of our volunteer workforce, recognising the valuable role it plays; but professional youth workers are needed to work with vulnerable young people and to lead youth services.
- xi. Another area that we found to be in need of attention was training and workforce development. Many skilled and qualified youth workers have been lost. Training and development pathways, both vocational and academic, are fractured and declining in number, and there is regional disparity in the levels of training available; this includes training for volunteers. Furthermore, many youth workers have migrated into other occupations, especially social care positions, as part of wider development of services, multi-agency working and partnerships with community groups.
- xii. By investing in and creating demand for more youth work, there is a need to open up pathways for apprenticeships and joined-up training to promote youth work skills across professions; access to youth work qualifications in advanced professional training should also be promoted, as well as interactions between connected professional areas. Many respondents argued that training for volunteers and those not qualified to degree level should be made easier to access in order to overcome shortfalls in knowledge, with more local, part-time and online study options being made available, especially for smaller providers.
- xiii. Overall, responses were clear that whilst the youth sector as it is could not maintain itself without volunteers' support and activity, there is a need for more experienced and qualified youth workers to oversee and run the majority of provided services.
- xiv. There were calls for a 'protected status' and national register for youth workers, to include all those working in the sector with Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) qualifications. Such a register would record workers' qualifications, experience and continued professional development and include a probationary period similar to NQT status for teachers. It would distinguish between, for example, a fully qualified youth worker and a support worker, in the same way that we recognise the difference between a teacher and a classroom assistant. All those supporting youth work – volunteers, apprentices, youth workers and professionals – should adhere to national occupational standards and a curriculum for youth work training and skills.
- xv. As local authorities have had to balance ever-tighter budgets, some have sought to sustain good-quality youth work by innovating with service delivery models, funding agreements and restructured workforces. However, both across and within regions, too often services are disjointed. Increasing reliance on short-term funding streams has caused a shift to short-term and targeted interventions. This is one of the main reasons why respondents feel that youth work is no longer able to properly address young people's issues and challenges over sufficient periods. Open-access services operating from school-based facilities, mobile units or dedicated youth centres have all but disappeared from some communities. It is important to recognise the impact of the decline in services on rural areas, which was highlighted as being disproportionately great.
- xvi. Compounding this lack of early and preventative services are increasingly high 'thresholds', which are preventing some young people from engaging with services until their difficulties are acute. Recent analysis commissioned by the Children's Commissioner in England determined that 'the significant reductions in many early and preventative interventions, such as Sure Start and young people's services, may push up needs and costs in the future.'¹⁴ Similarly, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector has warned that 'cuts to youth and other services are a false economy, simply leading to greater pressures elsewhere'.¹⁵
- xvii. In some areas, voluntary organisations and others have sought to continue to provide locally accessible, open-access youth work. Such provision is highly dependent on local champions in provider and funding organisations, with little reference to prioritising areas of high deprivation where the need is greatest.

See also:

APPG Youth Affairs interim report, October 2018¹⁶
Theory of Change for Youth Work (Appendix)

¹⁴ Elaine Kelly, Tom Lee, Luke Sibieta and Tom Waters, *Public Spending on Children in England: 2000 to 2020* (IFS and Children's Commissioner, 2018).

¹⁵ Ofsted, *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2017/18* (2018).

¹⁶ <https://nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/APPG-Summary-and-Recommendations-FINAL.pdf>

Summary conclusion

Youth work is a form of education that provides peer-group activities and trusted relationships, supported by trained professionals and skilled volunteers, to improve young people's well-being and personal and social development. Youth work needs to be (and be seen to be) transformational, harnessing skills of young people not fulfilled by formal education:

- Providing safe places to be creative
- Developing social networks and friendships
- With a trusted adult (aware of what is needed).

The evidence on youth work shows that too many young people do not have the family or social networks to support them, and need somebody to help. There is a great heritage of voluntary provision in the UK, including faith and uniformed groups, and more recently social enterprises and youth social action. However, increasingly short-term funding has caused a shift to short-term and targeted interventions. Open-access or universal youth services have all but disappeared from many communities.

Where the loss of youth services is pronounced, there are concerns about vulnerable young people falling under the threshold for agency or targeted interventions; such concerns have gained coverage recently in relation to mental health and loneliness, but may refer to any aspect of a young person's life. We need to provide a positive commitment from across government and society to invest in young people and their inclusion in decision-making and democratic engagement.

This collective impact is key to ensuring no young person is 'left behind', developing in young people the skills, resilience and flexibility needed for a rapidly changing society and labour market. Further investment and research and development is needed in youth work – including universal (open-access), targeted or detached (street) youth work – to adapt to new environments.

It is essential that the government now does all it can to build on the Civil Society Strategy's commitments by providing more opportunities for young people, in particular for those groups and areas that need support the most.

"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)

"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' (August 2018)

"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 (evidence submitted to the APPG Youth Affairs inquiry, 2018)

What is the role of youth work in addressing the needs and opportunities of young people?

Youth work has a broad role in providing opportunities and addressing needs amongst young people. The evidence base looks to a return to more universal and open-access youth services, out of which targeted work, appropriate signposting to specialist services and relevant social actions can grow. The role of youth work covers all of these areas in a continuous engagement with young people and their cultures, with impacts across the individual, communal and societal levels. Ultimately, there is clear recognition that the role of youth work is performed not in isolation, but as a necessary part of the whole eco-system of education, support and provision of services for children and young people, and enhanced by its distinct educational role and principles.

Defining youth work

Most responses to our inquiry couched a definition of 'youth work' in line with the description in the National Occupation Standards:

The key purpose of youth work is to 'Enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential'.

This statement refers to the holistic development of young people, recognising that personal, social and educational development can also include, for example, physical, political and spiritual development.¹⁷

Although many respondents highlighted particular characteristics such as empathy, understanding and trustworthiness, there were also key elements of youth work that came through strongly from the responses. Together, these were considered to be core principles or tenets that make youth work unique:

- i. That the principles of youth work are supported by reflective practice and peer education which establishes and maintains relationships with young people and community groups:
 - Specialist knowledge of how young people develop during adolescence
 - Trusted relationships formed through the voluntary engagement of young people
 - Understanding how to establish boundaries around challenging behaviour, preventing and de-escalating conflict

- The importance of providing a safe environment for young people.
- ii. That youth work can take place in a range of contexts and settings – most often in youth clubs or residential or community centres, or in social action projects or street work – but that it encompasses both universal (open-access) services and targeted support through activities that young people need, want and value, embracing young people's culture and community.
 - iii. That through youth work, young people undergo personal and social development and gain so-called 'soft skills', including:
 - Confidence and self-efficacy, motivation and inspiration, self-determination and self-control, social confidence, interpersonal skills and team-work
 - Life skills that can contribute to improved relationships, physical and mental health, and awareness about relevant topics, such as digital and social media
 - Economic skills via improved knowledge of how to engage in education and employment, and financial literacy
 - Social integration skills, including an understanding of 'difference', community and decision-making, citizenship and how to counter anti-social behaviour.
 - iv. There is a rich pedagogy of youth work, history of practice, research, and the weight of evidence submitted for this report shows youth work can help young people to overcome 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 to 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.

¹⁷ National Occupation Standards, *LSI YW00: Youth Work National Occupation Standards* (2008), p. 4.

- v. Good youth work accomplishes the above by:
 - Starting where young people are at, removing the need to meet a threshold or be in a certain location
 - Being informed by young people and embracing their culture, helping to bridge any disconnect between young people and youth services and ensuring that youth work is relevant to their lived experience
 - Ensuring voluntary engagement, helping build trust between youth workers and young people
 - Being asset-based: there are specialist and targeted forms of youth work that address specific needs, but all youth work identifies a young person's strengths and opportunities in the first instance.

Youth work's shifting role

The responses revealed a broad dichotomy between two main roles which youth work fulfils:

- a 'targeted' role in addressing one or two identifiable deficits or needs amongst young people;
- a 'universal' role in which youth work offers a service, support and guidance to all young people, regardless of any defined needs or deficits.

Respondents who highlighted the universal role emphasised that youth work should cover the whole spectrum of social, emotional and personal development for young people, which might best be addressed via universal and open-access services.

Respondents who highlighted the role of targeted youth services invariably stated that an adequate universal youth offer (alongside targeted provision) was preferable to increase the flexibility, continuity and scope of youth work.

What was once defined as youth work has fundamentally changed. Open-access or universal provision is being lost and in many neighbourhoods youth workers are now providing targeted support. There must be a space for both if we want our young people to flourish.

Youth Focus North East

Towards a closer explanation of how youth work provision might be made flexible and responsive, the ideal 'forms' of youth work identified were:

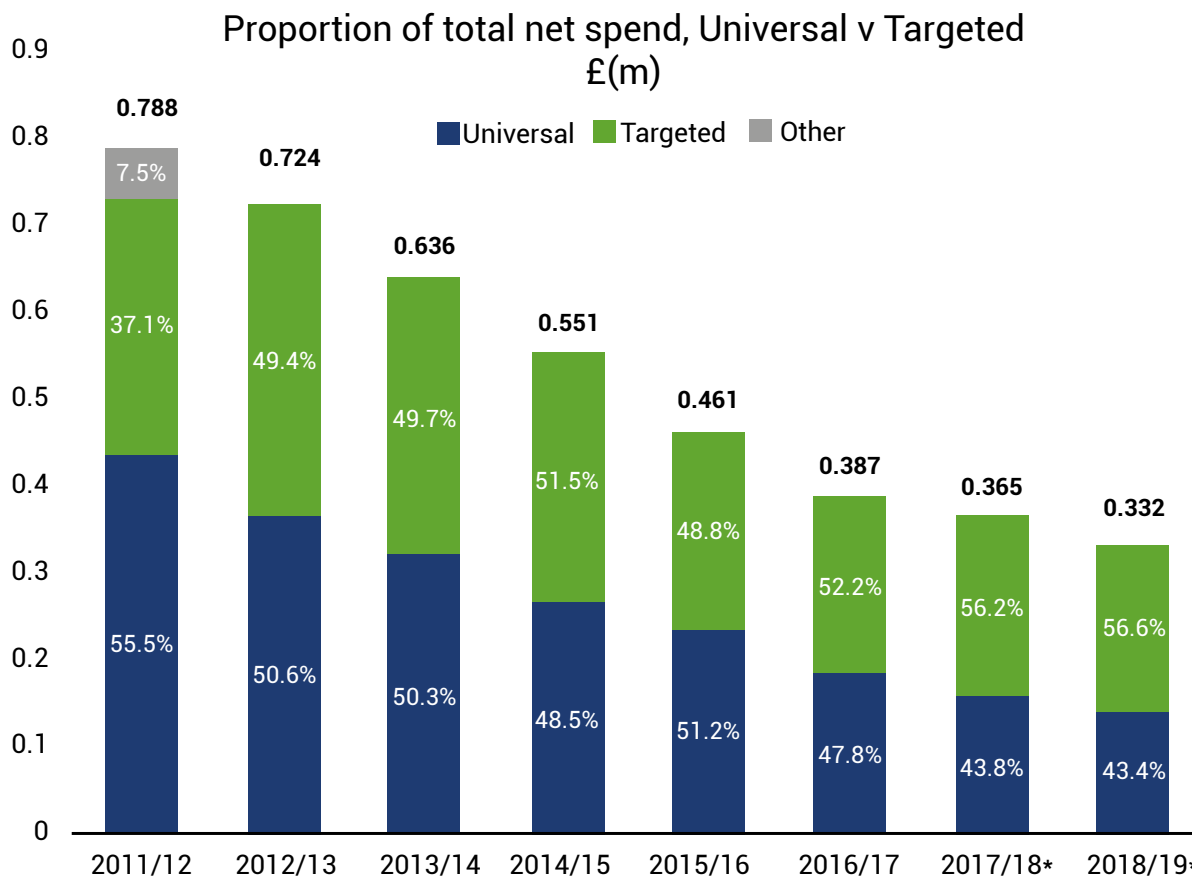
- Universal and open – allowing all young people to access youth services with informal check-ins as part of group sessions
- More formal one-to-one sessions or group social action with a youth worker to explore any issues and challenges the young person may be encountering
- Specific and tailored specialist support for targeted, identified or complex needs.

There is a consensus that the holistic role of youth work as described above is struggling to be maintained, because youth services have largely lost the first part of this structure, through the erosion of many universal and detached services. Consequently, the flexibility and personalisation that allows for trusted relationships to develop between youth worker and young person, considered as key to successful youth work, have also been lost in the shift from generic and universal to specific and targeted services.

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

These perceptions are consistent with our analysis of local authority spending on Services for Young People, which shows that the proportion of spend allocated to universal services is decreasing:¹⁸



*2017/18 and 2018/19 figures are taken from budget summary data

The worrying consequence of this trend is that 'early intervention' has become a smaller element in youth work, in spite of its long-recognised importance:

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.

Helen Taylor, Onside Youth Zones

The cost of late intervention has recently been estimated at £17bn per year in England and Wales.¹⁹ Furthermore, an analysis of individual local authority spending states that "the potential to reduce numbers of children coming into care" is the single largest factor in reducing costs.²⁰

The Office of the Children's Commissioner determines that *the significant reductions in many early and preventative interventions, such as Sure Start and young people's services, may push up needs and costs in the future.*²¹

Amanda Spielman, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, agrees, stating that *'cuts to youth and other services are a false economy, simply leading to greater pressures elsewhere'*.²²

Trusted relationships

There was a clear indication in many responses that youth work could also be thought of as a 'relational' activity across personal, cultural and structural relations, due to its ability to positively impact on individuals, their communities and society at large.

As well as benefiting young people themselves, for wider society, [youth work] helps engage young people to play an active role in their local communities and tackle a broad range of societal issues and disadvantage. YMCA

The following provides a break-down of these levels to highlight some key considerations and points that were made.

Individual relationships

We were informed that one of the primary roles of youth work is to allow trust and understanding to be organically built between the youth worker and the young person,

¹⁸ All figures taken from S251 returns, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/section-251-materials>; for figures prior to 2012/13 please see: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130108012413/http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/strategy/financeandfunding/section251/archive/b0068383/section-251-data-archive>

¹⁹ Early Intervention Foundation, *The Cost of Late Intervention: EIF Analysis 2016* (2016).

²⁰ Newton Europe, *Making Sense: Understanding the Drivers in Variation in Spend on Children's Services* (2018), p. 19.

²¹ Elaine Kelly, Tom Lee, Luke Sibieta and Tom Waters, *Public Spending on Children in England: 2000 to 2020* (IFS and Children's Commissioner, 2018)

²² Ofsted, *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2017/18* (2018), p. 17.

leading to meaningful and long-term relationships. The responses stated that this allowed young people to use youth work and youth workers as 'sounding boards' in order to explore, identify and understand their own strengths, opening up more opportunities and enabling them to identify and address all and any needs they may have. Its personal nature in this respect allows youth work to be relevant to the individual, rather than just to a whole cohort.

Youth work is a holistic process that starts where young people are at to allow them to develop through an expression of voice and built on through joint action. It makes a large contribution to cohesion, participation and empowerment for young people through informal education. There are many different models of youth work but rather than being an add-on it needs sustained contact and resources to develop a knowledge of individuals in social situations to help them develop life-long confidence.

Rajesh Patel, Senior Lecturer, Manchester Metropolitan University

Another important element of the personal role and individual impact of youth work is that often youth work can be independent from the 'space' in which it takes place, and therefore can go to the individual. It does not need to be performed in a youth club, with, for example, detached youth work being able to extend the reach that youth work has into the 'street' or places where young people are.

Federation for Detached Youth Work

From the responses, the relationship between youth work and the individual can be identified in three clear levels, with the role of the youth worker being slightly different in each level:

- (1) Youth work acts as a foundational base from which young people can identify their needs, opportunities and strengths
- (2) Youth work can co-act upon these needs, opportunities and strengths, working with the young person to agree and achieve desired outcomes via social actions, activities and discussion
- (3) Where appropriate, youth work can either work with young people on more specialist issues or signpost them towards specialist services.

As the first level allows the young person to act as the driver for change, and is experientially informed by the young person and independent of a fixed 'space', this level of youth work is considered as flexible and adaptable to the needs and situation of the young person at an individual level.

The more flexible nature of youth services, when compared to settings such as schools, has enabled them to be more adaptive to changing needs. Working with young people to develop programmes and services that address their needs.

YMCA

This flexibility and ability to be specific to the individual was considered vital in helping a young person, of whatever age, empower themselves in the transition from 'youth' to 'adulthood'. It also allows for a holistic and non-prescriptive service.

It is these voluntary relationships that enable youth workers to support, educate, influence and challenge young people, creating the space for young people to develop holistically. **Charlee Brewsher, Youth Work Unit, Yorkshire and Humber**

Some respondents expressed this idea by mentioning that we should recognise that much 'risky' behaviour is a natural part of that transition. Youth work allows young people to take ownership of the navigation and understanding of risk; it guides them through the process, when other services seek to suppress such engagement. It was explicitly stated that this was achieved most effectively through the voluntary relationships that lie at the heart of youth work.

It is well recognised that young people cannot avoid risk, and neither should they: this is a common feature of the developmental process that is adolescence. However, a strong relationship with a youth worker might help young people better understand the risks they are taking, reflect on the experiences that they have, and make different decisions when faced with subsequent similar situations. **Bethia McNeil, CEO, Centre for Youth Impact**

Youth work is also especially relevant to the individual in its ability to embrace a young person's cultural interests and contemporary trends, and fashion its services around them. For example, the 'SoapBox' centre in Islington encourages those who attend its sessions to produce shows and DJ sets based upon their current musical interests and tastes, and to then discuss the possible meanings and cultural impact of the music.

Community relationships

At a cultural and community level, the core idea was that youth work plays a role in 'social mixing' by bringing diverse groups together into a common, safe space, free from stigmatisation, prejudice and judgement, and encouraging such groups to co-develop and deliver common social actions and activities that have a positive communal effect.

A large part of the rationale for bringing young people together was stated as the need to introduce young people to 'difference', whether through introducing them to people of a different cultural background or bridging generational divides.

Youth work is essential for the engagement of marginalised groups. **Young Person 1: APPG Parliamentary Hearing with Young People**

Introducing them into different environments, e.g. from a city to an open, green space.

Open Spaces

We have had many events with older people [in our community centre] and this bridges the age gap. [This] is therefore more of a community.

Young Person 2: APPG Parliamentary Hearing with Young People

Where youth work can introduce young people to societal, demographic and environmental differences, we were also told that it can have a role in tackling social exclusion by providing participants with collective experiences to normalise any situation they find themselves in.

Youth work can have a particular advantage for young people who have additional needs [or who] feel isolated from their peers ... Youth clubs enable them to meet with other young people who have similar experiences.

Barnardo's

Young people consistently report to us the benefits of being able to be surrounded by other young cancer patients, who they can share experiences with.

Teenage Cancer Trust

There was also evidence that the idea of youth work providing a collective benefit was not exclusive to those with shared experiences or common interests; it was also stated as being able to tackle isolation by providing a sense of community and belonging.

You're a team, the minute you're in a youth group. It lays foundations as to how you grow; you learn from one another. **Dare London, London Youth's Advisory Board, London Youth**

Thus, social mixing, widening young people's horizons, and the fostering of collective similarities or communities of interest were all stressed as forming part of the role of youth work. For some, young persons' participation in voluntary social actions with communal benefits were key in this dynamic, as it helped translate learning into practice via ownership of activity.

Volunteer-led organisations make young people realise that they if they do not take control of their own services in times of low government input, they will lose them. This raises their responsibility, and levels of care and engagement ... [V]olunteering may not be a universal solution, but it is a key part of any youth offer and strengthens the community.

Young Person 1: APPG Parliamentary Hearing with Young People

We were told that it may well be the case that youth services as a whole would be more likely to gain political support if they could better evidence their ability to provide social mixing and to encourage a volunteering ethos through social action.

Society

In seeking to expand the understanding of youth work's role in structural terms, some respondents stated that:

The role of youth work goes beyond the direct delivery with young people and extends into the realms of political advocacy. As the only profession that holds the young people's interests as the primary focus of our work (as opposed to the interests of the Courts, parents, Councils, Public Health, etc.), youth workers are uniquely placed to be supporting the voice of young people at a micro to macro level.

Adam Muirhead, Institute for Youth Work

The basic principle here is that it is part of youth work's role to promote the political agency of young people and, where possible and appropriate, to provide young people with a platform on which to experience political engagement and let their political voice be heard.

There were other responses which built on the ideas of political advocacy into economic and social terms, where youth work's role was seen as being to act as a political 'leveller' to promote equality of opportunity.

At a structural level, youth workers can engage young people in democratic practices and facilitate political literacy, voice and influence as well as contributing in the longer term to strategies that promote greater equality and social justice.

Christine Smith, Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work

Some respondents framed the role of youth work within the context of civil society, stating that youth work acts as a link and broker between young people and different fields, sectors and services, such as the local community, school, social services, media and the police.

Youth work supports young people to become active citizens and engage in decisions and actions which affect them and their community. As a result, youth work enables young people to better understand the views and concerns of others and those of wider society, which in turn contributes to greater harmony and social inclusion.

Unite the Union

Within the ethos of civil society, there was also recognition that youth work should not be considered the sole antidote to, and means of protection against, wider issues and challenges, and that it must form a part of a wider eco-system. The key idea that emerged from these considerations is that regardless of the individual, communal or societal role of youth work, and whether the state or 'civil society' should drive it, youth work should co-exist as a part of a wider eco-system of other services.

Youth work does not and should not operate in a vacuum. It must be considered within the wider remits of both youth services and public services more generally. Many issues that impact on the wellbeing and life chances of young people fall outside of the remit of youth work, such as housing, education, health and employment. Ensuring that young people have access to opportunities and have their needs addressed must be seen as the responsibility of both the whole council and a wide range of partners, not just youth workers. **Local Government Association**

The role of youth work in relation to other services

There were frequent mentions of youth work's role as a 'signposting' and supporting service. Whilst in theory all young people might access universal youth work, youth workers should seek to either address specific needs through targeted or specialist programmes and social action, or signpost young people to the organisations best placed to provide support. Without such help, as one young person responded:

'young people don't know where they can go to get the right support'. Young Person, Chilypep

This uncertainty is despite the fact that one of the points in the guidance supporting the statutory duty of local authorities to provide a youth service to: 'publicise effectively to young people and their families the overall local offer of all services and activities available for young people locally'.²³

The guidance also places a duty on local authorities 'to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, equality of access for all young people to the positive, preventative and early help they need to improve their well-being'.²⁴ From the evidence received, this is not happening in many areas.

Youth work removes as many barriers as possible so young people can access help when they need it. Young people can be deterred from accessing support due to many barriers (e.g. limited opening hours, not being communicated with in appropriate ways, having to go through a 'gate-keeper'). Youth work seeks to remove these barriers and make it as easy as possible for young people to access support. Chilypep Professionals

Whilst this broad view holds true as a general principle, there is some regional variation, with young people in different localities having different structural needs and barriers, as well as differing youth offers.

Great importance is placed on the voluntary nature of the relationship between a young person and youth workers, enabling young people to share concerns that they may feel unable to raise with their family or those perceived as authority figures, such as teachers or social workers.

There was also recognition that youth services could have a proactive role in either:

- 'Targeting' known gaps in statutory provision, reaching out to those young people furthest away from statutory services; or
- Encouraging young people to voluntarily seek support via youth services, because of the informal nature of youth provision.

Youth workers are often able to reach 'difficult' and 'challenging' young people that schools, police and even parents are sometimes unable to.

Liberal Democrat Education Association

Young people engage in youth work because it is different from school and other social services – there is a more equal power relationship and a more informal atmosphere.

Tania de St Croix, Academic

The importance of this is enhanced in situations where the relationship between a statutory body and a young person and/or a young person's community has broken down. For example, in the interim report of the Youth Violence Commission it was stated that: '(46%) of [young people] said that they would NOT ask police for advice if they were worried about being a victim of crime'²⁵

The findings of that report suggest that this outcome was largely because the reduction in community police resources had led to the breakdown of relationships between communities and the police. It is likely no coincidence, therefore, that the same survey found that when asking young people, 'If there was one thing you could change that you think would make young people safer, what would it be?' – the most popular response emphasised the provision of more youth centres, sports clubs and other youth activities in local areas.²⁶

In locating youth work as a source of trusted adults for young people, which is not always evident in the relationship between other statutory bodies, some respondents prescribed a structural-functional role for youth work, supporting children and young people who, for whatever reason, do not engage with more formally defined statutory bodies. This role was most evident on a site visit to Lincolnshire, where the YMCA 'Showroom' (a MyPlace building) was providing a social hub and non-formal and extra-curricular education to a network of home-educated young children.

Some respondents argued that future investment in and extension of youth work services should not solely take place within existing statutory bodies such as schools, but also outside of them. The importance of such services outside of the school system was stressed in the 2011 Education Select Committee Report on Services for Young People, which stated that 'around 85% of young people's waking hours are spent outside formal education'.²⁷

²³ HM Government, *Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services and Activities to Improve Young People's Well-being: Section 4.k.* (Secretary of State for Education, 2012), p. 3.

²⁴ Ibid, **Section 2**, p. 2.

²⁵ Youth Violence Commission, *The Youth Violence Commission Interim Report* (2018), p. 10.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 8.

²⁷ House of Commons Education Committee, *Services for Young People: Third Report of Sessions 2010-12 Vol. 1* (2011), p. 3.

Analysis

There was a wide acknowledgement among respondents that it is problematic to define a singular 'role' for youth work. Youth work is a diverse practice with differences in length and intensity of interactions between youth workers and young people; there are also differences in the focuses of such interactions, or where their impact may lie. For example, there is a clear difference between a youth worker and a young person interacting in a one-to-one session dealing specifically with sexual health, and an open-access session with a large cohort. There are also differences in methods of engagement, levels of relationship, areas of impact, etc.

However, despite the diversity and complexity of the roles and forms of youth work, the responses clearly envisage an ideal-type youth work by elaborating upon its strengths and its unique core principles. They are ubiquitous across all youth work, with the National Occupation Standards at the core, and existing across universal and targeted services. These principles should be recognised and reinforced in all discussions surrounding youth work.

There is a consistent message from numerous different sources that suggests that preventative services, including those provided by youth work, have a powerful role to play within the totality of services available for young people more generally, with a common consensus that there is also a strong potential cost-benefit to reinstating such services.

In practical terms, an early and sustained relationship that provides a 'continuity' of services has been lost for many young people, who have been unable to benefit from a single hub for their support needs across an extended period of time, or continued access to a known youth worker.

Several respondents stated that since 2010, despite the government's promise to be 'Positive for Youth', youth work has lacked government support and suffered a significant erosion of funding.

The result of the combined loss of funding and of political leadership has been that an 'ideal type' of youth work, comprising long-term open-access and universal services, has been compromised, as the base has been eroded in favour of short-term targeted services.

There were suggestions that the government needs to realise the wider potential 'role' for youth work across all children's and young persons' services as a supplement to formal education. Youth services can augment and relieve the pressure on other, more costly statutory services, but to fulfil this role they must be funded appropriately and underpinned by clear statutory duties imposed on local authorities.

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

Are the key issues and challenges faced by young people being addressed by current youth services?

A 'Children and Young People Impact Assessment' (LGA) should be introduced for the government and other public bodies to use. This will help to ensure that the key challenges encountered by young people are central to all policy and legislative changes, and that in the event that services are not evident, there is an awareness and obligation to provide them.²⁸

We are also supportive of the commitment by the government, in its Civil Society Strategy (2018), to review the statutory duty and guidance: 'much has happened to change the way [youth] services are provided ... We expect that the review will provide greater clarity of government's expectations, including the value added by good youth work.'

Level and type of current provision

By far the most common assertion in the responses was that there are not enough youth services as a whole, especially when compared with previous years.²⁹ Recognising the decline in the number of youth services overall, there was a call for greater provision of universal and open-access services, as a top priority:

Quite honestly I don't believe that there are enough – coming again from personal experience, recently quite a few of the youth clubs in my area – although very popular – have been shut down. I've even witnessed the one that I have been a part of for nearly six years slowly decline.
Young NCB

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

Universal services provide the platform for personal and social development, as well as providing positive activities and opportunities and relieving the pressure on targeted and specialist services. We were told that the increasing lack of universal services meant there was little opportunity

for some young people to work through their 'issues and challenges' with a youth worker, before their difficulties worsen or become entrenched.

The shift towards targeted services was seen as both a cause and a consequence of the loss of central funding streams. Funding streams increasingly pursue short-term outcomes against narrow targets, suggesting an iterative and self-vindicating cycle.

Another consequence of such changes in overall youth provision has been the erosion of youth work in remote and rural locations, with youth services increasingly being run out of larger centres that cater for urban contexts, with less and less outreach work.

We don't feel all young people's needs are being addressed, especially when exploring young people within certain inner city environments ... [I]t is felt not all young people from such environments get access to explore effective youth work, as they are not picked up due to being seen as hard to reach, etc.

Kinetic Youth

Detached youth workers are at the forefront of supporting young people who are experiencing CSE and county lines, involved in gangs, criminal activity and ASB because the majority of these issues are 'hidden' or avoided by other adults and because detached youth workers are in the geographical places where these illicit and complicated negative interactions are happening.

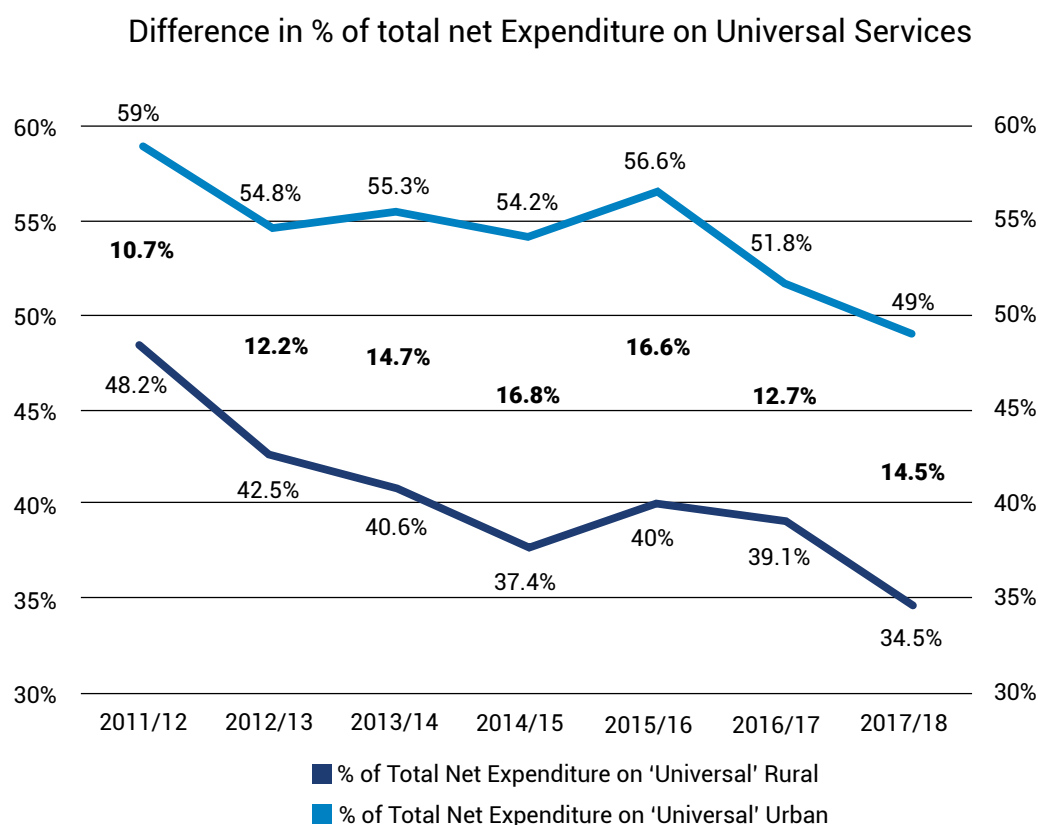
Federation for Detached Youth Work

The evidence indicates that whilst services as a whole have decreased in number, the disproportionate loss of the more flexible universal services exacerbates this trend, leading to increased demand upon more costly and targeted services. This is felt most in rural areas and areas outside of the immediate catchment of city-centre youth services; an increase in the numbers of detached youth workers is now needed to complement youth services in a fixed location.

²⁸ For a more detailed explanation of this point see: Local Government Association, *Bright Futures: Our Vision for Youth Services* (2018)

²⁹ For figures detailing such reduction in workforce see: Unison, *Youth Services at Breaking Point* (2018); Sian Berry, *London's Lost Youth Services 2018* (2018).

The trends described here are reinforced by our analysis of local authority spending on Services for Young People, across urban and rural areas (see chart below).



*2017/18 data

Youth service providers told us that these changes have had an adverse effect on the way that youth work is practised. Rather than acting as early identifiers of young people's 'issues and challenges' through a comprehensive provision of universal youth work, youth workers now more often start from a position of late intervention on more acute issues. This is a problem compounded by their not having an established relationship with the young people in question, impacting negatively upon the efficacy of youth work. Most commonly, we were told that as a result of the shift towards targeted interventions, the current levels of 'early' and 'preventative' services are insufficient.

As workers we are often working in crisis, giving us limited opportunity to build a trusting relationship and explore and tackle the real issues.

Carla Harris – youth worker

When we concentrate on a targeted offer we potentially miss less obvious needs which exist in different groups of young people.

Susan Greenwood, Development Manager, Kirklees

Compounding this lack of early and preventative youth services were increasingly high 'thresholds' which prevented some from engaging with specialist services due to not having a high enough 'need', leaving some vulnerable young people with little or no support.

The balance between prevention and intervention has tipped towards intervention, as increasingly constrained resources have been diverted towards the most obvious needs. This has had the effect of a lack of early help

for young people whose needs may not be immediately obvious or who may not meet intervention criteria.

London Youth

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 youth worker support.

Hollie Hutchings, Lillington Youth Centre, Warwickshire

Focus of provision

Respondents commonly voiced concern that current funding models are not providing the appropriate length of provision, impinging upon quality and the continuity of relationships between youth workers and young people, which need time to develop trust. Later interventions cause problems for the development of trusting relationships. Even within some universal services, it was evident that continuity and length of provision are affected by reduced core funding.

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

Katie Worthington, Westminster House Youth Club

In response to financial pressures, the Youth Service delivers to an efficient term-time-only operating pattern; therefore, there will be times throughout the year when youth work provision will not be available to young people.

Nottinghamshire County Council

Some respondents did not identify any specific 'issues and challenges' for young people, preferring to note that these were for children and young people to determine by themselves, and that there would be geographical variations. Amongst those particular issues that were mentioned, mental health, deprivation, social media and digital technology were the most dominant narratives, with mental health by far the most consistently mentioned.³⁰

Other respondents placed any 'issues and challenges' within the context of the transition from youth to adulthood, specifically referring to those young people who are NEET, excluded or otherwise at a disadvantage. Those who viewed the question in this light tended not to define singular 'issues' but rather to adopt a more historical or structural perspective, emphasising that changing demographics and political trends, austerity policies, poverty, Brexit implications, and intergenerational inequalities were areas youth work needed to understand in order to support the young people of today.

There was some focus placed not only on where key issues and interventions may lie, but how they impact in a wider context.

Look at the structure issues around employment, educational achievement (including the impact of institutional racism on BAME young people), how the media impact on young people, the political agenda, etc., and not just the situation faced by individual or groups of young people.

Jean Hatton, University of Huddersfield

It was made clear to us throughout the inquiry that some areas had suffered more than others from overall funding reductions, and there were inconsistencies even within regions based on a rural/urban divide. However, some regions were implementing different strategies and solutions to counter declining spends and a loss of centres, either by going to areas of need in mobile units or approaching youth work via detached methods.

Many respondents also highlighted the fact that regional inconsistency of service provision was likely due not just to a lack of funding, but also confusion surrounding the statutory obligations to provide youth services:

There is currently no national, regional or local benchmarking process in place for universal youth work. It would be helpful to establish a process for measuring the sufficiency of provision in line with the statutory requirements under Section 507B of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Nottinghamshire County Council

An area of concern for many older young people was that once they reached 18, all provision would be stopped, with no period of 'weaning off' or transition into other services. This situation for care leavers has recently been recognised through the Care Act (2014) in respect of mental health services.³¹

The problem is especially one of timing: if we were to design mental health services now, we would not include a transition point at age 16–18 years; indeed, this is the point where a transition point is likely to do most harm.³² Stability is required most when transitions occur, yet youth services are finding it increasingly hard to provide contact during these critical periods.

Specific areas of current provision

National Citizens Service (NCS)

Whilst respondents recognised that the NCS is not intended to be an all-encompassing youth service, it is the most heavily centrally funded service, with spend per head calculated at an expected £1,863 in 2016 for every participant who completes.³³ Several respondents explicitly mentioned that whilst the NCS model provides some benefit, it is not providing 'sufficient' services, cannot replace wider youth services and exemplifies the shift towards short-term, targeted interventions, especially in terms of reach, value for money and time spent with participants.

[The] NCS is a huge elephant in the room in discussion of the sufficiency of youth work: if half of the money currently being invested in it was to go through local authorities to fund a needs-led local youth service, the outcomes for young people would be better served.

Gill Millar – Chair of Education, Training and Standards Committee

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

It is not the purpose of this report to recommend precise distribution of funding or to recommend one service above another; but there is an underlying need for a 'base-line' of youth work provision that fits within and around the wider eco-system of children and young people's services and provides the best outcomes for children and young people. It is clear that the NCS would have to be factored into that discussion given its prominent position in the sector, its funding and its reach.

Youth work by population

Whilst the majority of responses focused on the widening of youth service provision as a whole, some argued that some sections of society are in greater need. As a consequence of the lack of universal and open-access provision previously found in youth clubs, social segregation is more likely to occur, exacerbating tensions relating to identity, race, gender, ethnicity and other differences; this was voiced by both young people and service providers:

³⁰ See also: YMCA, *What Matters Most: A Report Setting out Young People's Views about Today's Key Public Policy Issues* (YMCA, 2016), esp. pp. 9–10.

³¹ See: Department of Health, *Future in Mind: Promoting, Protecting and Improving our Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing* (NHS England, 2015), esp. p. 48.

³² P. McGorry et al., 'Designing youth mental health services for the 21st century: examples from Australia, Ireland and the UK', *The British Journal of Psychiatry* (2013, 202: 54), pp. 30–35.

³³ Comptroller and Auditor General, *National Citizens Service* (National Audit Office, 2017).

There is a continued need to engage with young people who experience discrimination and/or sit on the margins of mainstream services, including but not exclusively for example Kurdish Young People, Eastern European Young People and LGBT and Transgender young people.

Christine Smith, University of Hull

Gender

The gendered aspect of youth work provision is not well understood, and more research is needed into this area. One respondent ran a survey on questions of gender (357 young people aged 8–18); over half of the participants were females who wanted to see more activities on offer that appealed to them, 'as the current choice of activities seems to be more in line with what males may choose to do' (Doncaster Borough Council). Meanwhile, Felixstowe Youth Development Group described the running of gender-specific open-access sessions (mixed ages, school years 6 to 11).

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) groups

In a site visit which was conducted to Nottinghamshire County Council, the APPG representatives were told by the Young People's Services department that specific sessions had been opened for a group of travellers who had taken up residence in an area near one of the council's outreach youth centres. To ensure engagement amongst the community, the age limits for attendance were relaxed to allow all siblings to attend together, from ages 11 to 19, with separate and discreet provision of sexual health advice to the females, so as not to disturb the community's cultural norms. The submission from Leeds City Council also showed that youth work principles were an essential part of its offer to GRT communities.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

It was clear from several responses that young people with SEND required better support than many could provide. For example, one young person said that when taking part in NCS activities, he did not feel the youth workers had enough experience in supporting a child with special needs; they did not know how to support a panic attack or psychotic episodes. However, his one-to-one worker (personal coach) was more experienced and 'got him through' the course. He now works with the NCS board to improve accessibility for disabled young people.

Others suggested that problems around meeting the additional needs of young people with SEND were most often encountered by volunteer or inexperienced workers:

Professional training is needed; [I know that] from personal experience of being a youth worker and sometimes ... having to refer to others who are more qualified.

Young Person 1, Oral Hearing with Young People

BAME

There was very little evidence that focused specifically on BAME populations, but we were told that young people from ethnic minorities often only engage with youth workers at the point of crisis, and that youth services could be made more accessible and suitable for such communities if workforces were more diverse.

Many [BAME] young people only gain access to support at a point of crisis; therefore, different ways to promote early identification are needed, such as targeting the promotion of services, encouraging multi-agency working and drawing staff from ethnic groups.

Students' research, Sheffield Hallam University, on behalf of Element Society

LGBTQ+

Despite little detail on the nature of such provision, several organisations did tell us that they offered LGBT-specific sessions. For example, Think2Speak provided counselling and wellbeing support in Lincolnshire. Feedback from young people who use the Derbyshire County Council's youth services made clear that discussing and learning about issues of sexual orientation had been of benefit.

Since having some youth workers we have gained confidence ... as well as getting support around mental health, LGBT sexual health and issues faced with identity and rejection ... [W]e as a group have learned so much about LGBT rights, children's rights, LGBT sexual health ...

Derbyshire County Council

I think children should be educated on what the LGBT community is or how the person would most likely feel if they were in that position.

Aisha Kanwal, North Oxfordshire Academy

Analysis

In the main, respondents felt that statutory guidance that is open to interpretation in its definition of 'sufficient' has meant that reductions in central funding have impacted youth services heavily, as other areas of statutory provision have been protected.

Very concerning, reports indicate that upwards of 760 youth centres have been lost nationwide since 2012, with about 80 of those in London.³⁴ Whilst reinstating some of these may be necessary to provide a good base-line of youth service provision, it would not in itself be sufficient. In many rural or more isolated areas, we heard that without good and timely public transport links, access to existing city hubs would remain problematic.³⁵

For example, on a site visit to Lincolnshire, the parents of attendees at The Showroom youth centre explained to us that in the neighbouring village of West Ermine there was no bus service after 6 p.m., and therefore the children were reliant on parents providing lifts to undertake the four-mile journey.

For some counties, provision is often via 'mobile' youth units, such as in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. Many respondents recognised that in some areas an expansion of detached youth work would be more suitable than a dedicated youth centre, for example in dealing with 'postcode' or 'estate' territories, where attending a youth centre could be seen as a 'marker' of belonging to a particular area.

These observations reinforce the need to consider all facets of youth work in order to ascertain a 'sufficient' base-line. The solution is not as simple as providing more centres and workers, and these should be relevant to each area's geography and specific needs.

³⁴ See: Unison, *Youth Services at Breaking Point* (2018); Sian Berry, *London's Lost Youth Services 2018* (2018).

³⁵ See: Philip Alston, *Statement on Visit to the United Kingdom* (United Nations, 2018); County APPG, *Social Mobility in Counties* (County Council Network, 2018).

Are there sufficient youth workers to support youth services and other delivery models for good quality youth work?

The youth work workforce is spread across public, voluntary, charity and some private sector providers, and incorporates faith-based and uniformed organisations, amongst others, but we do not know in what numbers or proportions. We were frequently told that the number of youth workers overall is declining; however, not enough detail was made available to make anything but the broadest recommendations here. Research by Unison indicates that, at a minimum, 4,500 youth worker jobs have been lost since 2012.³⁶

As a whole, the responses were clear that whilst much of the youth sector now depends on volunteer support and activity, it needed:

- **more experienced and qualified youth workers to oversee and run the majority of services, with volunteers playing a supporting, rather than main, role;**
- **better training and support for volunteers who are having to deal with more complex and demanding workloads.**

There was no agreement on what is sufficient, i.e. what the minimum youth work provision should be. However, there was common recognition that investment in infrastructure is needed to support youth work in a range of organisations including voluntary sector bodies, housing associations and community groups, to help 'join up' and distribute services.³⁷

Youth workers

The Joint Negotiation Committee (JNC) is clear on what constitutes a qualified youth worker. The JNC Agreement for Youth and Community Workers states that post 2010, required professional qualifications for youth workers are at a minimum of honours degree level, with pre-professional qualifications for youth support workers recognised at JNC levels 2 and 3.

In 2010 a degree became the minimum qualification required to become a professional youth worker. Currently, people can become professionally qualified by undertaking an undergraduate or post-graduate qualification.

The Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work

These [JNC] qualifications prepare workers for engaging young people through a youth work methodology, develop[ing] reflective practice and supporting them to make professional judgements that hears the voice of the young person.

Roy Smith, Medway Youth Service

We need people who have safeguarding knowledge and sometimes specialist skills relating to CSE, gangs, etc. They also need to be able to undertake the necessary risk assessments and follow all the policies and procedures ... People with this level of skill can be very difficult to find, especially in a rural area.

Barnardo's

The most common narrative was that a lack of funding and statutory duties was eroding the availability of permanent, secure and full-time jobs to attract and retain qualified and experienced youth workers, including reengaging those having previously left the profession to secure work elsewhere. The responses suggest that loss of funding streams to employ youth workers has led to comparatively poor salaries, chances of career progression and job stability when compared to other sectors that provide services to children and young people, especially social work and care.

That many current youth services can even exist on their present scale is therefore due to the voluntary sector and the volunteer workforce. Whilst volunteers formed part of the youth offer in some areas, in others, where services had been cut altogether, volunteers were entirely responsible for continuing youth provision.

It was determined that a new approach for Doncaster would help to address the challenges provided by public sector budget reductions, but more importantly, also maximise other sources of funding and resources, e.g. volunteers to support children and young people. This new approach has enabled us to support the increase in sustainability of the voluntary, community and faith sector and provide a strengthened offer for young people compared to what the Council could deliver by itself.

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

Young people voiced concerns that some specific needs required skills that volunteers were unlikely to possess, for example, to support young people with complex needs or those who are vulnerable. There were numerous calls for volunteer training and support to be formalised on a national scale, with appropriate training and qualification structures. However, as with other parts of the youth work sector, concerns were also raised about how best to 'measure' volunteer suitability and impact.

Whilst the voluntary and community sector delivers substantial youth work opportunities for young people in Derbyshire, there is currently no way of measuring how many young people access these opportunities, or the impact of these opportunities.

Derbyshire County Council

³⁶ For figures detailing such reduction in workforce see: Unison, *Youth Services at Breaking Point* (2018); Sian Berry, *London's Lost Youth Services 2018* (2018).

³⁷ Previously, the NYA conducted yearly audits of all local authorities via freedom of information requests. Whilst these did not provide a comprehensive picture of youth work, they did provide a good reference point for available services in an area. The last audit was conducted in 2007–08 and is available at: <https://nya.org.uk/resource/nya-audit-2007-08/>

Sufficiency

Despite several comments questioning what constituted a sufficient amount of workers, the major consensus was quite simply that there were not enough youth workers as a whole, with more than one respondent simply answering the question with the word 'no'. One response referred to an estimate from a Department of Education report from 2002, which recommended one qualified full-time youth worker per 400 young people aged 13–19.³⁸

Unite believes that a sufficient level of appropriately qualified youth workers is one qualified full-time youth worker for every 400 young people aged 13–19 in each local authority ... [P]roviders should make provision for ongoing development of the workforce, including support for continuing professional development. Unite believes that the youth sector workforce should be suitably qualified, and that all youth workers should be employed on JNC (Pink Book) terms and conditions.

Colenzo Jarrett-Thorpe, Unite the Union

In the absence of attempts to define 'sufficiency' amongst most respondents, a few responses indicated that this should be determined at a local level: 'For youth work to be resourced effectively there should ideally be a formula to calculate sufficiency based on the local youth population' (Derbyshire County Council).

We also learnt that ensuring that workforces have quality staff was a challenge for the NCS also, so this issue is not just specific to those without central funding. Whilst the NCS example is primarily attributed to a lack of available workers to satisfy expansion needs, with few permanent or long-term contracts offered, it does suggest a sector-wide issue.

There are sufficient youth workers to deliver the activities and sessions that we want to offer young people; however, finding qualified youth workers who have a theoretical understanding of youth work and understand the fundamentals of the four pillars of youth work is highly challenging. 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

With the reduction in local authority services and a squeeze on many voluntary sector organisations, there are fewer workers with experience around. 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

Delivery models

Whilst the provision of more qualified and experienced youth workers is necessary, it is not in itself sufficient, and should not be seen as an attempt to replace the volunteer workforce or voluntary sector. Rather, any discussions about a 'base-line' of youth work provision should recognise the need for more experienced workers to work with and alongside the volunteer workforce, especially where specific youth work skills or subject expertise is required, and identify how the relationship between the voluntary sector and local authorities can be best strengthened.³⁹ For example, some councils were found to be providing or funding overarching support systems that invested in the voluntary sector in order to maximise the reach and efficacy of their youth offer.

For effective delivery models of quality youth work, funders and commissioners need to reduce administrative burdens and short-term thinking where possible and ensure a coherent and consistent message through their commissioning and administration processes. Funders also need to be more open to qualitative evaluation and outcomes,⁴⁰ taking into account the varied nature of open-access youth work and the wide scope of impacts it can have at individual, communal and societal levels. The cumulative or compound effects of good youth work are often ongoing throughout the life of a young person, and beyond the transition to adulthood, and only become apparent longitudinally after prolonged periods of engagement over a number of years.

Quality

Youth work projects, jobs and volunteering opportunities are increasingly short-term and insecure. There has been a reduction in previously secure, relatively unrestricted funding for youth services (primarily from central government) and a consequent reduction in the scope and reach of youth work, and the length of time that youth services are able to dedicate to individuals. Alongside this, job conditions and security have declined, which has in turn led to a de-skilling of the workforce via a loss of qualified and experienced workers into other sectors; this has increased the administrative and service pressure on those that remain. This all affects the quantity and quality of youth work.

Within this environment, many local authorities showed an ability to cope (albeit with a reduced service) by innovating with delivery models and partnerships – although it was often noted that the youth offer available to young people could vary drastically from one area to the next. There were frequent suggestions that, to help overcome this 'postcode lottery' of youth service provision, there should be investment into securing a better understanding of current levels of provision to improve co-ordination of services.

³⁸ Department for Education and Skills, *Transforming Youth Work: Resourcing Excellent Youth Services (2002)*, available at: <http://www.mywf.org.uk/uploads/policy/REYSDec2002.pdf>

³⁹ This point is noted in: HM Government, *Statutory Guidance* [section 4:h], p. 2.

⁴⁰ See, for example: Scottish Youth Work Steering Group, *The Impact of Community-based Universal Youth Work in Scotland (2018)*.

The local authority should have the responsibility, in partnership with local organisations and young people themselves, to determine [priorities]... The decision about how these priorities are delivered should be a local one. But at their core we should expect to see investment in a range of services.

Jon Boagey, Youth First

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 ... Improved co-ordination of services can help to ensure the safety of young people, maximise uptake and support genuine collaboration between services and providers to deliver joint outcomes. Local authorities are ideally placed to carry out this role, but the funding issues outlined have forced them to prioritise more urgent child protection work.

Local Government Association

Lower staff numbers and extra administrative needs for 'core' and bureaucratic responsibilities are reducing the ability of some youth services to expand their service or explore additional sources of help and revenue. Such issues were more acute in voluntary and/or smaller organisations, where there was often a lack of knowledge or expertise around such needs.

We are funded by over 30 sources in a year and all of them need information and monitoring, including targets met to some degree – imagine the wasted hours!

Katie Worthington, Westminster House Youth Club

Voluntary sector youth workers require support with budgeting, fundraising, marketing, careers guidance, health and safety, etc.

Cllr Emily Smith, Liberal Democrat Education Association

Analysis

There is much evidence suggesting that the number of youth workers overall is not sufficient, and that within the youth work workforce, the proportion of experienced and qualified youth workers has reduced quite drastically, with greatly increased reliance on volunteers.⁴¹

Volunteers are, in many places, delivering excellent work. However, we need to increase the number of experienced and qualified workers to: ensure the best quality of service, especially for young people with the most complex needs; oversee voluntary practices, ensuring that the core principles of youth work are embedded in services; and ensure that issues such as safeguarding are properly addressed.

It is also clear that a wider support infrastructure would be beneficial to volunteer services, to help with, for example, writing funding bids or completing health and safety or impact assessments. However, it seems that there is little national oversight of, or support for, such bodies, largely as a result of the same reduction in funding.

Whilst the reduction in youth services and workforce could be partly overcome by better joined-up working across the sector, there is an urgent need to audit the sector in order to understand what it looks like. The NYA used to be funded for this purpose and we recommend that funding is reinstated for this purpose, widening the audit in order to gain the fullest picture possible of current service levels. This could provide a valuable baseline against which any renewed statutory duty and guidance could be measured.

Such guidance should encourage the distribution of funds to, and necessary training of, existing delivery partners in accordance with each partner's specialism, location, reach and ability, rather than creating new and alternative services. We must endeavour to ensure the continuity of services and of relationships which young people clearly value, and strengthen the voluntary and community sector. Statutory guidance should stress that this should be done in a spirit of collaboration, as opposed to creating a competitive environment through tendering and commissioning processes.

⁴¹ These findings continue the trend revealed in the most recent NYA audit: The National Youth Agency, *England's Local Authority Youth Services: The NYA Audit 2007-08* (2009); see also: National Youth Agency and Local Government Association, *Youth Services in England: The State of the Nation* (2012).

What are the training and workforce development needs to secure and sustain youth work?

In a few areas, organisations and local authorities are providing infrastructural support and training to address some of the needs of their own workforce and training development; in the majority, this need is not being picked up at all. The strength of existing networks varies greatly. There is scope for national oversight of workforce and training development to support those networks that exist and to help create such networks in other areas where needed.

Increasingly, voluntary and community services have attempted to pick up the need for provision of services, co-ordination and guidance, but often without sufficient funding, resources or expertise, and without the previous levels of support from public sources and training infrastructure.

Youth work training

A workforce strategy should recognise that some necessary skills are ubiquitous across all those who work with children and young people. Such a strategy should be underpinned by renewed national occupational standards for youth work and a curriculum for youth work training. Such underpinnings would ideally extend to cover all those in the youth workforce, from volunteers to regional managers.

At more advanced levels, training will cover the most pressing contemporary issues and needs (such as mental health) and the latest academic research, whilst retaining enough flexibility to attend to local and regional needs.

Whilst different providers are taking training and development matters into their own hands via a variety of qualifications and training methods, there was a consistent theme that such an approach should be formalised and standardised. This will necessitate the development of a clear training strategy, with pathways defined from volunteer training to JNC level 1 youth work, and beyond.

A consequence of funding reductions in 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 ... a lack of co-ordination can result in duplication, difficulties for young people and their families in finding out what is available, and limited training and support for providers.

Local Government Association

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 were in place to ensure the safety and protection of beneficiaries have diminished.

UK Youth

The loss of training platforms is, the evidence suggested, keenly felt across all levels, from volunteers to management. Alongside the decline in vocational training, many also stated a concern at the vast reduction in academic routes. Compounding the lack of training availability in some areas was a loss of services needed for the workforce to gain experience, such as the necessary work-based placement hours to complete higher-level JNC qualifications. For example, level 6 JNC qualifications require 800 hours of work-placement experience, completed over two different placements to ensure a breadth of experience.

Furthermore, alongside the identification of sector-wide training needs, and of specific single-issue needs such as mental health, respondents told us that training provision should also be in line with local needs. For example, one smaller organisation witnessed 'a sharp rise in demand for advice from disadvantaged young people on rights-based issues such as debt, welfare benefits, homelessness and employment' (Osmani Trust).

There was also a strong recognition that in the current financial climate voluntary workers were essential in keeping some services operating, but also that they needed to be properly supported and trained to ensure they were not having an adverse effect.

Our youth work is currently funded mostly by church-goers. I think that the future of youth work (at least ... church-based [youth work]) is going to be volunteers. Those in paid youth work roles are likely to take on more of a co-ordination role, charged with raising up volunteer teams.

Joe Robbins, youth worker, Plume Avenue Church, Colchester

Voluntary youth clubs are the most cost-effective universal service for young people ... Voluntary clubs do however need appropriate professional help, support, training and checks to protect children, young people and adults in the workforce.

Richard Parkes, Shropshire Youth Association

Current concerns [focus] on the quality control of training and practice. Much youth work is community-owned these days, run by volunteers or by charitable organisations that have their own 'in house' training ... Who regulates this?

Steve Miles, Stroud District Council

Recruitment and retention

The evidence suggests that the 'image' of youth work in wider public discourse needs some attention, as many respondents viewed youth work as just providing places for young people to go and play pool, or as a diversionary tactic which keeps children 'off the streets'. There is not enough recognition of the meaningful and long-term impact that youth work can have. This is partly caused by, and further contributes to, a lack of understanding of youth work as a distinct form of education, amongst both the public and key decision makers. There were also concerns that current public thought and discourse has a deficit-based approach, which also has a negative effect on the way youth work is viewed.

Many people with the relevant training and experience are choosing to work in other industries and sectors due to difficult working conditions and limited job offers and job security. Workforce development should take primary importance, especially the reinstating of more secure and permanent positions that were previously provided as a result of central funding being above present levels.

Further, the reduction in open-access youth services also reduces the traditional pathways for young people to engage with those services, whereby they might stay on, volunteer and eventually train to become a youth worker themselves.

It was clear from responses that some providers were overcoming this by placing a greater focus on staff training to grow the youth workforce.

OnSide Youth Zones ... are now more heavily investing in workforce development, training our own staff and volunteers and providing greater peer support to maximise individuals' ongoing development. This does require the investment of resources and time but we believe it is key to meet our growing needs moving forwards.

Helen Taylor, OnSide Youth Zones

Ultimately, there is a need to create funding streams, whether central or other, that contribute towards more permanent or long-term contracts for qualified or aspiring youth workers. Without these conditions, much time and investment and many resources will be lost bringing about the necessary improvements to training and workforce development, as working conditions in other sectors will remain more favourable for those with youth work skills.

Youth work needs to be [held] in the same regard as social work, teaching, nursing and any other professional field.

Youth Focus North East

Increasingly, those who have been funding [youth work] are favouring short-term projects. [This] is threatening the value, the sustainability and the quality of the youth work force. It is also creating a gig economy within the youth workforce, as contracts lean towards the short term and sometimes even only seasonal employment terms, limiting the opportunities for youth workers to develop a real depth of understanding of what they're

doing. And this is contributing to a loss of expertise, a loss of historical knowledge, a destabilising of the workforce base.

Professional Association for Lecturers in Youth and Community Work

Recruitment of youth workers isn't a significant challenge for local authorities; however, retention is a growing issue as routes of progression disappear and social work is prioritised in training and development budgets due to the ongoing focus on the profession by central government and well-publicised shortages in this workforce.

Association of Directors of Children's Services

To reduce the overall investment needed to train new youth workers, a strategy should be developed to encourage the reintegration of the many qualified youth workers who have moved into other sectors and professions. Furthermore, the possibility should be explored of engaging prospective youth workers within those sectors with relevant transferrable skills, such as support work and social work.

Regarding raising the profile of youth work, several responses endorsed the idea of the development of a 'register' for youth workers, to include a probationary period similar to NQT status for teachers. Such a register was a necessary requirement to protect the status of youth workers who are appropriately trained and experienced.

Qualified youth workers must be registered and licensed to practice. The title 'youth worker' must be protected so it cannot be used by unqualified or unregistered persons.

Chris Seeley, Birmingham Federation of Clubs for Young People

Social workers, teachers, police officers, nurses, doctors; all have agreed standards and thresholds to achieve (that include peer assessment and a demonstration of competence and understanding) before they can be given those recognised titles. So do nightclub door staff. Yet anyone can call themselves a youth worker, regardless of knowledge, skills, attitude or motive.

Kev Henman, Space

Leadership and management

Further specific training needs were identified that focused on leadership and management, which gain greater significance given the disrupted nature of individual workforces and the fragmentation of services. If managers had the expertise, tools and data to be better informed about their services, the quality of those services and their impact, this would allow for a level of self-reflexivity towards improving services, and highlight relevant training needs.

At the most basic level, there is recognition that there are essential training requirements for all those working with young people, at all levels of youth work, principally in GDPR and safeguarding, equality and diversity, and – increasingly – mental health first aid. Mandatory training and clear lines of management are therefore required to ensure implementation.

The loss of experienced managers has shifted the demands of income generation, administration, health and safety and safeguarding onto frontline youth workers, sometimes volunteers. Many small community youth organisations struggle to dedicate the necessary time and resources. There is a need for funders and commissioners to better reflect the ‘overhead’ costs of management and administration in delivering quality youth work and SYP, given the trend for such costs to be largely excluded from grant or sponsorship funding, which often only supports ‘front-line’ support of young people.

A youth work workforce requires careful management, organisation, distribution and evaluation in the context of youth services across a range of agencies and settings. To achieve this, we believe there needs to be greater investment in sector (workforce) leadership and that

good-quality youth work has to be led by professionally qualified youth work staff.

Daemon Cartwright, Integrated Youth Services Manager – West Early Help Lead

Digital

Evidence submitted identified that youth work services need to extend their reach and appeal, but also to modernise, especially in a digital context; however, digital skills are viewed as lacking across the sector. There were suggestions that digital provision provides an instantly accessible area for most children and young people and would therefore extend the reach of some provision and ease the burden on youth services to some extent. However, it was stated clearly that ‘online’ services should not replace youth services, but rather provide an extended reach for youth-work information and/or access to youth workers.

In rural areas the picture is more complex than elsewhere. More digitally accessible youth work could provide a workable solution to provide youth services to those children and young people who are isolated by poor transport links. However, rural areas have the poorest rates of digital connectivity, suffering from poor broadband and mobile connections.⁴²

It's much better if the person [young people] are talking to is someone they know and trust and have real relationships with, particularly online. So this is a place where what can be offered by youth services can be made much stronger and bigger.

Cllr. Lucy Nethsingha, LGA, Children & Young People Board

Analysis

Many local authorities, voluntary sector organisations and regional networks are attempting to provide training pathways, structural support networks and membership services, some with success. There is therefore a need for a strengthened national body, not to replace these existing services, but to help co-ordinate, validate and standardise them, and to work with local organisations to create services where none are available.

However, recruitment has often fallen: 'From our perspective there was a high point in 2008 when universities recruited c. 1,500 students into youth work and related qualifications; that reduced to less than 500 last year, so in terms of the profile of people coming into this workforce it has dropped by two-thirds'.

Paul Fenton, Professional Association for Lecturers in Youth and Community Work

In this context we learned that there is an increasing reliance on volunteers who, whilst delivering much excellent and essential work, need training to help bridge the clear skills gap in their support of qualified youth workers. Whilst an increase in volunteers is to be welcomed, the evidence does point towards a certain need to redress the loss of experienced and qualified workers. Qualified and experienced youth workers are able to provide specific expertise and quality that volunteers are unable to in some areas of practice, and they can also act as a good source of support and guidance for volunteer services. Ultimately, therefore, there needs to be investment into creating the conditions for more secure and permanent vacancies.

⁴² See: Prince's Countryside Fund, *Recharging Rural* (2018); County Councils Network, *Broadband in County Areas* (2018).

Conclusion

Investing in Youth Work

The findings of this report show that in order to secure necessary investment, there is a need for a greater understanding of the role of youth work and the impact of youth services, not just in themselves, but in relation to the wider eco-system of services for children and young people.

Youth work as a distinct educational process supplements formal education by providing conditions in which the personal and social development of young people is supported, especially at the level of open-access universal services, with the potential to promote early intervention support through more specialist and targeted services. The cost of late intervention has recently been estimated at £17bn per year in England and Wales.⁴³ However, it is lower-level preventative services which have been most affected by changes in government spending since 2010: funding of non-statutory, preventative and early intervention services for children, as well as youth services funding, has reduced by 60% since 2010.⁴⁴

We wish to see greater investment into youth services as part of the next Comprehensive Spending Review; this should incorporate a review into the current level of, and spend on, youth services at a local authority level, especially noting the cost-benefits of preventative services. We recommend the reinstatement of funding for the local authority audit that the NYA used to carry out in these areas.

Statutory Guidance

The APPG is supportive of the commitment provided by the government in its recent Civil Society Strategy (July 2018):

‘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.’⁴⁵

We look to the review of the statutory duty and guidance to recommend the creation of a lead role within each local authority with responsibility for ensuring that the base-line of provision is met using existing service providers, and

Within this context, we need to ensure that a ‘base-line’ of provision is adequately funded; the focus, then, should not be limited to funding levels, but also encompass the question of how to ensure the improved accessibility of youth services alongside any training development needs, to reflect the whole spectrum and all levels of youth work across the two main strands identified above:

Open-access and universal services providing a non-formal education that supports the personal and social development of all young people, and engages them in meaningful activities and social action.

Targeted and specialist youth work SYP to engage young people with specialist needs, disadvantaged young people or marginalised population groups, and those who do not meet the thresholds for statutory interventions by health and care services.

for determining how it best fits within existing services to children and young people in that authority. The guidance should also provide clearer and more stringent instructions for completing Section 251 returns to ensure greater consistency of the key data that they provide.

In determining ‘sufficient’ access to quality youth work there should be a focus on providing more universal and open-access youth services, and training for professional and volunteer youth workers. A local authority lead should also be able to determine training needs for any specific targeted work in their area, with a strengthened national body for youth work funded to deliver such training so that it is standardised across the country with a guarantee of quality.

⁴³ Early Intervention Foundation, *The Cost of Late Intervention: EIF Analysis 2016* (2016).

⁴⁴ Children’s Commissioner, *Vulnerability Report* (2018), p. 12.

⁴⁵ HM Government, *Civil Society Strategy: Building a Future that Works for Everyone* (2018).

Accountability

Each local authority should play a lead role to ensure access to sufficient, quality youth work provision in the area; this should be overseen by the equivalent of a Deputy Director for Children's Services, to be responsible for young people.

In assessing how best to regulate or audit youth services, we considered an Ofsted-style model. In determining that the 'base-line' is met under a statutory duty at the local-authority level, service providers and organisations which deliver on behalf of councils would be able to self-

evaluate against standardised national quality assurance frameworks, with Ofsted convening 'spot-checks' akin to the means currently employed in its oversight of childminders.

Finally, within the various calls for increasing the provision of services, a Minister for Young People should be appointed to have ultimate oversight, ideally within the Department of Education to reflect the fact that youth work is a distinct educational process.

Valuing Youth Work

As we look to an 'end to austerity' in the 2019 Comprehensive Spending Review, what is needed is not simply more investment in youth services, but a clearer understanding for greater access to quality youth work provision. This report 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.'

For these measures to be effective, there needs to be a commitment sector-wide and across government to secure quality youth work and youth services. Locally, 81% of local authorities are considering establishing new models⁴⁶ to streamline delivery and increase their revenue streams for their youth services, most commonly in partnerships with organisations that have a track record of raising funds and setting up foundations or mutuals, and mobilising social impact bonds. Increasingly, dedicated youth services and facilities are supported at parish, town council or neighbourhood levels, notably supported by the likes of housing associations with long-term commitments to the community. There is also a great heritage of voluntary provision, including by faith and uniformed groups, and more recently by social enterprise and youth social action.

To achieve our shared goals, we call on the statutory and voluntary sector to form a compact with young people to produce a clear policy statement and guidance which recognises the benefits of youth work.

⁴⁶ OnSide Youth Zone, *The Way Forward for Youth Provision: Local Authority Decision Makers Views on the Future of Universal Youth Services* (2017)

Appendix 1

Methodology

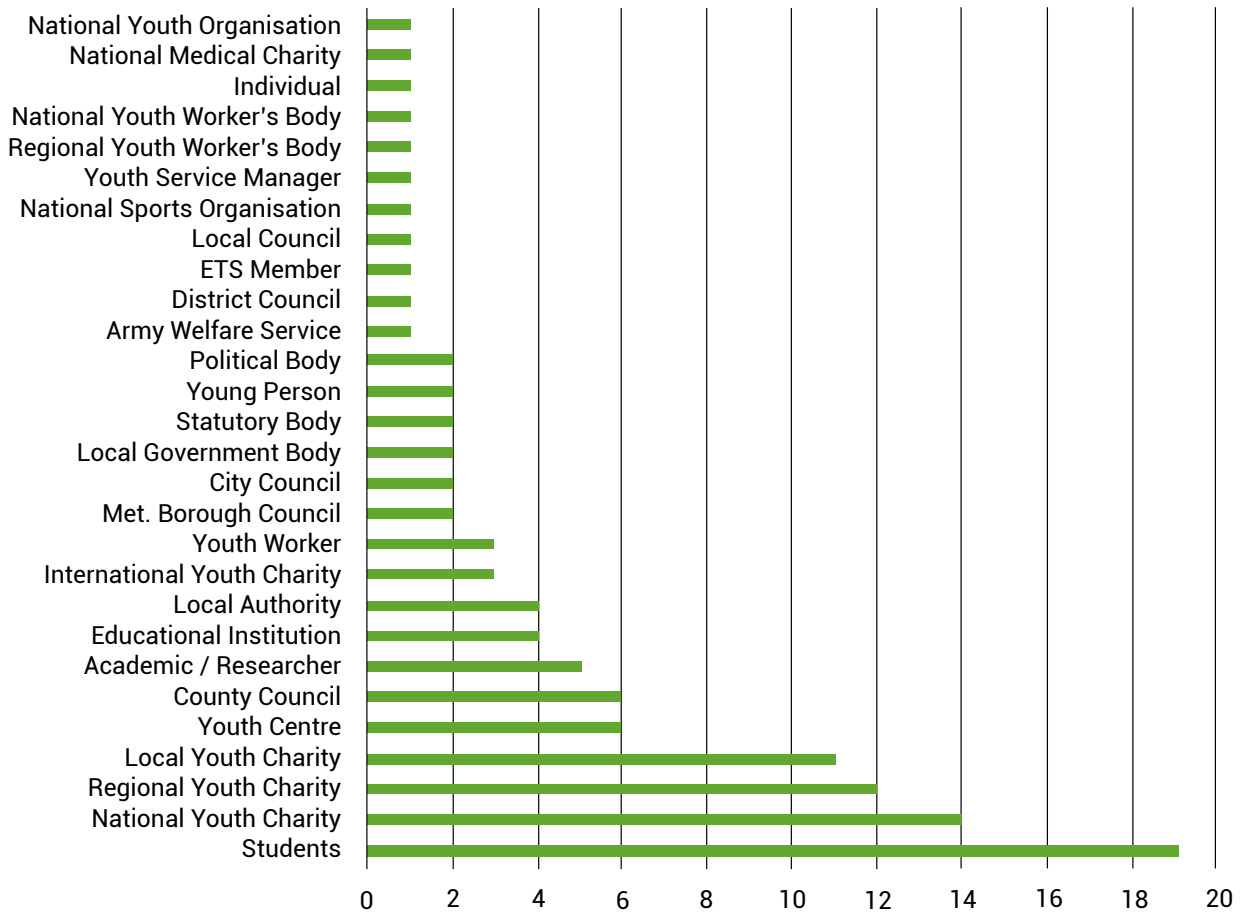
Call for evidence

An open call for evidence was sent out via the APPG secretariat and NYA, inviting interested parties to answer the following questions:

- a) What is the role of youth work in addressing the needs and opportunities of young people?
- b) Are the key issues and challenges faced by young people being addressed by current youth service provision?

- c) Are there sufficient youth workers to support youth services and other delivery models for good-quality youth work?
- d) What are the training and workforce development needs to secure and sustain youth work?

Some 111 written responses were received, which were analysed to provide a foundation for questions explored at oral hearings and to shape the focus of the desk research.



NB: Many responses drew on multiple voices, for example, where submissions from local councils and youth centres included evidence from young people.

Parliamentary hearings

Four oral hearings were held, chaired by Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP and attended by APPG members from at least two political parties, to ensure impartiality. Expert advice was provided by Leigh Middleton, CEO of the NYA. The oral hearings used both open and semi-structured lines of inquiry, which allowed witnesses to provide evidence without direction, and APPG members to explore specific lines of inquiry.

Witnesses were invited to introduce themselves, to explain their understanding of youth work and to say why they had chosen to provide evidence. They were also encouraged to provide an overview of their submission, in line with the broad questions that framed the inquiry. APPG members responded with questions about what they had heard, and further questions on related and emerging areas of interest. The hearings aimed to involve a representative range of witnesses, including: children and young people, national organisations, grassroots youth work organisations, government and government-funded organisations.

Children and young people

Age	Gender	Region
23	Female	North-West
17	Male	London
18	Female	North-West
17	Female	North-West
25	Female	North-West
17	Male	West Midlands

National organisations

Local Government Association

Cllr. Lucy Nethsingha – vice-chair of LGA Young People's Board

Association of Directors of Children's Services

Martin Pratt – Chair of London ADCS

Office of the Children's Commissioner for England

Martin Lennon – Head of Policy

Grassroots youth work organisations

Partnership for Young London and Regional Youth Work Units

Sharon Long – Director of Partnerships for Young London Regional Youth Work Policy Unit

Federation of Detached Youth Workers

Emily Collinsbeare – Executive Committee Member

Association for Lecturers in Youth and Community Work

Paul Fenton – Support and Development Officer

Government-funded organisations

NCS Trust

Alison Wood – NCS Manager at Bolton Lads and Girls Club

Centre for Youth Impact

Bethia McNeil – Chief Executive

Site visits

Site visits were arranged to allow APPG members to see youth work in action and to ask questions to young people, staff, management and others. This gave members an opportunity to explore in more depth some of the issues raised in the oral hearings and written submissions, as well to raise other relevant queries. Visits were kindly hosted by:

- Nottinghamshire County Council Youth Services
- Brighton and Hove Youth Collective
- Merseyside Youth Association
- Lincolnshire Youth Association.

Events

Several other events helped to inform this inquiry, in particular:

- Fringe events at the Party Conferences: - Liberal Democrats; Labour Party; Conservative Party
- NYA Youth Work Summit
- National Advisory Board Meeting: representative organisations from voluntary and statutory youth services and youth work hosted by the NYA.

Appendix 2

What is youth work?

Models of and approaches to youth work see it as informal or non-formal education, encompassing some of the around 85% of young people's waking hours which are spent outside formal education.⁴⁷ On this basis, youth work curricula support personal and social development, and enable young people to increase their resilience and skills in the present, and promote their ambitions for the future.

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

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

Youth work takes place in a range of contexts and settings. It is 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 team-work
- Life skills (family and relationships; physical and mental health; digital and social media)
- Economic skills (engagement in education and employment; financial literacy)
- Social integration (community engagement and decision-making; citizenship and reflection on anti-social behaviour).

Responses showed the richness of the history and practice of youth work, indicating that youth work can help young people to overcome latent inequalities by:

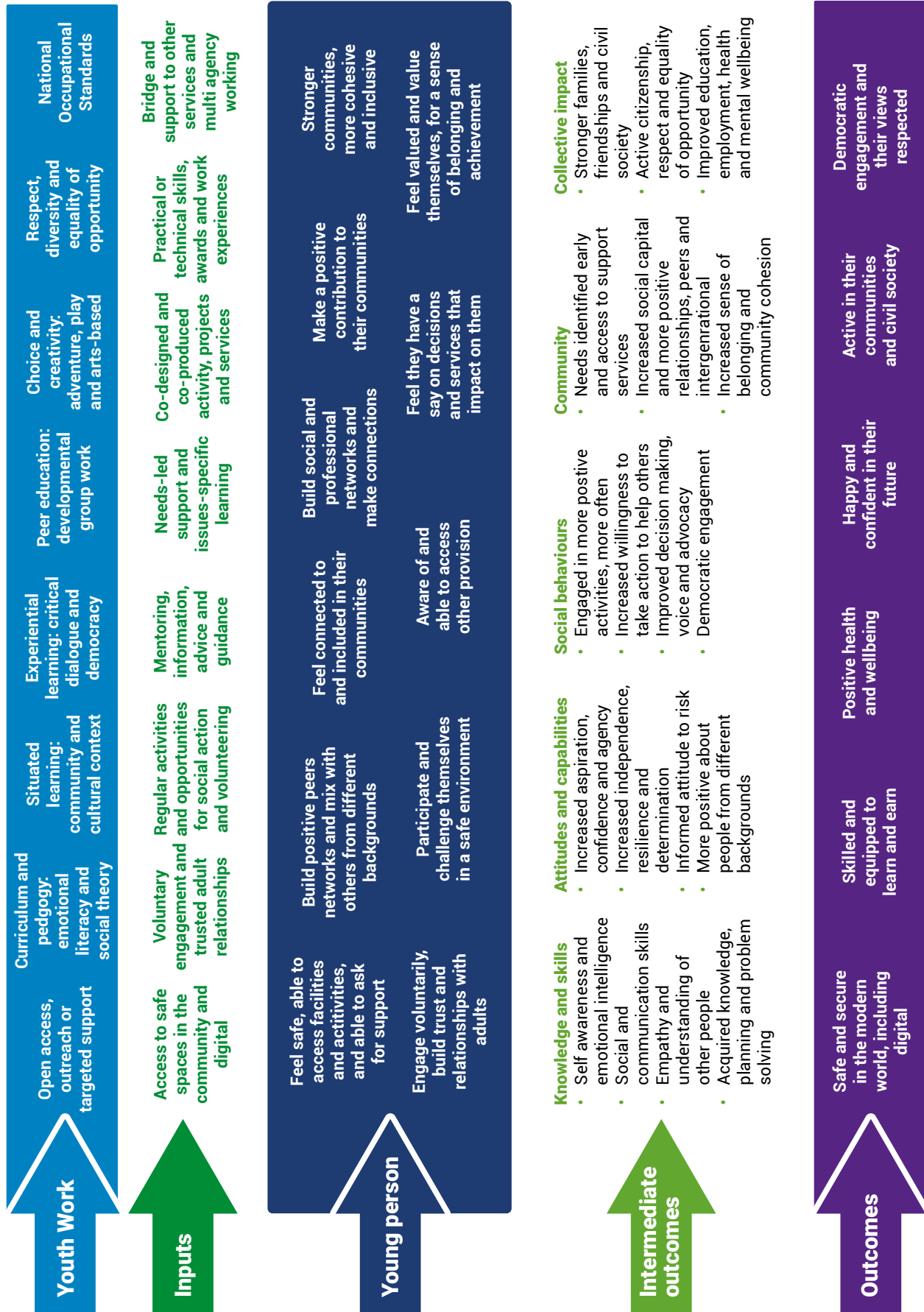
- Providing them with the skills needed to learn about themselves and their strengths and assets, alongside learning about others and society
- Engaging them in positive activities and networks, giving them the space in which they can overcome societal divisions
- Helping them develop their own voice,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

Good youth work accomplishes this by:

- Starting where young people are at, removing the need for them 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
- Ensuring voluntary engagement; along with the provision of safe spaces and secure environments, this will help build trust between youth workers and young people
- Being asset-based: there are specialist and targeted forms of youth work, but all youth work deals with young people and their strengths and opportunities.

⁴⁷ House of Commons Education Committee, *Services for Young People: Third Report of Sessions 2010-12 Vol. 1*

Theory of Change | Youth Work



Appendix 4

Funding

Further desk research was carried out on the funding landscape for youth work and Services for Young People (SYP), to better understand the extent, trends and impact of the funding cuts cited by the vast majority of respondents to the inquiry.

Summary

Recent analysis shows that over the long term, overall spending on young people has largely remained constant. Spending instead has been redistributed in favour of protecting services for which there is a statutory demand, meaning for example that 'education' has largely been protected, whilst within children's services, the protection of spend on looked-after children (due to increased demand) has come at the cost of big reductions in spending on non-statutory services for families with young children and programmes for young people.

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 onto local authorities: central funding was cut 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, many previously ring-fenced targeted funds were also abolished in 2010/11. Compounding these declining spends, the total population has grown and demand has increased for homelessness services and adult and children's social care.

In a relatively short period of time, large cuts to SYP were enacted as a consequence of a reduction in specific ring-fenced budgets and overall local authority income. The onus for maintaining these services was transferred onto local authorities, which were either unable or unwilling to maintain spending levels given their reduced spending power and limited statutory obligation to maintain youth services.

Furthermore, the total population has grown and demand has increased for homelessness services and adult and children's social care. Spending on SYP has, as a result, been pushed down the list of priorities, and has grown smaller whether measured against nominal spend, real-terms spend, spend as a proportion of non-ring-fenced income, or spend as a proportion on non-looked-after children. These reductions have been heaviest for universal, open-access services.

We can show that overall spend under SYP is declining. Yet the reduction is not uniform across the country. Due to the large variations in recording practices it is beyond the scope of this report to investigate individual council or local authority spends in comparison to each other.

From our analysis of S251 spend we can show that since 2011, urban areas have suffered from a larger reduction in spend, both in terms of overall amounts and as a percentage of total spend. However, the levels of spend were initially much higher; there was more to lose.

In rural areas, the starting point for spends was lower and there is little doubt that the reduction in spend will have harmed all services. The damage will be most felt in rural areas where restricted means of travel and wider dispersion of services necessitate higher spends. Furthermore, we were frequently told that in rural areas with a wide catchment area, universal services are by far the most appropriate to ensure more children and young people receive some support, but that such services have clearly declined the most in such areas, annual spend currently standing at just £20 per head.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ It is likely that the actual figure seen by young people is less, once overheads and other costs are accounted for.

Local authority spending on services for young people

In attempting to determine the level of spend on children and young people, the most common source of data is the Section 251 (S251) returns submitted by upper-tier local authorities to the Department of Education. Until recently, S251 was the only source of detailed information about spending by local authorities across England on education and children's services.

The information gathered for and provided in S251 is important for a variety of reasons. Spending amounts are of central relevance to the lives of almost every child in England; the dataset also incorporates a specific focus on some of the most vulnerable children in society. The dataset covers a number of years, enabling the analysis of mid- to long-term trends.

However, while S251 data can be used to determine trends in local authority expenditure, it is not fully reliable for a detailed analysis. This is for a number of reasons:

- Changes to the dataset: There have been numerous definitional changes in the dataset since 2008/09, rendering comparisons over time problematic. Most notably:
 - Prior to 2010/11, there was no solid distinction within the data between 'universal' and 'targeted' youth spend.
 - Prior to 2010/11, youth service spending was subsumed under a wider 'youth and community' category. Other definitional changes also occurred in this year. Since 2010/11, SYP have been listed under their own category.
- Recording inconsistencies: S251 budget data is based on intended spend, and is therefore not fully indicative of actual spend.
 - An analysis of the accuracy of using the intended spend to predict actual spend, published in 2017, cited several problems, concluding that for children's services it 'would have been more accurate simply using the previous year's outturn as a predictor of current year outturn rather than producing a budget'.⁴⁹
- An analysis on the reporting accuracy of S251 conducted in 2014 concluded that variations in how the returns are completed are, 'significant to the extent that the analyses are not fit for the purpose either of making valid assessments of total spending on specific areas or of making useful comparisons between local authorities'.⁵⁰
 - For instance, some local authorities include spend on homelessness services aimed towards young children under their spend in this section, while others include it elsewhere.
- Corporate overhead allocations are also responsible for large variations in spending (e.g. HR and corporate financing for children's services) because the proportion of overheads spent on children's services as a proportion of the whole is not recorded consistently.⁵¹
 - It is not clear to what extent these inconsistencies affect the sections on SYP that we analyse here on a local authority level. A more forensic audit will be needed to determine this.

Universal and targeted spend

From 2012/13 a number of sub-service spending lines were moved in the returns from education services to children's services, but with no clear indication of whether they had been allocated as a 'universal' or a 'targeted' service. However, for the purposes of this report it is assumed that any deviation caused by this is likely to be marginal, as the two primary areas of spend in the SYP category that have caused the discontinuity (funding for teenage pregnancy services and substance misuse services) had a combined gross spend of only £24.4 million in 2014/15, reducing to £15.7m in 2016/17. It is most likely that the services in question are targeted services due to the specific nature of the issues they address.

There are inconsistencies between local authorities in how spend allocations are broken down into universal and targeted. A few authorities place total spend under universal, and some place it under targeted (Essex for example declaring £0 spend on universal services across the period 2011/12–2017/18, despite a population of 150,000+ 11–19 year-olds and a yearly peak spend of £20.62m)

In the course of these investigations, it was also found that multiple values might exist for the same or similar data analyses due to previous years' budgets having been revised, or it not having been made clear whether 'net' or 'gross' expenditure had been used or whether budget or outturn data had been analysed.

⁴⁹ Revolution Consulting for Department for Education, *Section 251 Data: Testing Accuracy and a Proposed Alternative - Research Report* (2017), p. 45.

⁵⁰ Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, *Research on Children's Services Spending and Budgeting – Section 251 Returns and Analysis: Final Report* (2014), p. 4.

⁵¹ Newton Europe, *Making Sense: Understanding the Drivers in Variation in Spend on Children's Services* (2018), pp. 26–28.

Use of datasets

Under current processes, outturn information is not available until nine months after the end of the year to which it relates. The timing of returns means that for the first six months of a year there is no information available about the current financial year. In effect, this can create a 15-month period during which only the budget information is available.

Using the outturn data for S251 is therefore problematic in trying to provide a comparative illustration of previous years to the current year, because whilst outturn data is more representative of expired years, there will be no data for the latest year until at least six months after the financial year's end.

In the outturn (R03) data on local authority spending, the 'SYP' line only goes back to 2014/15, and all anecdotal evidence received as part of this inquiry suggests that the largest cuts were evident much earlier. In order to place the trend of cuts to youth services into some formative context, it is therefore necessary to use S251 data.

Therefore, whilst Section 251 returns are of huge importance in any investigation of this kind, they cannot be considered fully accurate in providing a dataset from which to compare individual local authorities, and instead should be considered as illustrative of larger aggregate trends.

Funding trends

The following analysis therefore attempts only a high-level overview, rather than a forensic investigation, in order to provide an illustrative analysis of decline in SYP spending. To retain some consistency and to overcome the 15-month gap as described above, we use the outturn summary data for all years except 2017/18 and 2018/19, where only the budget summary is available. For all data, the 'net' expenditure is used.⁵²

To help overcome the definitional changes as detailed above, data from 2010/11 is considered more reliable; figures for 2008/09 and 2009/10 were calculated by taking the aggregate net expenditure for the sub-total of youth and community work, and deducting the amount allocated to 'adult and community learning'. To this figure was then added 'substance misuse services' and 'teenage pregnancy services', as these were allocated under SYP spend from 2010/11 onwards.

This provides a base figure for years 2008/09 and 2009/10, but the actual spend in those years is almost certainly higher, as a part of the excluded 'adult and community learning' expenditure (which was a large proportion of the whole) would likely have been spent on young people.

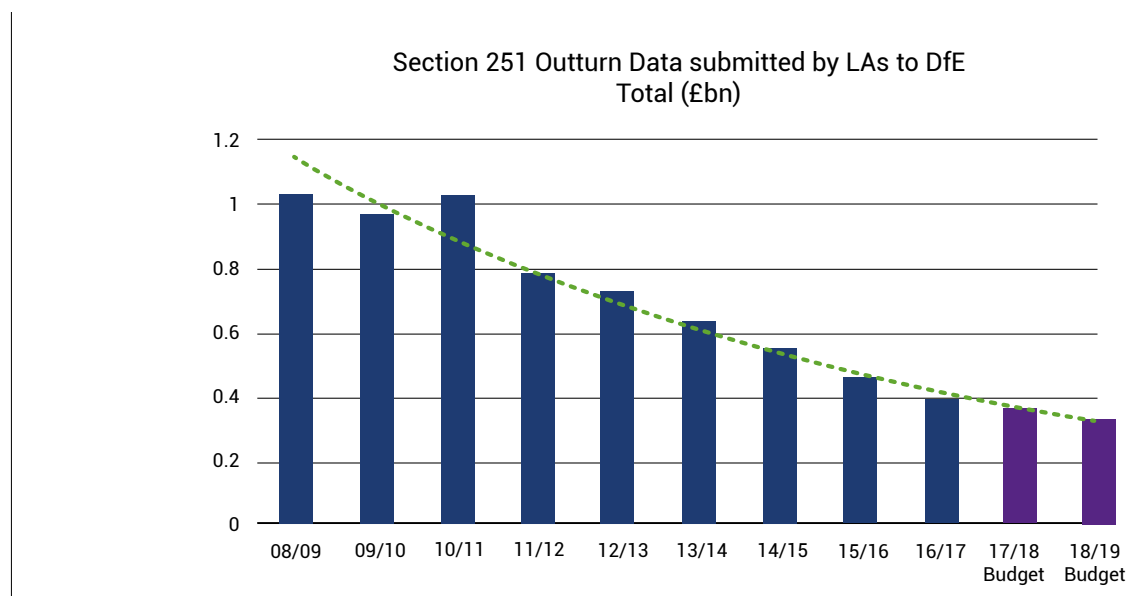
Using this methodology, the figures for net SYP expenditure are as follows:

	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18*	18/19*
Net Spend	1028	971.44	1022	787.17	724.82	635.07	551.04	462.16	387.66	364.97	332.20

*Figures for 17/18 and 18/19 are taken from budget summaries

Fig 1. Section 251 returns 2008/09 to 2018/19

Nominally, the reductions in spend on SYP are clear, and are illustrated below.



⁵² Section 251 returns; available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/section-251-materials>

To adjust these findings for inflation we use the ONS Consumer Price Inflation Index, which is the officially recognised method.⁵³

We determine the yearly inflation rate based on the period between April to April for each year in order to more accurately depict the rate of inflation for a financial year using the following formula:

$$\left(\frac{(\text{April}^n - \text{April}^{2008})}{\text{April}^n} \right) * 100$$

So, for example, the inflation-adjusted multiplier for the period FY 16/17 to FY 08/09 would read:

$$\left(\frac{(\text{index value for April 2017} - \text{index value for April 2008})}{\text{index value for April 2008}} \right) * 100$$

Using the rate of inflation in this manner, and with the year 2008/09 as an index point, gives the following:

All in £m	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18*
Nominal Net Spend	1028	971.44	1022	787.17	724.82	635.07	551.04	462.16	387.66	364.97
Cumulative % Multiplier	1	1.021	1.05	1.11	1.143	1.170	1.192	1.189	1.193	1.225
08/09 Level Spend	1028	1049.59	1079.4	1141.08	1175	1202.76	1225.38	1222.29	1226.40	1259.3
Shortfall	-	78.15	57.4	353.91	450.18	567.69	674.34	760.13	838.74	894.33

*Figures for 17/18 use budget summary data

The clear indicators are that services for young people have been cut drastically as responsibility for spend has been shifted onto local authorities.

Whilst nominally the reduction has been from £1.028bn in FY 2008/09 to £0.388bn in FY 2016/17, the real-terms reduction when adjusted for inflation shows a shortfall of £838.74m against levels in 2008/09.

Looking specifically at the period 2010/11–2016/17 – to help negate the change in data-recording methodology that was implemented at the beginning of this period – the S251 data shows a nominal reduction in spend on youth services from £1.022bn to £0.388bn, or £623m. In real terms, this equates to a £780.5m shortfall.

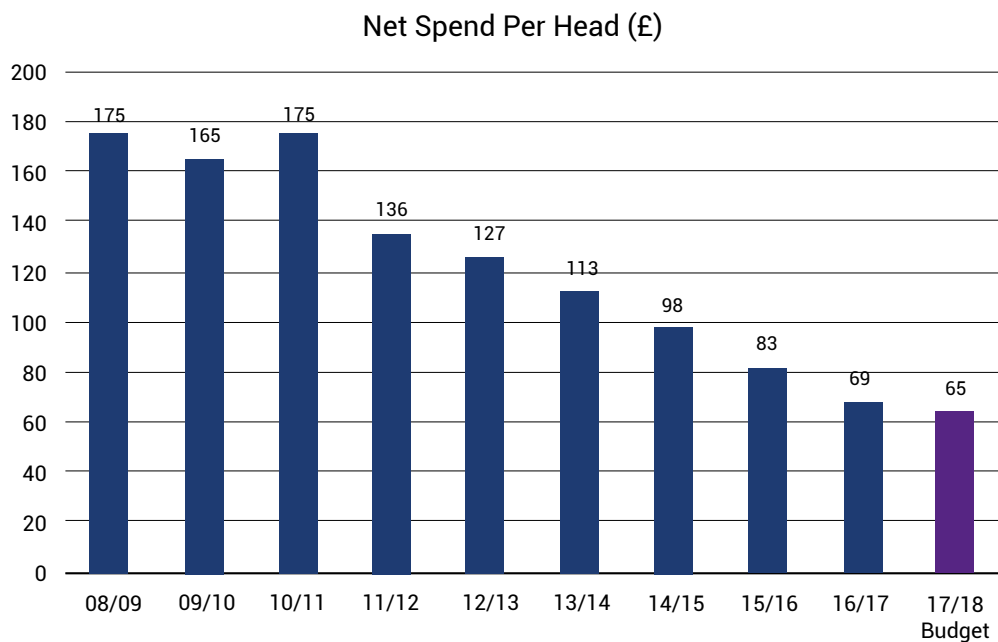
Early indications from the 2017/18 and 2018/19 budget summaries suggest that the cuts will be confirmed as continuing when the next round of outturn data is published, and for FY 17/18 inflation has continued to rise, at the fastest annual rate during the time-series we examine. Therefore, the gap between nominal spend and real-terms trend will likely increase further.

⁵³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/datasets/consumerpriceinflation> – Table20a.

Expenditure per head

A more rigorous way of analysing the data is to also factor in changes to the total youth population across the time period (assuming the ages of 11–19 constitute the 'youth' population).

In mid-2008 there were an estimated 5.87m young people aged 11–19 in England; by mid-2017 this had reduced to 5.62m⁵⁴



Nominal spend per head over this period sees a decline from £175 to £65, a 63% reduction, or £110 shortfall. In real terms the shortfall is actually £149.

Over the period 2010/11 to 2016/17, the reductions in nominal and real spend per head are £110 and £131 respectively.

Mapping these results to show the grouped frequency distributions of interval data better highlights the trend towards lower spend per head on an individual upper-tier local authority basis rather than an aggregate basis.

In order to more accurately depict the trend, we exclude any upper-tier local authorities with an 11–19 aged population of less than 500 (Isles of Scilly and City of London), leaving 150 upper-tier local authorities.

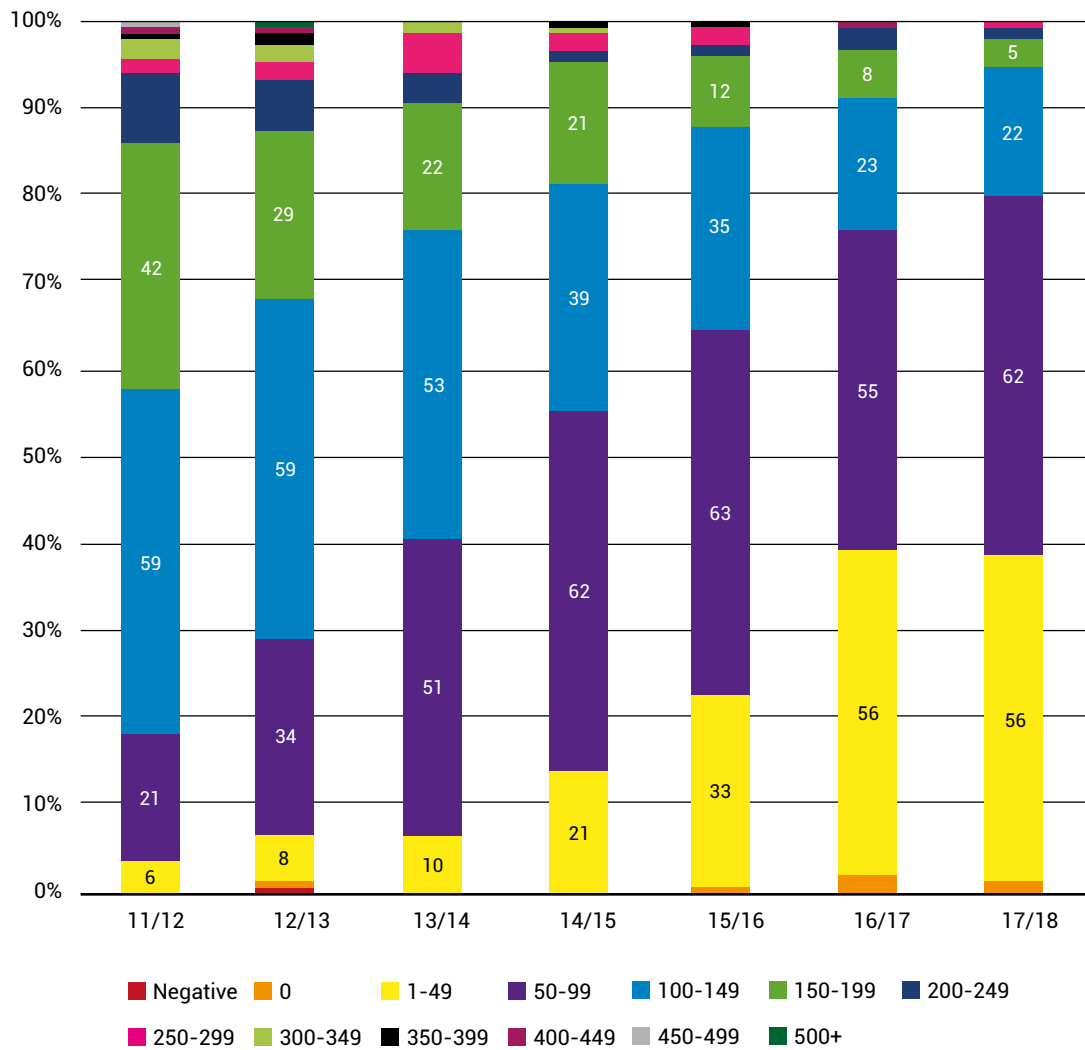
The graphic shows that whilst in 2011/12 only 27 local authorities, or 18%, had a total net spend per head of under £100, this figure had risen to 114, or 76%, in 2016/17.

The budget figures for 2017/18 predict a further rise to 120, or 80%, in 2017/18.

We are unable to fully predict against the 2018/19 figures as the mid-year population estimates were unavailable at the time of writing; however, it is expected that the trend will continue.

⁵⁴ Mid-year time series available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland>

Upper-Tier LA Net Spend per Head (£)

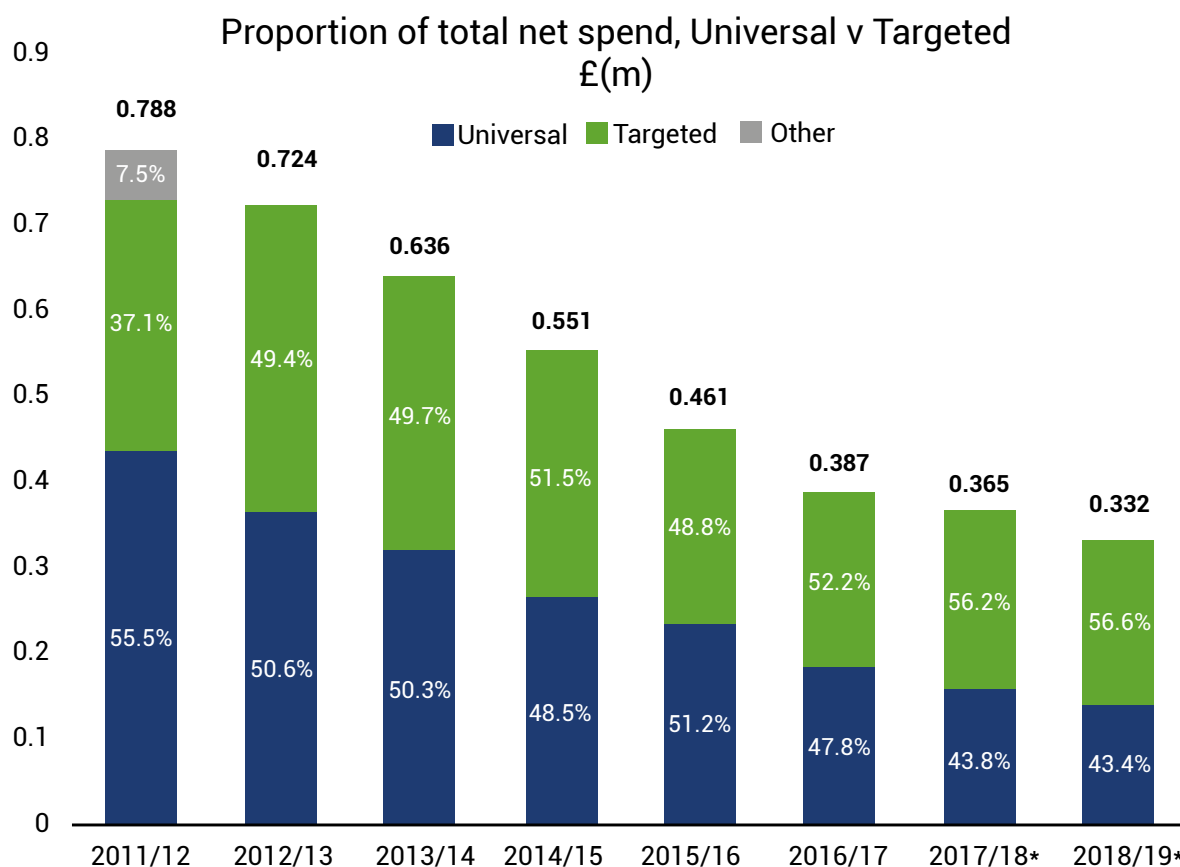


*2017/18 figures taken from budget

Universal vs. targeted expenditure

It is therefore clear that there has been a decline in SYP spend across all local authorities, most markedly from 2011/12 to the present, primarily as a result of the 2010/11 spending review.

However, alongside this reduction there is also a clear trend whereby spend is increasingly being allocated to 'targeted' rather than 'universal' services. This suggests spend is increasingly being 'ring-fenced' for a smaller proportion of the youth population, as illustrated below.



*2017/8 and 2018/19 figures taken from budget summary

Rural vs. urban split

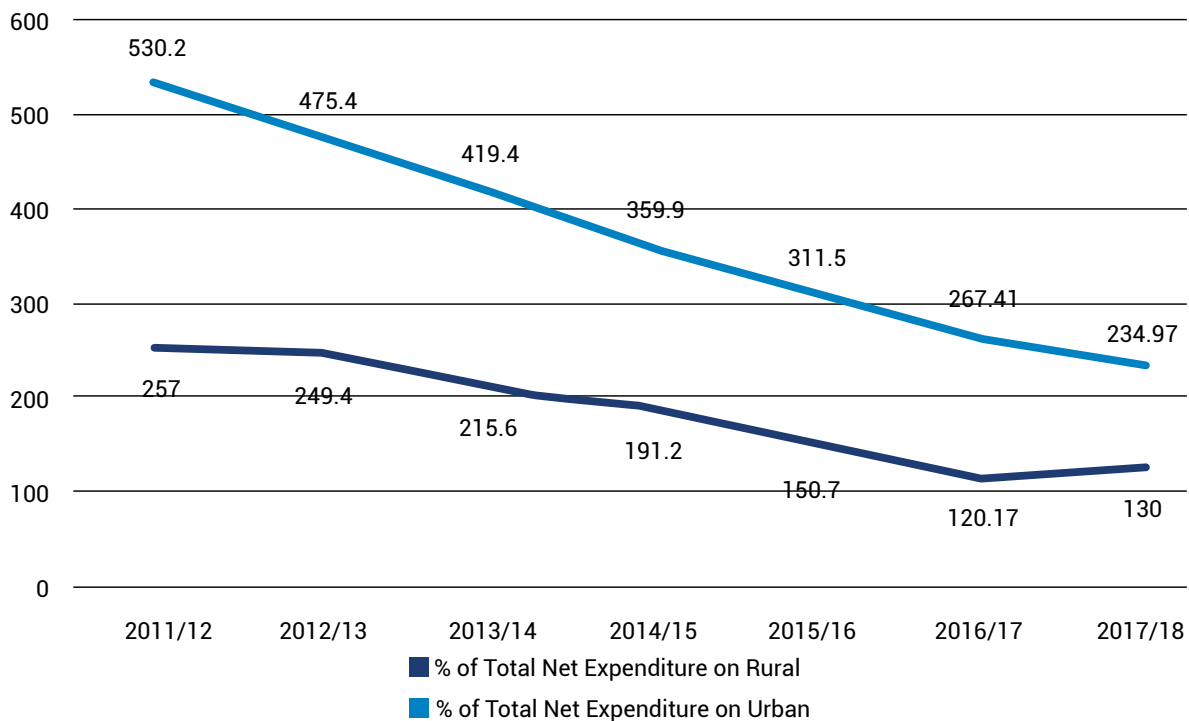
Rural–urban classification for all upper-tier authorities allows a basic analysis of differences in spends across rural and urban divides. The classifications are as follows:

Classification	Number of Authorities
Urban with Major Conurbation	65
Urban with Minor Conurbation	5
Urban with City and Town	40
Urban with Significant Rural (rural including hub towns 26–49%)	21
Largely Rural (rural including hub towns 50–79%)	17
Mainly Rural (rural including hub towns >= 80%)	4

For the purposes of this analysis we consider the first 3 of these categories as 'urban', and the latter three as 'rural'. As these classifications came into use following the 2011 census, we use the time period from 2011 onwards.

Using S251 spends across these classifications, we can determine that over the period of confirmed spend 2011/12–2016/17, rural areas declared a 53.2% drop in overall spend, as opposed to 49.6% in urban areas, as indicated below.

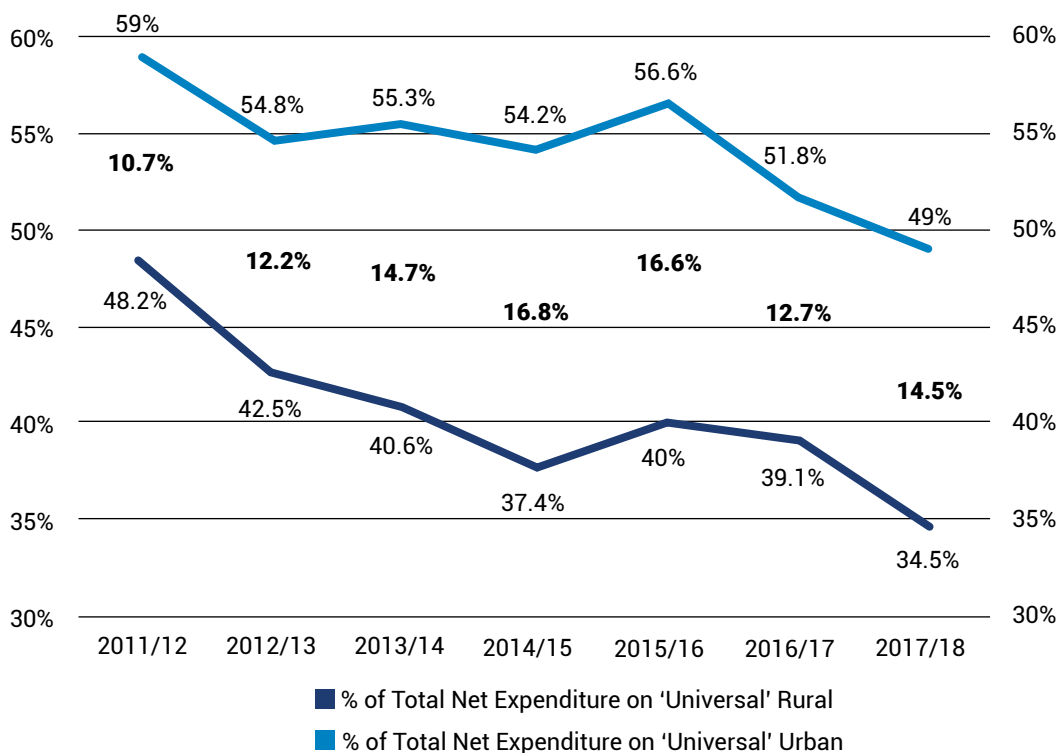
Total Net Expenditure on SYP (£m)



*2017/18 figures are from budget summary

When assessing the relative proportion of overall spend attributed to 'universal' services, it is clear that in rural areas this has always been at least 10% below that of urban areas, and that this gap is widening, as illustrated below.

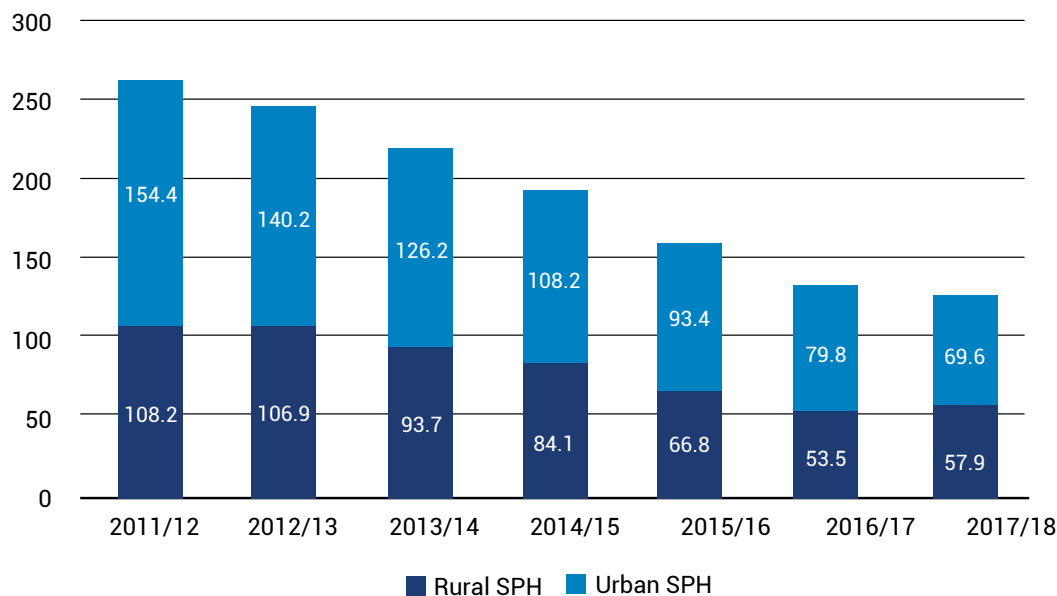
Difference in % of total net Expenditure on Universal Services



Assessing these same findings in terms of spend per head shows the following:

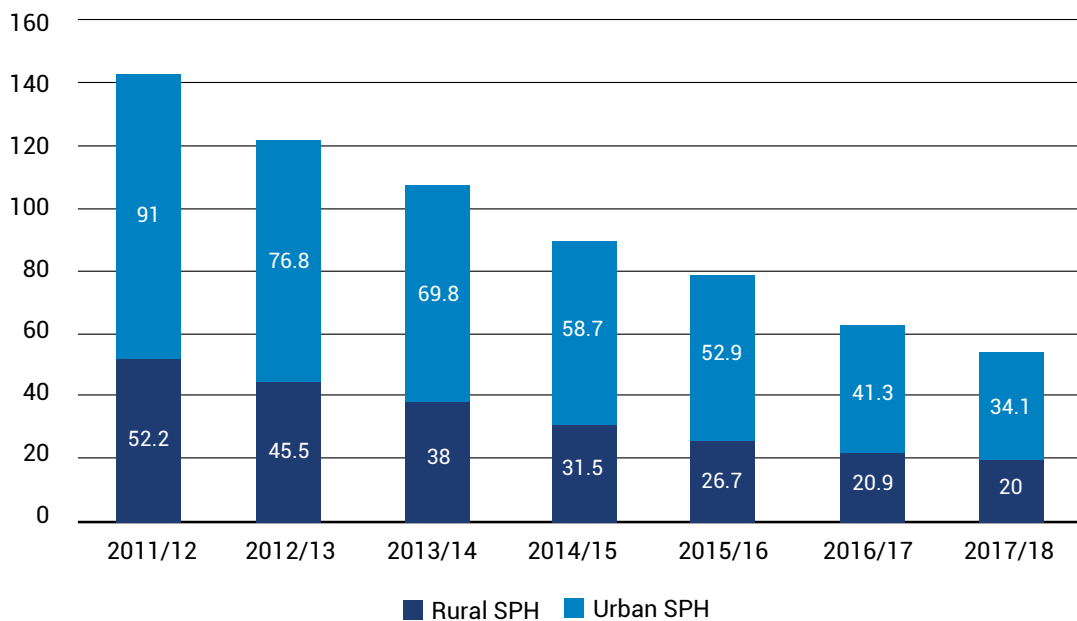
- Urban areas have had a higher overall spend per head, and a greater proportion of that spend allocated to universal services throughout the time-series
- Overall, urban areas have, across the time-series, reduced spend per head by a larger amount and a greater proportion than rural areas
- Rural areas have, across the time-series, incurred greater spending cuts in relation to universal services than have urban areas.

Total Net Spend Per Head (£)



*2017/18 figures taken from budget summary

Net Spend Per Head on Universal Services (£)



*2017/18 figures taken from budget summary

Local authority income

For local authorities, the 2010/11 spending review led to a loss of several ring-fenced targeted funding streams and reduced amounts via the early intervention grant. This led 'some local authorities to prioritise statutory and higher-risk services, such as children's services, above youth services.'⁵⁵ This was compounded in 2013/14 by the vast reduction in the Revenue Support Grant (RSG), which had previously been bolstered by redistributed non-domestic rates.

The biggest drops in spend were in 2010/11 and 2012/13. However, in 2010/11 many previously ring-fenced targeted funds were also abolished as stand-alone funds:⁵⁶

Youth Opportunity Fund (£40.75m in 2010–11)

Youth Crime Action Plan (£11.98m in 2010–11)

Challenge and Support (£3.9m in 2010–11)

Intensive Intervention Grant (£2.8m in 2010–11)

Children's Fund (£131.80m in 2010–11)

Positive Activities for Young People Programme (£94.5m in 2010–11)

Youth Taskforce (£4.34m in 2010–11)

Young People Substance Misuse (£7.0m in 2010–11)

Teenage Pregnancy (£27.5m in 2010–11)

Comparing spending for Services for Young People as a proportion as a proportion of the major non-ring-fenced income streams for local government, shows SYP expenditure is disproportionately cut.⁵⁷

Table: SYP as a percentage of local authority non-ring-fenced income (all figures in [£bn])⁵⁸

	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14*	14/15	15/16	16/17
RSG income	24.639	24.89	23.577	15.175	12.675	9.52	7.188
Locally funded income	47.328	47.899	48.771	57.319	58.335	58.966	60.445
Total non-ringfenced income	71.967	72.789	72.348	72.494	71.01	68.486	67.633
SYP spend	1.022	0.787	0.724	0.635	0.551	0.462	0.388
SYP spend (%)	1.42%	1.08%	1.00%	0.88%	0.78%	0.67%	0.57%

*Prior to 2013/14, RSG income was calculated by combining the RSG and redistributed non-domestic rates

The simple observation is that the nominal total of non-ring-fenced income of local authorities only began declining from 2009/10 levels from 2015/16 onwards (without adjusting for inflation), but that spend on SYP, as a proportion, has dropped more drastically, especially from 2010/11.

It is clear that overall local authority spending on SYP is decreasing disproportionately to the overall non-ring-fenced income expenditure. However, when we assess SYP as a proportion of the total spend of the Schools, SYP and Youth Justice Budget, it is also clear that even within spend on young people – that which is not allocated for looked-after children – youth services are losing out more drastically than other areas.

	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18*
Net SYP Spend (£m)	1022	787.17	724.82	635.07	551.04	462.16	387.66	364.97
Spend as % of Schools, SYP and YJ	2.94%	2.51%	2.53%	2.04%	1.85%	1.58%	1.37%	0.85%

*17/18 uses budget data

⁵⁵ House of Commons Education Committee, Services for Young People: Third Report of the Session 2010-12, Vol. 1. (2011). See also: Elaine Kelly, Tom Lee, Luke Sibieta and Tom Waters, *Public Spending on Children in England: 2000 to 2020* (IFS and Children's Commissioner, 2018).

⁵⁶ House of Commons Education Committee, Services for Young People: Third Report of the Session 2010-12, Vol. 1 (2011).

⁵⁷ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/539179/2905557_LGF_Accessible.pdf [accessed 31 May 2018]; https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/lgastandard?mod-metric=4109&mod-area=E92000001&mod-group=AllRegions_England&mod-type=namedComparisonGroup [accessed 31 May 2018]

⁵⁸ Data collated from <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-government-finance-statistics-england> [accessed 1 August 2018]

Statutory duty and guidance

Throughout the course of this inquiry, there was some implicit recognition of the need for statutory duty and guidance from the government in the release of the DCMS Civil Society Strategy, which states:

‘The guidance which sets out the statutory duty for 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 on the government’s expectations, including the value added by good youth work.’⁵⁹

The statutory duty deals specifically with the provision of youth services – Section 507B of the Education Act 1996 (as amended by section 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006).⁶⁰

A local authority in England must, so far as reasonably practicable, secure for qualifying young persons in the authority’s area access to –

(a) Sufficient educational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities, and

(b) Sufficient recreational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities, and

‘Qualifying young persons’ are those aged 13–19, and up to 24 for young people with a learning difficulty or particular disabilities.

In revised statutory guidance introduced in 2012,⁶¹ the Act also placed new responsibilities on local authorities to:

- Ascertain young people’s views on positive activities
- Publicise positive activities
- Consider alternative providers.

However, within this guidance there is no indication as to what constitutes a ‘sufficient’ level of ‘leisure-time’ activities, and these are compounded by the qualifier ‘so far as reasonably practicable’.

The interpretation of this guidance has led to some upper-tier local authorities considering that there is no statutory duty to provide youth services, as ‘alternative’ providers could be deemed to be providing that ‘sufficient’ level.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Full text available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/507B>

⁶¹ Full text available at: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130320220817/http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/s/statutory%20guidance%20on%20a%20youth%20provision%20duty.pdf>

Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.



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