Delivering youth work in England

Summary evidence of qualitative research from local authorities, youth and community organisations, young people, and analysis of secondary data

National Youth Sector Census
Second Report: October 2022

NYA
National Youth Agency

Acknowledgements

Contents

Foreword

This is the second report as part of the National Youth Sector Census, undertaken by the National Youth Agency (NYA), which is an initial two-year programme of research and data analysis, on priority areas for young people and youth work in England. For the purposes of this research, such provision is defined as out of school activities that purposefully develop personal and social skills. It includes activities for young people aged between 8 to 25 years, where their attendance is voluntary.

Young people are consistent in what they want: to socialise and have fun, with activities they are interested in; and support, advice and mentoring with someone they trust and can talk to. This requires a safe, informal space in their community that supports a sense of belonging and identity. In short, all young people want somewhere safe to go, to socialise and learn new skills, with a trusted adult who knows what is needed and access support. This is underpinned by the government's National Youth Guarantee for access to regular out of school activities which support skills for life and work, and for mental and physical wellbeing.

Overall, there is no significant difference between communities, urban or rural, other than the larger scale of supply in urban areas that enables joined-up provision, diversity of activities and accessibility of services. This is in large part due to the spatial distances, dispersed population and more difficult transport arrangements in rural areas, meaning less youth work places and provision. In turn, it should be noted that in urban areas young people voiced they felt unsafe travelling to and from services, especially in some estates or postcodes.

The findings from this report seek to identify the current mix of youth provision and where there are gaps of provision or data. The needs and expectations of young people are similar across the country. What remains perhaps the biggest challenge is equitable access to youth work. The research shows an estimate of around 10,100 youth organisations and a further 26,700 units of national uniformed groups throughout England. Significantly, of the 152 unitary and upper-tier local authorities, there are now fewer local authorities delivering their own in-house youth services; and where some direct delivery is maintained, this tends to be scaled down, sometimes run from one central location or only in the most deprived boroughs.

From the 2021 census returns of 90 local authorities, 15% told us that they offered no direct delivery youth work, with a higher proportion likely from those who did not respond to the survey. However, there is inconsistent data held by local authority and statutory provision, and a lack of transparency with targeted provision often sitting within larger departments of children's services and family support, and sometimes with other statutory providers like education and violence reduction units.

What is clear from our research is that youth charities and community groups are disproportionately providing, and being commissioned by local authorities to provide, universal services. Local authority provision is more focussed upon targeted delivery. While there is a statutory duty on local authorities to provide sufficient youth work provision (educational and recreational leisure-time

activities for young people, as defined by the 2006 Education and Inspections Act) most lack the resources to provide anything other than a targeted offer often, based on safeguarding requirements of other statutory services.

Therefore youth charities and community groups have, in many areas, filled the gaps left by reduced local authority provision. This is born from necessity, responding to local needs. There is increased demand and an expectation for informal support that can be provided by youth workers, where there is a shortfall in the level of and access to specialist services, like CAMHS for mental health. Some youth organisations are seeking extra training, up-skilling and hiring in specialist resources to deal with this demand. As a consequence, we have seen many local authorities move to become enablers, funding or supporting others in delivery of youth work, and where youth and community organisations are well-placed locally, trusted by young people. Commissioning can provide greater reach across a geographical area and greater access to a wider pool of skills from the youth workforce of professionals and volunteers. Crucially, youth groups and organisations are dependent by their very nature on work with and support by young people. If they do not listen to what young people want and say, they would not exist. All the young people interviewed for this research are clear that youth work works for them.

Trust and consistent relationships over time are key components of youth work which relies on the voluntary engagement of young people. Activity-based groups like sports, arts and community support have come to embrace facets or connections to youth work. Meanwhile in many areas youth clubs and groups, whose primary purpose is personal and social development, have been adept and agile to diversify their funding in order to sustain youth work. However the constant need to generate income has also put strains on small youth organisations in particular.

Many youth organisations work in partnership with others to deliver youth work, but with no consistent pattern or model, using different structures to deliver specific projects or activities. Some areas have a support infrastructure, others multi-agency services, but some are dependent on individual professional or voluntary relationships. There is an overreliance on short term projects or programme led funding, and where targeted funding by local authorities from limited resources can be seen community groups as too restrictive and time-bound to sustain youth work built on long term, trusted relationships.

Further research is needed to help secure and inform youth work in England. While there is wider acceptance and culture of data capture, there is little sense of standardised practice in data collection, in defining what is measured or how data is collected and or used for shared outcomes with young people. This includes an exploration of models that support local youth partnerships, recognising there is no single service or provider across communities, rather a need for greater cohesion and collective impact in shared outcomes with young people.

Other areas for further consideration from the research include: the role and contribution of detached youth work, as an important preventative tool, for early help and support; and increased

capacity of dedicated venues and space for hire – including outdoor venues – with greater use of community assets with young people.

Crucially, there is no definition of sufficiency nor is the statutory guidance clear on what is delivered by, commissioned, grant funded or otherwise secured by the local authority. Greater clarity from guidance is needed to underpin the statutory duty for local authorities, with increased transparency and accountability, if we are to deliver equitable access to youth work with young people across all communities.

This in turn is supported by NYA as the national body for youth work in England to support quality standards and youth work curriculum, qualifications and workforce development, contextualised safeguarding and risk management, and data for an evidence-based approach from policy to frontline practice, empowered by youth voice and advocacy.

Leigh Middleton, Chief Executive

National Youth Agency

Executive summary

About this study

The findings in this report are derived from two research activities. Primary research was undertaken in March and April 2022 by CFE Research with 72 organisations operating in nine English upper tier local authorities (UTLAs). Interviews were undertaken with representatives from each of the nine local UTLAs and youth work organisations operating in their area. A further three interviews were taken with organisations that operate across England.

A research team led by NYA spoke with 23 groups of young people across these areas, most of whom attended some form of youth provision, but including a small number who did not. There is a smaller quantity of data available from these sessions, and so the findings from these sessions are drawn in to provide context and to substantiate the stakeholder interviews.

Secondary research was used to estimate the number of youth work organisations and the venues from which they operate. The work expanded analysis undertaken for NYA in 2021. Data from existing sources was supplemented and manual web searches that identified youth work organisations operating in 18 UTLAs were added.

Youth work organisations in England

To identify youth work organisations, NYA provided a working definition that an organisation must:

1. offer out of school activities or services

2. provide activities or services that purposefully develop personal and social skills

3. offer activities or services for young people aged between 8 to 25

4. offer activities where attendance must be voluntary

5. deliver services or activities within England

Such organisations may be part of existing statutory services aimed at young people delivered by a Council, non-statutory services for young people delivered by a Council, or non-statutory services for young people delivered by other organisations.

Secondary research using existing data estimates that there are around 10,100 non-local authority organisations which are more likely than not to deliver youth provision, and which are not affiliated to a national uniformed group. The estimate is grossed from detailed searching in 18 of 151 upper tier local authorities (UTLAs) and applying discretionary

judgement where available public information could not definitively meet all 5 criteria. The full estimation method for non-uniformed group organisations is presented in Section 7. Expanding this work across a larger number of local authorities could improve the estimate by increasing the underlying base size and creating opportunities to accurately impute data.

Returns from national uniformed groups show that there are a further 26,700 units of national uniformed groups throughout England which also deliver youth provision. A unit describes a separate entity with which young people can engage which may or may not be based in the same venues. For example, girl guides groups are classed as a separate unit to ranger groups although both may operate from the same venue.

More than three in five units (16,700; 63%) are uniformed groups comprising scout troops (c6,300), girl guides (c5,750), scout explorers (c2,500) and rangers (c2,000). The remainder are mixed units.

Due to the varied nature and sizes of local authority delivery (discussed in Chapter 2), there is no summation possible of the scale of that delivery.

Local authority statutory requirements

The 2006 Education and Inspections Act places a statutory requirement on local authorities to provide "sufficient" educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people[1]. All local authority representatives participating in this study said no definition of sufficiency exists; a position supported by NYA's own research[2]. Many representatives interviewed for this research said they adopted their own interpretation of sufficiency, although the components of sufficiency were often similar covering places that young people can safely attend outside of school in their leisure time. Services may be universal (open to all) or targeted at a specific social circumstance or challenge.

Targeting funding

The concept of safety partly explains the emphasis local authorities place on safeguarding in their own youth offer. Local authorities usually say they target available resources on young people in or from disadvantaged circumstances, or vulnerable young people. Some local authority detached youth work (street-based services or interventions) is described as a preventative tool by many local authority representatives. Here, preventative means limiting antisocial behaviour and criminal activity through non-formal education, community engagement, and signposting to activities and/or support of interest to young people. Other

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[1] HM Government (2022) Education and Inspections Act 2006. Part 1; Section 6. 507B.
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/section/6

[2] https://static.nya.org.uk/static/ee06e7a621f49e562f71119d5fe524ac/The-Role-and-Sufficiency-of-Youth-Services-V06.pdf

detached work has a wider youth audience and fulfils an important role signposting youth from many backgrounds towards suitable leisure provision.

Local authority youth work budgets demonstrably shrunk over the past decade. Funding for youth work has diminished for all local authorities which also strengthens the perceived rationale to focus remaining resource towards interventions targeted at areas of greatest need. Sufficiency is defined within the context of how best to use limited resources.

Commissioning and structure

Three main local authority funding models were present: local authorities maintaining all youth work delivery; authorities commissioning all youth work; and a mixture of both. A temporary situation whereby no youth work at all was funded by an authority was also identified (See Figure 2, p.20 for a diagram of these models). There was no discernible pattern in which model was adopted by local authority characteristics.

Youth work services were part of a larger department in the authority focused on children, families or youth in all nine authorities represented in the study. Creating a named youth department within an authority implies a stronger and dedicated control over youth services.

Creating and funding a universal offer

Local authorities' universal youth service offer has diminished with funding.

Around half of the local authorities participating in this research maintained some type of universal offer (typically long-standing youth clubs under their direct control, or partnerships with other providers). In these cases, the number of venues had been reduced across the authority.

Organisations operating in the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) addressed the gap in universal (open to all) youth provision. Two structural models of youth work organisations were identified based on how they deliver the central requirement of personal and social development (PSD). The **activity-based PSD** model delivers personal and social development via a specific activity or group of related activities like the performing arts, sports, community support, etc. The **PSD-first** model defines organisations for which personal and social development was their main goal and activities were designed around

this purpose. Such provision is often venue-based of which classically structured youth clubs are the obvious example. Figure 1, p.16, illustrates these models.[3]

Youth work organisations adeptly diversify their funding. Some reacted to reduced local authority funding through seeking other sources. Other, newer organisations were born and grew in a context of limited or no local authority funding. Funding is drawn from charities and trusts that target young people, wider social goals, specific activities or interests, and geographical or community goals. Many interviewees said they spent significant time applying for suitable funding, then managing such income. The data indicated that the burden correlated directly with the size of an organisation, with larger organisations often being able to dedicate resource specifically towards business development and project management, whilst smaller management in smaller organisations often had to undertake these activities alongside other operational activities, and delivery. Some organisations also generate private income through trading, retail or venue hire; a few had corporate sponsorship or investment income streams.

The graph below details sources of income for Scout Group and Youth Clubs in 2018/19 as calculated by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations.[4]

FIGURE 1: Sources of Income for Scout and Youth Groups in 2018/19 (£m)
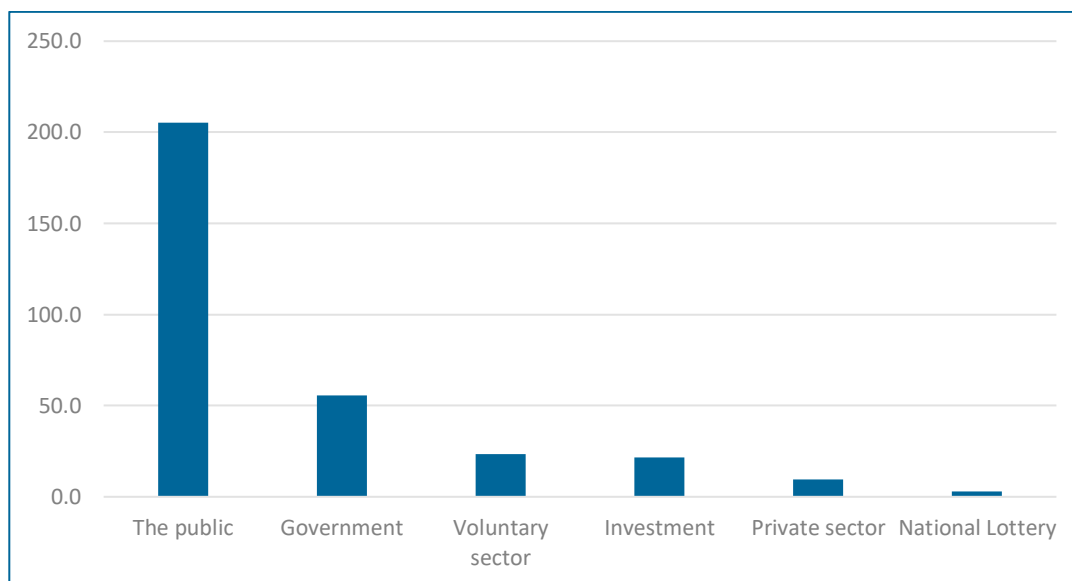
Whilst stipulations often direct how funding is used, including defined projects, most organisations welcomed the flexibility diverse income streams offered in the range of services they could provide. Several interviewees feel that local authority funding for

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[3] These differences closely mirror the definitional difference between informal learning (in which 'learning' is a by-product of the activity) and non-formal learning (youth work, in which the 'learning' is purposeful and intended)

[4] Available at: https://beta.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-publications/uk-civil-society-almanac-2021/about/classifying-what-voluntary-organisations-do/#icnpo-41-scout-groups-and-youth-clubs

targeted work comes with more restrictions on its use than other targeted funding, as it is often time-bound for a single year, targeted at a specific intervention delivered as a part of a dedicated programme (such as C-Card or Holiday Activity and Food Programmes), or has a defined area and target audience. Some interviewees felt local government management, administration and funding constraints can limit creativity and entrepreneurial spirit through having tightly defined parameters for delivery, sometimes without input from local partners.

Several community-led organisations offer universal services based on a defined community need. Here, "community" is defined by geography and culture. Some organisations recognised a youth need within their neighbourhoods and created spaces for young people to meet in their leisure time. Cultural organisations include those based on religious beliefs or accommodating people from other countries.

Working with others

Many youth work organisations work with others to deliver services. Partnerships include formal contractual relationships and looser arrangements to meet specific needs or deliver one off projects. Some collaborations operate on an equal basis with all partners engaging at a similar level to deliver a service. Partners often have complementary roles in such circumstances, delivering a combined service which would be inviable if working alone. Others operate with a lead partner or partners who ask other organisations to fill specialist or minor roles that fill operational gaps. Organisations may create partnerships using different structures to deliver specific projects or activities.

Partnerships help personal and social development through increasing the breadth of support and experiences available. They can deliver a well-rounded service that better meets the statutory "sufficiency" criteria by widening or deepening an offer to young people. For example, organisations delivering an activity work with specialists in counselling or young people's mental health.

Enablers of good practice

Most local authority and organisation interviewees identify two concepts associated with good youth work practice. The first is trust. Developing trust with young people through alternatives to compulsory activity is youth work's central proposition. Youth organisations say they are well-placed to develop what the authors class as adult-to-adult relationships with the young people[5]. The opportunities to build the same types of relationships within compulsory activities (school, social care) are fewer. Youth work provides an alternative

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[5] Transactional analysis theory created by Eric Berne identifies three "ego states"; the adult state defines behaviours, thoughts and feelings based in the present. The parent state are behaviours learned from parents; the child state are behaviours drawn from memories of childhood. See https://ericberne.com/transactional-analysis/ for more detail.

way to discuss their personal and social needs using relationships built on mutual trust which is a function of voluntary attendance. Trust is viewed by some interviewees as the main conduit for impact.

Coupled with trust, listening is another key concept. Some youth organisations say they would not exist if they did not listen to young people, because their services would not reflect youth need. Local authorities and organisations all have some mechanisms to collect the youth voice. All participating local authorities say they have some type of youth parliament or forum, and/or a youth voice team. The strength and phase of development of youth voice mechanisms varied between authority and not all subsequently explained decisions they made to young people.

In comparison, most youth work organisations say they act on their users' views to ensure their offer is relevant. Organisation staff and volunteers make decisions based on the evidence collected from young people and, in some cases, including them in the decision-making process. Having a voice was highly valued by young people, and helped foster trust and a sense of belonging and ownership in their provision which, in turn, drove engagement In a single case, young people make all decisions themselves for a specific project. Many organisations connected elements of service decision making with young people's personal and social development.

There are wider enablers of operational good practice. The capacity and quality of offer for many organisations was directly related to the size and skills of their workforce – including both paid and volunteers. Organisations told us that lost, experienced workers had not yet been replaced. This included workers in both delivery and management. They were facing challenges recruiting replacements and also in upskilling existing staff. Young people told us of the difference which youth workers and others made, especially in comparison to others in more formal settings such as schools.

Partnership working was an enabler of good practice in helping to provide economies of scale, expansion of provision and sharing of resources and expertise. For some organisations this took place with direct working between partners and in other places there was infrastructural support available to provide multi-agency coordination.

Inhibitors of good practice

Many interviewees cited limited trust and not listening as important inhibitors to a good youth offer. As an 'absence' of an enabler this is an obvious finding but was contextualised by nearly every interviewee providing some reference to limited resources constraining the scope and scale of listening activities they could offer. For many interviewees, the constraints that often come with funding can detrimentally impact on organisations' ability to meet the needs of young people even prior to delivery. Many young people also talked of 'tokenistic' engagement where they didn't feel their views would either effect change or be

considered. Resourcing constraints in the form of revenue obviously also constrains the capacity of organisations, both in terms of quantity and variety. When discussing factors other than revenue, premises and poor equipment are mentioned as limiting the breadth of services that some organisations would like to offer, or the quality of the service. Access to appropriate staffing and skills also limits some personal and social development activities. Organisations delivering activity-led PSD are especially affected by limited access to people with the right background of skills. Several interviewees point out that their staff had relevant activity expertise but lacked professional-level skills in areas of high need, especially in counselling, emotional support and guidance. For young people, the absence of support in mental health related areas between the informal support of a youth worker and CAMHS was an area that was mentioned in almost every group.

Differences by type of area

One of the research aims was to draw out any differences in youth work strategy, operation, and delivery across rural and urban areas. The findings in this regard are limited but participants in rural areas were more likely to identify that there were supply issues in factors affecting the quantity, accessibility, and quality of youth provision. From operational and management staff we heard that there were fewer skilled workers in rural areas and a smaller pool of potential other staff (including volunteers). Young people were conscious that there were often less places they could go to partake in activities, and that there were sometimes much more difficult transport arrangements in place due to limited public transport and/or the spatial distance between where they lived and where services might be. Conversely, in urban areas, there were generally advantages to a larger scale of supply which helped enable joined-up provision, sharing of resources, and accessibility to services. However, young people in urban areas often voiced that they felt unsafe travelling to and from services; especially in some urban 'estates' or 'postcodes'.

DCMS priority areas

The research did not seek to directly ask questions related to DCMS' two principle aims for supporting young people; (a) to enhance young people's skills for life and work, and (ii) supporting mental and physical wellbeing. The findings do, however, indicate that these areas are in high demand and recognised as most important by the sector and by young people, but that supply was not currently at sufficient quantity – especially for provision related to supporting mental health which was the most frequently cited area of support need. Whilst many young people told us that they received some mental health support from individuals in their youth services which was beneficial, it was also clear that there was a gap in the support available between expert services, such as CAMHS, and the informal support that can be provided by youth workers. Some organisations were seeking extra training and hiring in specialist resources to deal with this demand.

Approach to the study

Context

CFE Research is conducting a research study on behalf of the National Youth Agency (NYA) to explore how youth work organisations operate and estimate the number of youth work organisations operating in England. This study is augmented with complementary work undertaken by NYA supported by a freelance qualitative researcher specialising in young person's interviews and group work.

This research began in January 2022 after completing an earlier survey and scoping exercise to inform secondary data analysis of youth work organisations operating in England, and provide a sampling frame for 9 Upper Tier Local Authorities (UTLA) to perform qualitative stakeholder interviews and young persons group work in. All UTLAs were ordered by the number of young people aged 11 to 19 living there and the socio-economic conditions of the UTLA. A random selection of UTLAs were then selected as an initial sample. This list was then reviewed and other UTLAs substituted based on internal discussion within NYA. The final purposefully selected sample totalled 18 UTLAs, composed of two local authorities from each of the nine English Government Office Regions (GORs).

Manual internet searches were undertaken in all 18 UTLAs to supplement the existing sample of youth work organisations found in the earlier study. Contact details were collected as part of this exercise to create a sample frame for depth interviews. In addition to an analysis of the secondary data (Chapter 7), this report also covers the most recent qualitative fieldwork stage: in-depth interviews with 75 youth workers and organisational leads who make decisions about services and support in youth work organisations.

Whilst attempts were made to have a varied sample of interviewees there was no way to ensure that the sample was representative of the sector as a whole; especially when local factors are to be considered. Findings discussed below are therefore considered indicative.

Aims and objectives of the qualitative work

The purpose of the qualitative interviews was to learn more about how youth work organisations operate. The main research aims were to:

- Identify the range of services and support provided and the rationale behind service offers;
- Understand how services are funded;
- Comprehend the relationships and partnerships that are created to deliver services and support;

- Assess the impact achieved with young people;
- Consider the factors that both enable and limit the impact of youth work and an effective local offer.

Research audiences

Methodological outline

Seventy-five in-depth interviews were conducted with youth workers and those with strategic and operational oversight of youth work. Interviews were conducted with government representatives from local authorities and managers, and leaders running youth work organisations or projects. The fieldwork took place during February, March and April 2022.

Interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams, Zoom or telephone, depending on the preference of the interviewees. All interviews were recorded and the audio transcribed for analysis, which was conducted using a coding frame developed in Excel.

A further 23 focus groups were run with young people. The quality of the interviews varied as not all interview questions were equally probed in all locations by moderators depending on the group dynamic. For this reason there is more evidence from some areas than others although in the analysis we made every attempt to include voices from everywhere in the country. We asked questions about how young people had been affected by Covid-19 but their answers related to the impact on their education and their anxiety about missed academic opportunities rather than their social lives or youth provision.

All groups were held in person, with one undertaken online via Teams. The groups were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis, which was undertaken using a complementary coding frame.

Sampling – Secondary Data Analysis and Stakeholder Interviews

The purpose of the initial survey work was to identify, catalogue and categorise youth work activity within the selected UTLAs in as much detail as possible, in order to augment 2021's census of youth work organisations undertaken for NYA. Based on responses to the survey, 9 UTLAS in England were selected for the qualitative study (6 areas were in line with DCMS contractual agreements, augmented by three additional areas, to ensure one area per region).

Within those 9 UTLA areas, small geographic areas (of 5 neighbouring Middle Super Output Areas) were chosen. Where enough organisations were present, all operating within that area were identified through a combination of survey responses, additional desk research and a snowballing technique within the research interviews. The characteristics of each area were slightly different to produce an overall sample of areas of varying environmental characteristics, e.g. coastal, rural, suburb, city etc. The other factors informing the selection

of 9 smaller-geographic areas included variance in the 3-year average spend per head by the UTLA on services for young people and variance in the level of deprivation for the UTLA overall (as ranked by IMD). In several cases, the small area selection method was inviable as too few organisations operated in the UTLA. In these cases, samples were drawn from across the authority.

Within each area, a range of youth work organisations and local authority representatives were selected, with a target of 7-10 interviews per area. Within local councils, at least one interview with the youth service lead or a development lead responsible for connecting to and developing the local youth offer and / or a local councillor with a portfolio of children's and young people's services, was conducted. The researchers aimed to interview at least 5 organisations in each identified area across a range of provision, to include at least two universal, open access providers, at least two specialist or targeted services and at least one provider offering outreach or detached services. Other local stakeholder groups were also included, where appropriate.

In addition, three interviews were completed with national stakeholders.

The table below summarises the characteristics of the whole sample and the completed interviews.

Area	Sampling Frame	Completed Interviews
Total	100	75
National Stakeholders	3	3
Bury	12	7
Coventry	9	9
Dorset	11	9
Islington	14	9
Middlesbrough	11	8
North Yorkshire	8	8
Nottinghamshire	10	6
Slough	10	9
Southend-on-Sea	12	7

Sampling – Young Person's Groups

The sampling strategy for listening to young people was based around longitudinal data which shows that attendance at youth provision is largest at ages 11 to 15, before dropping off. We therefore sought to engage two groups from each of the nine UTLA areas above, with the cohorts comprising of at least the following groups:

- 11 to 15 year olds who do attend youth provision

- 16 to 20 year olds who do attend youth provision

- 11 to 15 year olds who DO NOT attend youth provision

- 16 to 20 years old who DO NOT attend youth provision

In total, 23 groups were run across the 9 UTLA areas, identified either through NYA contacts or via the sampling for the stakeholder interviews. There is an overrepresentation of young people who DID attend provision with access to other young people proving difficult. To mitigate this we extended recruitment to non-traditional youth organisations and areas, such as skate park clubs, horse-riding clubs and others to ensure a range of voices.

Sampling – Young Person's Groups

Service offer and financial context

Youth work delivery in context

Defining youth work

Youth work takes a holistic approach with young people. It starts where they are at in terms of developmental or physical location (open access or detached/street work) – and the relationship between young people at youth worker is entirely voluntary – youth work often only works because of the voluntary relationship. Many professionals work with young people, but principally, only in youth work is it the choice of the young person to engage with the professional.

Youth workers usually work with young people aged between 11 and 25 years, although with adolescence starting younger in the modern age, the NYA recognises youth work from ages 8-25. Youth work seeks to promote young people's personal and social development and enable them to have a voice, influence and place in their communities and society as a whole. It builds resilience and character and gives young people the confidence and life skills they need to live, learn, work and achieve. Youth work offers young people safe spaces to explore their identity, experience decision-making, increase their confidence, develop inter-personal skills and think through the consequences of their actions. This leads to better informed choices, changes in activity and improved outcomes for young people. Services may be universal (open to all) or targeted at a specific social circumstance or challenge.

All interviewees represented organisations with an offer that falls in line with this technical definition of youth work lying between a spectrum of some being explicitly youth work focussed, and others providing activities which young people engaged in, and where development happened through those activities. Some offered services only to young people within this definition; other organisations delivered a youth offer as one of two or more services.

Government spending on youth work

The 2021 Spending Review allocated £560m to youth services in England, including the Youth Investment Fund and National Youth Service[6]. In 2022, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) announced the National Youth Guarantee as a way to allocate the £560m budget. The Guarantee will increase access to uniformed groups and Duke of Edinburgh Awards with young people and maintain the National Citizen Service, and capital-led funding for up to 300 new and refurbished youth facilities in the most deprived parts of England.[7]

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[6] HM Treasury (2021) Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021. Policy Paper. Published 23 December 2021. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-budget-and-spending-review-2021-documents/autumn-budget-and-spending-review-2021-html

[7] Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (2022) Government outlines ambitious plans to level up activities for young people. Press release. 1 February 2022. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-outlines-ambitious-plans-to-level-up-activities-for-young-people

This is in addition to local authority's resources to provide the statutory requirement of sufficient educational and recreational leisure time services.

During interviews, councillors and officers with operational oversight of children and young people's services report significant reductions in their budgets, with funding for statutory services such as children's social care, Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), Early Help Units and education and skills services being prioritised ahead of open access and preventative youth work, which is not viewed with the same parity as social work or targeted interventions arising from safeguarding concerns.

Prior to 2010, the participating local authorities had a uniform, well-established and popular youth work offer. Most delivered detached work alongside universal, open access, place-based youth clubs run by qualified youth workers.

There are now fewer local authorities delivering their own 'in-house' youth work provision. Where local authorities retain some direct delivery work, this tends to be scaled down, sometimes run from one central location or in the most deprived boroughs. Resources tend to be targeted at vulnerable groups, with less open access provision remaining.

> *Our budget was £1.5 million, 12 years ago, and it's now £250,000 and the way that got reduced was to remove the youth clubs in the six areas and centralise it all. We got rid of the universal offer and just focused on targeted work, but what we've realised is that universal is needed because that's where you form relationships and where you pick up young people to then assess their needs, to realise whether they do need targeted support. So, we then said, 'Let's revitalise our universal offer to still maintain contact with these young people, but we're just in the two most deprived areas now.*
> — **[Youth Service Manager, Local Authority.]**

The policy context for this is borne out of central government allocations towards services for young people having been subsumed within The Early Intervention Grant (EIG), which was introduced in 2011/12 and which replaced many ring-fenced grants for spending on the under-fives and support for young people and families. The first EIG paid to councils was significantly (32%) below the combined grants which it replaced. EIG did not have any 'ring-fenced' criteria, targets, or any reporting needs, the Government stating that this provided *greater freedom and flexibility*. However, within the FAQs to explain the EIG was an explicit statement that:

local authorities will have a stronger role in commissioning services and only providing services themselves as a last resort. Underpinning this they will want to ensure that resources

are targeted carefully to ensure that those children, young people, and families who need it most receive extra support.[8]

Analysis by the House of Commons Library shows that the overall allocation has reduced from £2.24bn in 2011-12, to £1.04bn in 2020/21.[9]

Whilst these budgets were not ringfenced, they were nominally allocated towards delivering the Statutory Duty for delivering youth services which is devolved to single-tier and county council authorities. The duty states that an authority in England must *so far as is reasonably practical secure … sufficient educational leisure-time activities* for all young people aged 13 to 19, and up to 24 for those with a learning difficulty or particular disabilities.[10]

In short, allocated local authority revenue for children and young people has both declined markedly over the period in question and is allocated against a wider age-range. It was therefore built into the policy direction that local authority youth services should determine their own budgets, targets, and conditions for their youth services, taking into account that:

1. Nominally allocated budgets would be reduced.
2. That allocated budgets for children and young people were to be spent across a wide age-range (0 to 25)
3. That any youth service spend should be targeted at the most high-need individuals
4. That other individuals should be supported by services which had been outsourced / commissioned

Concurrently, costs on more expensive adult and child social care continued to rise, squeezing the remaining budgets.

Analysis of local authority spend on youth services shows that gross spending has dropped from £1.2bn in 2010/11 down to £379m in 2020/21. Real-terms total gross spend has been £1bn or more below 2010/11 levels in each of the past two years, with a cumulative total reduction of just over £7.5bn across the time-period.

There is currently no equivalent gross spend data for non-local authority youth work.

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[8] Department for Education. (2012). Early Intervention Grant FAQs. Gov.uk; The National Archives. https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20130903173929/http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/earlylearningandchildcare/delivery/funding/a0070357/eig-faqs

[9] House of Commons Library, Early Intervention: Policy and Provision (2021).

[10] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/507B

Defining sufficiency and managing resources

All local authorities said no definition of "sufficient" educational and recreational leisure time activities exists which means no tight definition of their statutory duties is possible. This observation that is supported by NYA's own position[11] and supports interviewees' observation that no clear definition of local authority's statutory requirements exists.

Local authorities discussed sufficiency in different ways. Most made the theoretical connection between the requirement of sufficient educational and recreational leisure time services with a similarly broad definition. The usual components of sufficiency were places that young people can safely attend outside of school in their leisure time.

> *For me, I think it's about young people having a safe space to go … and things to do outside school hours in their leisure time. For me, it would be for them to have access to positive activities and a trusted youth worker, particularly in the evenings and weekends.*
> — **County local authority**

No local authority expressed this requirement with measures or metrics about amount of provision that is sufficient or details on the composition. All authorities did have an aspiration of a universal offer (i.e. activities open to all young people), however several interviewees said they lacked the resources to provide anything other than a targeted offer based on young people most in need. Need means services designed to address social disadvantage, safeguarding and the authority's other statutory requirements for young people. A couple of interviewees openly felt their youth service was insufficient because of limited and scattered resources. These interviewees felt youth services were given low priority compared to other statutory services covering the education, care and wellbeing of young people. In one case, the interviewee felt the wider authority misunderstood what youth services are so couldn't meet any sufficiency requirement.

> *I don't think that [sufficiency] is met by us in our local authority... That duty has not [been part of] the youth service the whole time I've been here because I think there's an understanding that [youth services] was covered in drips across servicing departments. [We are not covering this] duty because they [other departments] didn't understand what youth work was.*
> — **Urban local authority**

Local government's funding allocation from central government has no ring-fenced allocation for youth services. Other statutory services have clearer, measurable definitions on service requirements that are simpler to monitor. This report's authors infer there is logic in local authority decision-making that allocates resources first to clear statutory needs rather than vaguer requirements. Local authorities are audited. They have an

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[11] https://static.nya.org.uk/static/ee06e7a621f49e562f71119d5fe524ac/The-Role-and-Sufficiency-of-Youth-Services-V06.pdf

incentive to make sure they fund the requirements that are easier to audit. Of the nine local authorities interviewed, one had no budget (due to the council pausing 'non-essential' spending due to financial difficulties), and most others said youth service funding is allocated with what is left over after other services are budget for. Interviewees told us that spend was concentrated in other services with more defined statutory requirements for children with higher needs, especially those supported by children's social care and children with education, health and care plans (EHCPs).

> *Children's services are on their knees. Absolutely we're drawing on our reserves all the time and we can only draw on a reserve once and it's gone. The Education, Health and Care plans since 2014 are going through the roof. The school transport budget alone is millions. When budgets are shrinking, you have to put it into statutory duties, and then once you've done your big things like your children's social care, your home school transport, all the big things. Anything that's left over, you start looking at the low-lying fruit for the statutory duties and you start saying, 'Well how statutory is statutory? The jam's spread too thin.*
> — **[Local Councillor]**

Young Person's Views

Young people did not think about (and were not asked about) 'sufficiency' in ways which would be measured discretely. However, young people did understand that there were inequalities in the amount and type of provision available. In most local areas where we spoke to young people, there were youth activities on at least two nights of the week (not including uniformed groups). Some young people had a lot of choice of youth clubs, a view more prevalent in urban areas:

> *"There are lots of clubs: There's Lift, there's Platform, there's the Soap Box on Holloway Road, and there's here".*
> — **Young person, Islington**

Some, predominantly rural, areas had fewer opportunities:

> *"There's just not a lot of choice. I know it sounds a bit horrible, but there's not enough to do, we want to do things. There's Brownies and Guides and Scouts and that kind of thing, but if you aren't interested in that kind of stuff, there's not really anything else you can do. You get that when you live on a small island."*
> — **Young person Portland**

Living in urban areas may have been a better guarantee of greater supply of provision, but many young people in urban areas were unaware of the greater number of opportunities. In Slough, for example, the young people felt they didn't hear about youth activities, so they were missing out on whatever was being provided:

> *"I feel that there are some things but I haven't really got around to looking at some of them because there isn't much advertising around."*
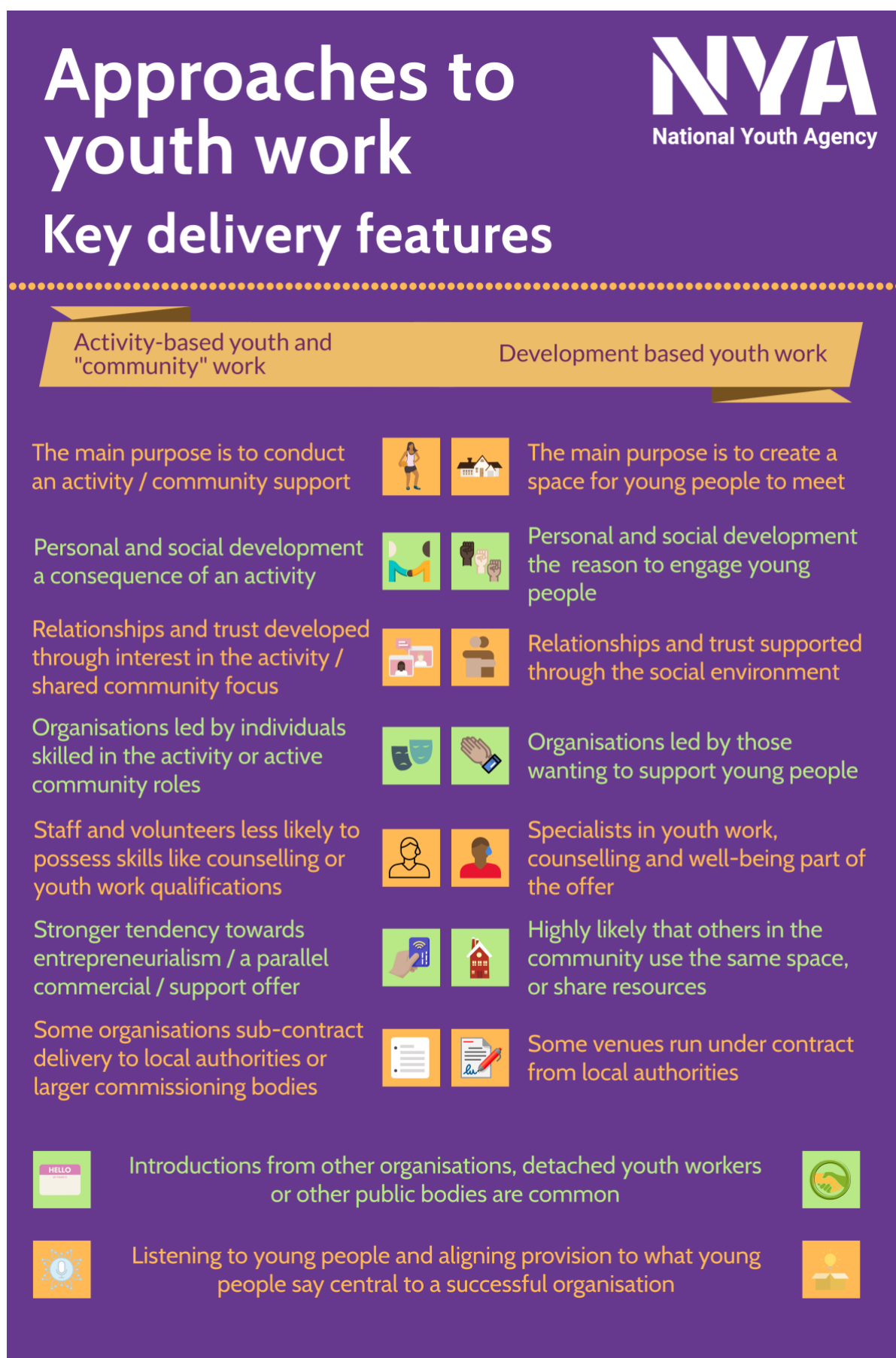> — **Young person, Slough**

Youth work organisations

Delivering personal and social development

The youth provision delivered by organisations fell into three categories.

1. Organisation representatives have a keen interest in a specific activity or subject and created an offer for young people from that interest. Most deliver personal and social development via a specific activity or group of related activities like the performing arts, sports, etc. In this report, the term **activity-based PSD** is used to describe this provision. These services are typically led by local champions of that activity who also want to help young people in their area.

2. A subset of activity-based PSD describes organisations with a specific community or cultural focus, where "community" means a geographical area, or an identity or collective interest. Examples include groups based in neighbourhoods, connected by faith, or a shared identity such as an LGBTQ group. Most of these organisations provided services or support purposefully to benefit their community, but often wrapped personal and social development within and around this and could be termed **community-first**. In this report they are combined with **activity-based PSD** for ease of explanation, but we recognise the difference in focus and approach here.

3. An alternative mechanism (of which there are fewer examples) is provision designed first from the angle of personal and social development. Activities are then designed to fit around this purpose. This provision is given the short-hand **PSD First**. For example, some universal, venue-based services provide young people something to do. These offer a range of activities without a specific specialism and the type of activity available is decided through conversations with young people.

The relative proportions of each of these types of organisation in the population of youth the sector as a whole cannot be estimated from the sample due to the sample not being representative and purposefully extending in to the sporting and activities sectors to try and understand whether and how their operation and delivery fitted with overall provision at a local level. Figure 1 (overleaf) summarises the main differences between the types identified above. In short, our interviews showed that the method of youth work in providing personal and social development for young people is evident across several different types of organisations with different focuses. Thus youth work has a broad, adaptable and varied scope in supporting and developing young people, regardless of where they are or what they are doing.

Figure 1: Differential approaches to youth work

Approaches to youth work
Key delivery features

NYA
National Youth Agency

Activity-based youth and "community" work	Development based youth work

The main purpose is to conduct an activity / community support

The main purpose is to create a space for young people to meet

Personal and social development a consequence of an activity

Personal and social development the reason to engage young people

Relationships and trust developed through interest in the activity / shared community focus

Relationships and trust supported through the social environment

Organisations led by individuals skilled in the activity or active community roles

Organisations led by those wanting to support young people

Staff and volunteers less likely to possess skills like counselling or youth work qualifications

Specialists in youth work, counselling and well-being part of the offer

Stronger tendency towards entrepreneurialism / a parallel commercial / support offer

Highly likely that others in the community use the same space, or share resources

Some organisations sub-contract delivery to local authorities or larger commissioning bodies

Some venues run under contract from local authorities

Introductions from other organisations, detached youth workers or other public bodies are common

Listening to young people and aligning provision to what young people say central to a successful organisation

Activities coexist with the social and personal development offer and are the medium through which PSD is achieved.

> *Some sessions we just play Jenga, table tennis, or we'll throw a ball to each other and ask them questions as we're throwing the ball, their hopes and dreams things like that. Sometimes we've been on walks, and some of them are really good at photography, so we've tried to encourage that.*
> **[Youth organisation, Bury]**

Young Person's Views

Through the sessions with young people there was a recognition that the breadth of different approaches were appealing to different young people, for different reasons. Young people's main reasons for attending any of these types of groups were primarily three-fold.

Firstly, to participate in activities they were interested in and/or to socialise and have fun. This was the most commonly given reason by young people and it was important to young people that this took place in informal spaces.

Socialising was not confined to existing friendship groups, and for some young people the chance to meet others and make new friends was valued:

> *"When people are new, they automatically click, because it's just like we have the same energy or we have the same opinions or whatever about some things".*
> **— Young person, Islington**

This process was carefully managed and described by youth workers who spoke of "folding them [new participants] into the group" by creating a semi-formal framework for participation that balanced a sense of freedom through purposeful activities that encouraged shared participation, while placing enough boundaries on behaviour to allow young people to be safe and respectful to each other.

The second primary reason that young people attended services was for support, advice, guidance, and mentoring. For some, it was a lifeline that youth provision provided someone to talk to,

> *"I'd be stuck in the house without anywhere to go. It can affect your mental health to be sitting in all day. Here you can speak to people and say things. It's good for you".*
> **— Young person, Bury**

These two primary reasons are not mutually exclusive and were key motivations within community-based groups also. For example, a group of young carers were open about appreciating having leisure-time off from the stress of parents or siblings, of receiving

support, and of feeling assured by the fact that there were others in similar situations to themselves with whom they could share their experiences.

Some young people were also highly appreciative of the opportunities some provision provided to learn new skills, from social skills to formally accredited activities like the Duke of Edinburgh's award. That said, having fun and participating in specific activities of interest was still almost exclusively the primary motivator for these young people, with some attending provision because they wished to take part in a specific activity such as visual arts, film making or bike maintenance. The gaining of accreditation was often viewed as a positive addition, and some also appreciated the gaining of non-accredited general life skills. In all instances we heard that they gained socially as well, for example:

- The Youth Council in Slough was offering political and citizenship opportunities such as a visit to the House of Commons and these young people were gaining in confidence through taking part in this more structured activity.

- Some like the Rural Arts Club in Thirsk offered art and creative activities, but sitting alongside one another and making, children and young people also built friendships and social skills.

- The Yes Outdoors Bike Hub in Islington offered a six-week bike maintenance and safety course with a refurbished bike at the end. A wide age range were taking part in this with enthusiastic and informed youth work specialists to offer bike specific skills plus social skills. They learnt about the highway code with a fun quiz and enjoyed learning that way.

- In Slough, Resource Productions offered young people a range of film related activities. That group was attended by an older age range of young people, those who were doing well academically, but had no interest in going to a youth club itself. As well as learning film making skills, they appreciated that their communication skills had improved a lot.

Several focus groups mentioned a lack of skills training to prepare for independent living or for adult life which they would like to learn more formally.

"Budgeting, there's not much in place with budgeting, yes. I feel like they should at least-, for example we've never been told how to deal with tax or a mortgage or anything."
— Young person, Slough

"I think it's just all household bits in general. Because a lot of people don't know how to use a washing machine and stuff".
— Young person, Islington

Cooking, for me. I don't know anything, just cooking, to be honest"
— Young person, Thirsk

Identifying personal and social development needs

Universal, open access, and detached services are sometimes used as a diagnostic method to identify preventative support for young people. These services use observational, discursive methods to identify further personal and social development opportunities or wider support. Organisations can then consider the best support for a young person which may include introductions to other support services delivered by the organisation or a partner.

The extent to which an organisation can meet an identified need internally depends on the expertise they have available. Where suitably qualified or experienced staff are absent, several organisations said they engage specialist freelance staff or partner organisations to provide the support required. An example of this is where youth organisations want to provide holiday activities and food programmes for young people and their families but do not have the staff or the expertise to provide everything themselves. Youth organisations are establishing mutually beneficial partnerships to help provide these services in their area, for example youth clubs and sports clubs working together. This approach reaches far more young people than would have been possible on their own.

> *We reached about 5000 kids face to face through workshops, when they were allowed to take place. Obviously, that's completely free to access for children who are on free school meals. So, they get the activity for the day or the half-day and a meal and they're allowed to take part in as much of that as they want that is in their local area.*
>
> — **[Youth organisation, North Yorkshire]**

Some organisations place their youth work offer in a community or cultural context: faith-based organisations and uniformed groups are the main example. Young peoples' personal and social development is considered within the community or ideological context and activities are strongly connected to this context. For example, faith groups will align personal and social development to the tenets of the faith. Uniformed groups will connect activities to the wider organisational vision.

Some local authorities also considered young people as one part of the wider community rather than a specific cohort. The view can influence decisions about investment and funding. For example, several authorities described capital infrastructure or commissioning investments that benefit communities and, hence young people associated with those communities. The rationale is this is the most effective use of funding available for as many people as possible.

> *We don't have things that are dedicated 100% solely for young people because we try and make them as much about community. [The local] football club used to play away from [the town] and there was a commitment from the council to bring them back home. … not only did we want to make [the authority-owned facility] accessible for the football club, but for it to become a community facility that young people can use, that wider communities can use, different groups can use. So, within that contract there's dedicated usage time and space for schools, for youth groups outside school hours, for wider community groups, for people with disabilities, all that kind of stuff.*
>
> — **Urban local authority**

Organisational structure of local authority youth work services
Managing youth services within an authority

All local authorities manage youth services within a larger departmental structure. The larger departments in which youth services fit have different foci including children ("Children's Services"), youth ("Youth Support Services") and family ("Families Matter"). The placement suggests the viewpoint from which youth services are managed. Placing youth with children's and family services indicates co-management of youth services within a wider offer. Creating a specific youth department implies a stronger and dedicated control over youth services.

> *There are slight differences in [our targeted youth work] model, in some places we do more work with schools, in other places the targeted youth worker does the majority of the detached work, in other areas the voluntary sector do more of it and we co-ordinate. It varies slightly but what I would generally say is that the model is pretty consistent [across the local authority area].*
> — **[Service Manager, Local Authority]**

This research identified 4 local authority delivery models that have emerged in the context of austerity measures. The graphic overleaf outlines the key features of each model. It should be noted that there is a degree of fluidity between the models. Sometimes, emerging requirements for youth provision can drive changes in funding.

Figure 2: Main methods of managing youth service delivery

Local authority youth work
Key delivery features

Local Authority maintains delivery

- Workforce of paid qualified youth workers, unqualified operational staff and volunteers
- Scaled down youth club provision retained. Relocated to central areas and / or areas of high deprivation. Some targeted at young carers, LGBT+, SEND, etc.,
- Targeted detached work, drawing on intelligence of police and social workers
- Targeted one to one mentoring in schools, homes or youth club settings

Mix of local authority and external commission

- Smaller team of qualified youth workers deployed across settings including youth clubs, schools, detached work and mentoring
- Council funds by need, e.g. youth clubs in deprived areas, and mentoring for safeguarding
- Commissioned services can offer specialist support in areas such as mental health, substance abuse
- Some support and advice for volunteer-led youth clubs
- Allows for bespoke project work with external partners as issues arise, e.g. knife crime, racial tension, food poverty

All youth work commissioned

- Youth work is commissioned via contracts to one or more agencies. Includes sub-contracting to other organisations
- Sometimes rely on volunteers or community organisations for open access youth club work
- Commission specialised agencies to support issues like substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health
- Detached and targeted work is outsourced to youth organisations

No funding for any services

- Rare, temporary situation where a local authority facing severe financial restrictions or special intervention
- Central government funds or trust arrangements put in place for delivery of key statutory services
- All youth work provision sits in the voluntary, community and private sectors

We've been through various iterations of youth work in-house. For the first 2 years [after the loss of the youth clubs], we commissioned a targeted youth service, which was pretty much focused around group work in schools and young people at risk of exclusion and in June 2020, we reintroduced direct formal youth work roles again…. it's primarily because we recognised that we were not responding appropriately to our most vulnerable young people, who were off-the-grid, for want of a better phrase.
— [Service Manager, Local Authority].

A couple of local authorities set up separate, authority-controlled companies to manage youth services. These entities were separate from the authority and were governed by terms of reference that the authority monitored. These local authorities say that using companies to run services allows the authority to house all youth work in one place, provides a commercial focus for youth work and offers greater flexibility in the service offer through supporting entrepreneurialism and thinking differently about provision. This change also aligns to thinking from youth work organisations.

> *"I personally am not sure that youth services fit best with the local authority. I think if you can be entrepreneurial, then I think there is something in that. To be truly child focused, otherwise you fall into 'council thinking' rather than 'broader thinking' in terms of what could be right, how you could be creative in how you work with young people. I think there is room for that. I think the stimulation of the youth market is really important."*
> **— [Youth Organisation, Slough].**

Commissioning

The largest youth management function in a few local authorities is commissioning services. These local authorities offer larger service contracts and devolve some decision making and administration to external bodies. These authorities include many service conditions in the contract that stipulate the required offer. Contract holders then have freedom to service these contracts as they see fit within the set conditions. This includes sub-contracting some delivery to smaller, specialised providers.

Local authorities commissioning criteria include the range of experience and expertise in youth work, the breadth of the service offered and how the contractor can demonstrate the personal and social development impacts of their service offer. One local authority aspired to bring youth services back under direct local authority control but recognised they had lost much of their internal expertise in youth delivery over the last decade. Replacing this skills base would be a significant challenge. Utilising external contractors' skills, knowledge and experience is one of the main reasons most local authorities commission at least some youth services. In our interviews it was also mentioned that it allowed the authority to ensure place-based provision in areas where they might not themselves have had a fixed location. Swords et al (2019[12]) also identified a spectrum of delivery models between solely local authority-led and solely commissioned.

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[12] Swords, B, Day, S, Parish, N, and Bunyan, A (2019) Developing an effective local youth offer. Local Government Association. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ce55a5ad4c5c500016855ee/t/5e1f1a14f7c6f25343b7e9d0/1579096730145/LGA+ISOS+Local+Youth+Offer

[I] focus predominantly on early intervention and prevention, but that also includes the targeted services as well that provide more targeted interventions for young people with more complex issues, in a way. So, some of those are council services but there are also a number of commissioned services that are my responsibility. We've just recently gone out to tender to secure new contracts in relation to providers for our youth hubs,
- [Youth Services Lead, Local Authority]

What local authorities offer directly

Local authorities are far more likely to offer targeted support for young people based on safeguarding needs or the statutory requirements of other authority services (health, social care, etc.,). Detached provision is an important preventative tool for local authorities. Detached workers are often used to identify needs directly from young people across local authorities. Evidence shows local authorities prioritising detached work to specific areas of need or targeting social disadvantage / specific demographics. Detached services are an example of PSD first provision i.e. activities are designed in response to highlighted personal and social development needs.

Targeted Youth is run through Early Health. And what they do is, if you've got a problem, if you've got low level antisocial behaviour, don't send the police in. Let's send in these 2 people that will just walk around the area where they've got a problem happening, observe the problem and say, 'Hey, are you alright mate, what's happening?' And they'll engage with those young people.

— **[Children's services lead, Local Authority].**

There were fewer instances of universal provision directly offered by local authorities, but some direct control over youth clubs and other venues remains. The youth club offer has been rationalised in all local authorities as a response to funding cuts. Many remaining youth clubs have occupied buildings and spaces for many years and the authority sometimes still owns the building. Youth clubs also operate out of spaces like village or town halls and from schools.

[Youth clubs were] configured in the traditional way, in which youth services were organised in local authorities, whereby we had a core staff team of full-time youth workers spread out around the county in community-based youth centres. I suspect, like most local authorities, the decision was taken that we would no longer deliver that work directly. In 2016, we transitioned – we moved our youth centres into community ownership.

— **County Local Authority**

Understanding young peoples' views on wider requirements

Measuring demand for youth services

Youth work organisations

Measuring demand

Youth organisations describe a mix of formal and informal methods to measure demand for services. Here, "formal" means working with public bodies like the local authority, schools, social services, etc., to identify services that young people want and need. (See local authority analysis later). Methods to measure demand during interviews with representatives of youth work organisations include:

- Introductions made by services such as youth offending teams and school SEND teams. This relies on youth workers in organisations actively cultivating relationships with key contacts within these statutory groups and institutions to facilitate a 'referral' process. The use of 'referral' is discussed later in this chapter.

- Wider networking in a local authority or neighbourhood with other organisations or individuals delivering youth services. Networking provides general qualitative / anecdotal evidence to inform decisions about a service offer.

- Networking with other organisations or individuals delivering similar activities (wider performing arts. Mental health support / services, etc.,). The evidence collected is anecdotal, but this type of networking fill precise gaps in specialist provision and access to suitably qualified or experienced staff.

- Community and youth voice consultation through discussion, interviews, surveys, etc.

Many interviewees describe informal methods to understand demand for services. Interviewees described listening to communities through interactions with young people and services, e.g., through churches and schools, and by talking directly to young people about their needs. Conversations with young people are informal whilst they attend youth provision. Some interviews encouraged friends and family to contribute their views as well. Listening mechanisms are organic. Staff from youth work organisations use their own knowledge of the community and the challenges facing young people to build a picture based on conversations and observations assessing need and responding accordingly. This is the essence of a "bottom-up" approach to decision-making.

> *We hold a range of different activities throughout the day. So whether it's baking, arts and crafts, karate, boxing, music, dance etc. and each staff member that's working on that area, will maybe say, 'There's one young person who could do with some extra mentoring support.' They've noticed something.*
> — **Youth organisation, Coventry**

The importance of building rapport and trust

Many organisations say an informal approach built on voluntary engagement works because young people are at the foundation of what they do. Building trust and giving young people space to talk is fundamental to their organisational aims and priorities as a youth organisation. As trust is built between young people and staff, behaviours are observed and issues to address are brought to the surface. Therefore, young peoples' trust in youth workers and volunteers is an important mechanism for gauging genuine demand direct from young people for services such as mental health support, improving confidence and addressing antisocial behaviour. Conversations about young peoples' needs are described as honest because of the rapport built with the organisation. Organisations think this creates an accurate and true measure of demand.

> *It's mainly young people that come to us, so we're focussed on building positive relationships with everyone that attends and understanding their individual needs and trying to understand that in the context of the communities that they're part of.*
> — **Youth organisation, Islington**

Young people are attracted by a specific service or activity in activity-based PSD provision. Personal and social development emerges through doing the activity of interest and the resulting relationship allows youth workers to learn more about any additional support that might benefit young people. Some youth organisations offering 'open access' provision place emphasis on assessing young people's needs and responding accordingly.

Voluntary attendance is an important pre determinant of trust

Voluntary attendance to youth provision is an important element of measuring service demand as participants can 'vote with their feet'. Compulsion or mandated provision removes choice for the young person and mirrors the other institutions in young peoples' lives such as compulsory education, safeguarding services for vulnerable young people, etc. Trust is easier to build when young people are choosing to use a service.

Working with other organisations to understand demand

Most youth organisations in urban areas are keen to establish relationships with other community and youth groups in the area and co-ordinate provision. Urban youth work ecosystems offer an economy of scale, more proximal networking opportunities, and better infrastructure: there are more young people to support a diverse youth work offer and a greater number, variety and concentration of services and activities within a small geographic area. These are generally better accessible due to being within 'walking' distance of each other, or with better transport links available. This proximity and accessibility helps enable joined-up provision. For example, detached youth workers signposting young people to youth services and activity-based groups partnering up with youth hubs. The latter are assisting with engaging young people.

The word referral was frequently used by interviewees and usually described introductions made between services. Interviewees did not mean official of statutory referral processes; they were borrowing language to describe communication between organisations about service that may benefit young people. Local authorities could introduce young people (and their families) to services that the young person could choose. One interviewee said they

used "referral" when engaging with local authorities because it was language local authority staff understood.

Responding to demand from communities

A few youth organisations were set up in direct response to a community need. Such needs include gaps in provision arising from the withdrawal of the local authority. This gap is filled by a community or charity organisation offer means new groups and clubs emerge. This model is especially prevalent amongst sports clubs. In these situations, communities include people living in a defined area, and parent and school groups. Some local authorities also offer support to those entering a service gap they vacated.

For many of these organisations, youth work is not the sole focus of the offer. Instead, the organisation focuses on the wider community of which young people are part. However, the benefit of the provision is recognised as important for them and their community.

> *We give all of our junior players season tickets for the first team, so they all come along and they'll volunteer. Lots of them volunteer to do jobs, especially the older ones, on match days. Yes, I think for me, a club is way, way more than just playing a game. It's a community.*
> — **Youth organisation, Slough**

Local authorities

Community focus

Several local authorities also focused on the needs of the whole community in their overarching strategic priorities. Local authority processes for establishing demand from communities is often organic, from ongoing discussions with community leaders, observations and feedback. Communications prompted by local authorities but facilitated by community / arts and culture groups and venues directly target young people.

Subcontracting services

A few local authority commissions a service-level organisation to manage, administer and deliver some youth work services on their behalf. The service-level organisations also subcontract out activity-based PSD provision. Other youth organisations are delivering activity-based provision through direct commissioning by the local authority. For example, one local authority used to run fitness sessions for young people and because they could no longer run it, they commissioned an activity-based organisation to run it for them. This was then developed to provide further activities. Another local authority has a specific team that enables youth organisations and the voluntary sector to deliver youth services. They take a supporting role helping them with infrastructure needs, training and safeguarding information.

Collecting the views of young people

When specifically looking at the provision of youth services, most local authorities we spoke to said they are keen to listen to young people when assessing demand, and say it is important to collect their views. Often from Youth Parliaments or Councils, Forums or Youth Voice teams, although membership of these groups is described by a few as difficult to

develop. Some of these forums are in their infancy and others are set up for specific hard to reach groups, for example care leavers.

Some local authorities also conduct surveys and focus groups with young people to find out what they need and the activities in which they are interested. One local authority monitored social media to understand what young people want. There are a couple of instances of elected officials / democratic representatives informing wider community needs based on testimony from community members or constituents. More detail on the use of councillor budgets is presented in Section 4.

Some council youth services teams encourage young people onto community consultation groups. In some areas detached youth workers also work directly with small groups of young people they are meeting on the streets to find out their views on what they need from youth service provision. One local authority uses informal feedback gained from outreach and detached youth work to form committees to discuss a specific issue relevant to young people. Within some of these forums local authorities are collecting information from young people on their views through qualitative interviews, ethnographic studies, surveys and discussion panels. Other feedback mechanisms are more indirect e.g., by proxy through youth organisation networks and agencies who act as intermediaries for local authorities.

> *We bring people together. So, partnerships, collaborations. So, every youth voice group we get, we usually have a community of practice staff network that supports that as well. So, the idea is that whilst working with young people you're also looking at sustainable youth voice.*
> **— Urban local authority**

Understanding demand from other government bodies

Other public bodies such as the NHS, social services and police provide targeted information from which demand for related services (health, social care, preventative crime, etc.,) is derived. This is an important mechanism for these related statutory services but is also used to understand targeted demand for social and personal development provision. The delivery design associated with public partnerships is often PSD first i.e. public bodies recognise a personal or developmental need to be addressed in some way.

Some local authorities triangulate evidence from public bodies to identify and target service demand, akin to or as part of a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment[13]. They do this by using data from the police, council and education together with feedback from youth voice groups and committees. These formal and informal sources of information help to identify demand and gaps in provision. For one local authority their relationship with voluntary bodies is an important source of information, however, these relationships do not exist among all. Another local authority highlights the importance of outreach youth work in targeting issues raised by statutory bodies. The emphasis for the youth work teams and youth organisations can then be on prevention of existing issues for young people that have

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[13] A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is a plan to improve the health and wellbeing within local communities and reduce inequalities for all ages. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jsnas-and-jhws-statutory-guidance

wider implications for the community. At the same time they will identify new and emerging issues to address.

> *We've got … really important metrics, which we use to determine how well we are doing in relation to our statutory responsibilities. So, we've got all of those but then they also filter down into the more targeted and universal world as well, so it's really important to have that quantitative data. But it's also really important to have the qualitative as well to find out from young people directly whether or not we are delivering services which are good for them.*
> — **Urban local authority**

Secondary data and management information was commonly used by many local authorities to assess demand reflecting a 'top-down' approach using depersonalised large datasets[14] like, for example, the multiple deprivation index. Youth offending data including custody entrants, number of knife crime incidents was used. The data was drawn from Police youth crime statistics and social care metrics. The latter included children under a child protection plan and the number of young people not engaged with education, employment or training. These are "top down" methods of assessing demand where information is assessed by officials to make decisions. Note that some of these metrics are used for reporting other local authority statutory requirements.

Our interviews showed that "bottom up" methods – where views are taken directly from young people - are more prevalent amongst non-local authority organisations. These methods became more direct between the service provider and user where they work operate over a small geographic area. Local Authorities, who traditionally operate over a wider geographic area, were more likely to use "bottom up" methods via forums, consultations, and existing youth councils. The use of "top down" data – i.e. using social and administrative statistics - was almost exclusively undertaken by local authorities.

There was a clear and obvious lack of data on youth service providers, which can hinder the decision making and operational ability for service planning across a large area.

Supplying youth work services

Youth work organisations

Staffing youth services

A few youth organisations describe the lack of volunteers and qualified, professional youth workers as a hurdle to effective supply of youth services. These shortages are primarily for two related reasons. Firstly, the significant falls in income over the last decade resulted in a smaller workforce working fewer hours. Experience, institutional knowledge and capacity was lost in the youth work sector. This shortfall led to the second issue: a shortage of sufficient skill sets, experience, or qualifications in the remaining workforce, which has been exacerbated as many previous training and CPD funds through local authorities have

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[14] Distinct from a "bottom up" approach that uses evidence and testimony from young people and / or communities.

been lost. Latterly, there is some anecdotal evidence that recruiting volunteers post-Covid has become more difficult. Staff and volunteer shortages were said to especially limit service capacity and growth. Some organisations feel rural areas have a smaller pool of specialists to recruit from, compared to those based in urban areas. Further, youth work is often part time and is based on evening work which exacerbates recruitment difficulties.

> *I think youth work is still really difficult. Because it's a part time basis, it's people coming out in the evening... I mean, as long as I've been a youth worker that's always been the case, but never, I don't think, as bad as this . That there's a real lack of people wanting to come forward.*
> **— County local authority**

Venues and premises

The capacity of venues and space for hire – including outdoor venues – is a problem for some youth organisations, preventing them from supplying the range of services they would like to. Whilst some organisations did receive favourable rates to use local authority facilities, several said they paid full price for venue or equipment hire, which may have previously been subsidised or free. Several organisations said the local authority's financial position was a reason they were charged the full amount or were not granted preferential rates. Other youth organisations had identified more space they could use but would need extra funding to be able to rent it. For most youth organisations, space was vital because they wanted to extend their reach beyond their immediate areas and widen provision, recognising there are gaps in provision.

> *If we had more space all we would do is just spread out, and you would just be able to have more young people come in and take part in more activities and your reach would be greater. You would just have more space to deliver it.*
> **— County local authority**

Some youth organisations try and limit supply to local needs for financial and capacity reasons. However, most like to have an open access approach and offer services across a wider area. Some youth organisations say there are gaps in provision for areas in the boundaries of the cities and want to extend their provision to those areas. These are areas where youth work provision is not specifically targeted or provided but there is still a need. This has financial implications for numbers allowed in the premises, for transport, staffing and supply of volunteers.

Meeting the needs of the community

Some organisations' focus was the social needs of the communities in which they were based. They existed to address issues like food poverty, social care and vocational skills. Such organisations identify a wider community issue which also affects young people. By targeting the issue, they also improve their understanding of local young peoples' needs, often through supporting whole families.

> *We created these [food] packs, created recipe cards, got donations for the packs, and it's grown and grown. We've got state funding now to run it and it's taken off,*

and that's amazing. That came about really obviously from a whole national conversation about the need, also paired with, we know our families and we know our community, and we know that a lot of our community were already struggling.
— **Urban local authority**

This approach introduces the organisation to young people and their families who were formerly unaware of them and their service offer. Most youth organisations encourage young people and their families to drop in and see the activities on offer and to chat informally about concerns. Some provide programmes on food preparation to address wider food poverty issues in the community and others run girl's and women's groups. A few also run programmes on a larger scale to support adults as well as young people in creative arts to encourage the whole community to engage. As per the section on demand, addressing wider community issues helps build trust between the organisation and young people who may develop an interest in the activities and / or personal and social development opportunities on offer.

Local authorities

Making best use of budgets

The supply of universal and open access provision, and preventative interventions varies by local authority. All local authorities make decisions about how they use their available budget to deliver sufficient youth provisions (see Section 2 for a discussion of sufficient services). Nearly all local authority interviewees said they focus funding on areas of greatest perceived need within their area. Defining "need" differs between local authorities based on their geographical, socio-economic and financial circumstances, and any politically strategic priorities, and it may be that the idea of 'sufficient' services is determined as a proxy for 'highest need' rather than 'highest need' being incorporated within a wider definition of sufficiency. Most local authorities that participated use statutory service data from the various sources, for example the police and education to give them key areas of strategic focus. This is often used to target detached youth work and to inform the commissioning of other youth organisations and voluntary agencies to deliver provision alongside existing youth provision in the community. For a few local authorities the need is identified as being focused on addressing antisocial behaviour and youth offending. For another it is around a wider strategic plan for health and wellbeing in the community.

Many local authority representatives said commissioning others to deliver youth services is cost-effective (local authority commissioning models are illustrated earlier in Figure 1). The perceived value of commissioning lies in helping benefit from the flexibility to design a service offer around the needs of young people in their area by utilising greater access to a more diverse resource pool of workers (for example who may have specific skills that are not present in the local authority workforce), and in reaching wider geographical areas than may be possible through the fixed locations from which a local authority may operate. Most local authorities we spoke to employ few youth workers and most of these staff deliver detached provision. Commissioning provides the local authority access to a range of specialist and community organisations whose services can map to demand.

We've got a really wide-ranging, far-reaching youth offer that is able to be responsive to the needs of young people…. It's about that open access, universal offer that's meant to enrich the lives of young people, we have that in place.
— **Urban local authority**

Targeted and detached provision

For many local authorities, targeting provision means prioritising youth services for vulnerable young people and safeguarding activities. Where direct services are provided by local authorities, they often include detached services to address safeguarding issues such as violence, gang affiliation and child criminal exploitation. A couple of local authority interviewees said such services where vital in places of high economic disadvantage. Many of these services include statutory aspects of wider local authority services such as social services and youth offending.

Many local authorities said preventative approaches are cost-effective because they reduce the need for expensive subsequent interventions, and are more effective in engaging young people. Detached youth services were described as an important component of preventive services. Detached services cover youth workers engaging with young people in public spaces (streets, parks, shopping centres, etc.). Detached youth workers build rapport and trust with young people to identify their needs and signpost to youth offers that might be of interest. Detached work was often described as preventative because the local authority could build a picture of local need, then create a service offer to meet need. This is a good example of PSD First service model.

We want to make sure that we can intervene early, that's important, early help, early intervention and prevention, I think that's key, in a way, and it's about young people being able to get that support when they need it.
— **Urban local authority**

Accessing services

Issues around cost and reliability of transport can inhibit access to provision. Many local authorities lack budget to subsidise transport which means some young people cannot access distant services due to cost. "Distant" also has multiple meanings including physical distance, time taken to travel, the number of transport changes and the emotional or cultural associations with spaces and neighbourhoods. Many local authorities consider these factors when considering supply. For example, a couple of interviewees said they created or commissioned provision in a central area to ease access for all. Many local authorities said it was important to place youth services in specific neighbourhoods to address emotional or cultural barriers to access. For example, many young people will not or are unable to travel even from one side of an estate to another and so some youth organisations face difficulties in engaging with them.

You're paying £6 for a very short journey and you just think this is not right. So, that's been a tricky one. But in saying that, we're trying to promote cycling and make it easier for people to cycle around [the area] rather than use the buses if they can.
— **Urban local authority**

Some, mainly urban, local authorities promote cycling, walking and other modes of transport such as e-scooters to address access issues. These options are rarely available in rural areas. In rural areas physical distance and limited / infrequent transport services can be a major barrier to access, especially where parents are unable to drive young people to provision.

> *Rurality is a bit of an issue in terms of young people accessing services but we are doing quite a significant piece of work called delivering locally, one of my ex-colleagues is leading on that piece of work to basically try and ensure that young people can access as many services as possible within their local community.*
> — **Rural local authority**

Underlying factors that influence young peoples' motivation to engage with youth services

Interest in activities

Activity-based PSD draws in young people through their interest in the specific activity offered. The activity-based organisations participating in this work all had parallel purpose of addressing young peoples' social and personal development (as opposed to those solely interested in the activity such as a football club, karate dojo or chess club). The main conduit for reaching young people is through the activity or activities offered by these organisations. Activities are a motivating medium through which personal and social development is provided. A good example of the distinction is one of the theatre organisations interviewed for the study. The organisation ran programmes for disadvantaged and disabled young people with a parallel purpose of personal and social development. They also rented performance space to commercial youth theatre companies with no additional social agenda.

Peers and family

Parents and peers also motivate young people to access activities and youth services. Young people come forward when they see friends or family members are part of something. In the case of peers, some organisations say young people talk to others facing similar issues, encouraging them to try the service.

Fostering independence

An important proposition for nearly all youth organisations is that young people have a safe space to be themselves and to have fun. This approach builds trust with organisations' staff and volunteers and creates the opportunity to offer mentoring and support as needed.

> *Especially with generic youth work, they [young people] want their space to come. They want to be able to communicate with their friends. They want to play football, kick a ball around, have the youth workers there to talk about all the issues on an informal, confidential basis.*
> — **Rural local authority**

Addressing mental health

Most youth workers said poor mental health was one of the main issues they were encountering with young people, and that the demand was rising. The demand for mental health related support was also the most voiced area by young people.

Two major reasons were given. Firstly, because of the reduced capacity and accessibility of other more specialist resources. Secondly, an exacerbation due to Covid. Increasingly youth provision is having to deal with more complex and serious mental health issues that would normally be referred directly to the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Several interviewees discussed training and guidance they received to identify potential issues in young people. Some organisations are recruiting specialist youth workers to deal with this growing area of need. On the other hand, others do not feel equipped to deal with a growing demand for mental health and trauma-informed counselling services (as opposed to softer elements of personal and social development like citizenship and confidence building). In the main, organisations prefer to access specialist support where mental health and counselling needs are significant.

One of the challenges we have … is that a lot of these issues probably require a clinical response and we're not clinicians.
— Youth organisation, Slough

Young Person's Views

Mental health support was the most widely expressed support need in young person's focus groups. In different focus groups young people told us of the difference that youth workers made:

"Because of my anxiety I usually come and talk to [NAME REDACTED], she's always available … other places I've been to … I just don't feel like I can talk to them."
— Young person, Slough

"It's somewhere where we can always go, they're always there to listen to us if we have a problem … we can always ask to go in a different room and speak privately."
— Young person, Southend

Young people were more likely to look for support from youth provision than from school or health care providers, which were sometimes described as poor, rubbish, or even disgusting.

Although some youth provision provides spaces for immediate and informal supportive conversations with workers and friends, it was not deemed sufficient for some young people who wanted more specialist support, especially where CAMHS waiting lists are very high.

In Bury and Nottingham young people felt there was a lack of support altogether.

Referrals and introductions

The motivations for accessing youth services via a local authority are varied. Many arrive via a referral, and this often covers some manner of statutory provision outside of youth services i.e. the referral isn't voluntary. Some local authorities still directly manage youth clubs and young peoples' motivation for attendance with vary by person such as wanting to be with their friends.

Many local authorities recognise increasing need to support young peoples' mental health and well-being. Whether this is a genuine motivation to engage with local authority provision or an aspect of demand needs further investigation through analysis.

Financing

Youth work organisations

Responding to reductions in local authority funding

The research evidence points to a relationship between the long-term reduction in local authority funding and a corresponding increase in wider grant funding amongst youth work organisations. Many youth work organisations apply to funding bodies for either core or project funding. Core funding describes longer-term grants and finance for ongoing operations. Project funding is usually fixed term and associated with a tightly defined activity or purpose. Many youth work organisations seek funders that align with their mission. Some organisations create collaborative partnerships to deliver projects or improve their chances of accessing funding streams.

Some youth work organisations and local authority interviewees said the reduction in government funding increased reliance on local charitable and commercial youth work provision. These interviewees said local authorities introduce young people to their organisation or use the network of local youth work providers for targeted provision. Local youth work organisations are important because they now occupy many of the spaces vacated by former local authority provision.

> *Most services can't be delivered equally across all areas within the county. So, they have to be targeted where they are needed most. Where they're needed most is usually the most deprived areas. Because we don't have as many of them [deprived areas] as a borough, we look less deprived, therefore we get less services. So, the LSP group tries to address that by bringing in as much multi-agency working and trying to, almost, fill the gap.*
> — **County Local Authority**

Some youth organisation interviewees feel disinvestment makes local authorities poorly placed to lead on the development of local youth services due to a loss of institutional knowledge and a reduction in active partnerships. Some interviewees said that their local authority services were unable to innovate, work creatively or foster partnership working, largely due to a lack of resource to enable this with any available resource dedicated to delivery without sufficient resource for strategic planning on a sector-wide basis. The same interviewees said philanthropic funders and specialist youth organisations largely responded positively to this changing context. They were working in the funding void left by local authorities and found solutions to the absence of local authority youth services. Interviewees also said grant funders operate without the cultural and economic constraints faced by local authorities. This tension is also recognised amongst a few local authority officers, who note that some youth organisations are growing and thriving without the financial support of the Council.

> *For me, you need that third sector specialist stuff because you need people without the constraints of the local authority. I've got an overview and an insight of what's happening and who's out there…. I have to bite my tongue a little bit because I appreciate the work they're doing, because we have the same ethics and morals and stuff, but they're branching out survive and to win contracts*
> — **[Urban Local Authority].**

There was no way to understand changes in the overall level of combined local authority and non-local authority services over the time period with the data available. A possible research project that can provide an indication of this would be to explore back-dated financial returns of registered organisations who provide youth services through the Charity Commission Register and/or Companies House. A feasibility study would better provide an understanding as to the possible quality of this. For future years, the collection of income data through the NYA Census will go some way towards indicating any changes.

Adapting to funding opportunities

Most organisations are flexible and agile in how they fund a varied, and often creative, youth work offer. Many organisations have a core offer around which other activity or projects are delivered. For example, one charity designs group volunteering opportunities for young people from different ethnic backgrounds. They created a community kitchen by negotiating free access to a vacant unit in a shopping centre and drawing down funding for food and kitchen equipment from the Holiday Activities and Food Programme. The outcomes of this project included increased awareness around healthy eating, young people cooking a greater share of their own meals at home, the transfer of cooking skills to other family members and a shared appreciation of other cultures' cuisines, which helped to break down cultural barriers between the organisation's members. The young people led on the bid writing process too, gaining valuable commercial skills including presenting the benefits of an idea, linking their idea to current agendas, i.e. childhood obesity and food poverty, writing a funding bid and costing a project.

A music and video production company, with a vision to diversify the workforce within the creative industries by giving young people the opportunity to work on live media projects, drew down funding from a range of arts and film providers to support live campaigns around issue facing young people including knife crime, violence and against women and girls, extremism and terrorism.

Working with small budgets

A couple of volunteer-run youth organisations gave examples of activities delivered at minimal operational costs and without local authority funding. For example, a young person's friendship group ran walking and talking sessions in country parks that address fitness and mental health concerns. From this activity, they linked with park rangers to deliver a project creating artwork showcasing positive mental health affirmations and displaying it on the trees in the country park, which further promoted their services and attracted new members.

Commercial income

Greater entrepreneurialism is arising in the sense that some youth work organisations are generating their own commercial income in addition to grant income, with profits re-invested in youth work. Several methods of generating commercial income were discussed during interviews. These included using profits from commercial contracts to fund youth work services, renting out space, generating income from hospitality services like cafes and selling on items restored with the help of young people.

We've never had core funding from any organisation. We have a patchwork model of project-based activity, but what we tend to do is keep our core plan of activities focused around our users and what we want to achieve for them and then find the appropriate funders to support the projects that enable us to do that and then building overheads and core costs into every project that we do… We do take on [commercial] contracts… and any profit that we make from that we reinvest in the outreach and engagement and youth work and training that we do.
— Youth organisation, Slough

Subscription

In every locality, there are youth organisations that operate outside of the local authority funding model, notably sports clubs, uniformed organisations such as the Guides, Sea Cadets etc, youth theatres and music groups. These organisations are primarily funded through subscriptions, grants and commercial income, e.g. clubhouse takings, cafes, renting space, concerts and productions. They may have very little contact with the local authority, may be in respect of paying business rates on buildings and in a youth work capacity, there may be occasional contact if a member is being supported by a social worker or youth worker.

The sources of funding

Non-local authority youth work organisations

Youth work organisations discussed a plethora of income streams which can be grouped into several different categories.

Central or local government contracts

This type of funding was often accessed through a tendering process with the relevant authority. As per the earlier discussion on commissioning, tenders were either for a collective, whole service offer, for individual projects or specific items or equipment as determined by the relevant local authority. They cover agreements to: run youth clubs; provide individual projects or services like the C-Card[15]; offer ongoing advice and support for other organisations like safeguarding support and volunteer training; detached work; and one to one mentoring. There are also some programmes which are commissioned from Central Government funding sources and which some organisations delivered provision through. For example; National Citizens Service and Holiday Activities and Food Programme.

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[15] https://youngandfree.org.uk/join-the-c-card-scheme/

Grants from funding bodies and charities (local and national)

Numerous bodies and charities fund youth work organisations. Their focus can be categorised into the following:

- **Those focused on young people** such Children in Need, NSPCC, Prince's Trust. Funding is provided where youth work organisations can demonstrate impacts on young people that align with the charitable vision.

- **Supporting community or cultural interest groups** including The Co-op Foundation, National Lottery Awards for All, Reaching Communities England, Rotary Clubs, Tesco Bags of Help. Funding constraints and rules from such organisations are typically focused on the needs of designated communities.

- **Funding activities or infrastructure**. Examples include Sovereign Homes who funded the re-fit of a building for youth work. A youth homelessness charity received funding from Centrepoint and Crisis. One video and music production charity won grants from the British Film Institute, ScreenSkills and the Arts Council England. A cricket club accessed training programmes and equipment funded by the English Cricket Board. These funds were often used to specific projects or purposes.

- **A geographical focus** accessible to organisation based on their area of operations. Examples of funders included The Rothschild Foundation, Forever Manchester. A mix of operational and project funding was drawn from such organisations.

Youth organisations typically bid for these grants through an application process, which is often time intensive. Some interviewees said the application process reduced the time they had to deliver youth services. Others used specialist support, e.g. from professional bid writers or volunteers with professional experience of bid writing to help write bids.

Commercial and fundraising income

Many organisations generate commercial income from services, production or performance. Several interviewees represented the performing arts and many held performances which included an entrance fee. Many organisations with fixed premises rented their space to others for a fee. Some organisations also had cafés which generated income for the organisation. A few organisations had corporate sponsorship from firms those fulfilling their corporate social responsibility commitments. Most organisations with commercial income did not solely offer youth work services within NYA's definition: youth work was part of a wider community or wider public offer.

> *We are, I would say, quite self-sustainable. So we have a new building which is 3 floors. We hire the floors out, so then obviously we can use that money, again, to provide youth provision. We also have a café which, again, comes back into the youth provision pot. So we, again, are being able to provide youth provision through that as well.*
> - **[Youth organisation, Coventry]**

Fundraising events or crowdfunding were common across youth work organisations. The range of fundraising activities mentioned by interviews was large including charity bike rides, Great North Run, bag packing at supermarkets, car washing services, raffles etc., Some fundraising activities involved the young people attending the service; staff and volunteers undertook other fundraising activities. A couple of interviewees connected the process of fundraising with young peoples' personal and social development because they were involved in organising, then partaking in the activity which increased their wider community and social awareness. For example, a cricket club, involved young people in the organisation of a barbeque and raffle and a Sea Cadet company delegated its members to organise a community car washing event with the Fire Service.

Private and service user income

Some organisations collect subscriptions or a nominal fee from young people. These payments are common with sports clubs, performing arts clubs, youth clubs and uniformed organisations. These are often associated with offers where attendance is regular and continual rather than a time-bound, specific youth projects. Several interviewees said a small fee added a sense of worth to services which could be absent where there was no charge. They felt that young people often valued a service more if they had to pay for it, even if the change was small.

> *Parents pay a phenomenal amount of money to keep their children in school for an extra hour at the end of the day, but we are near a number of schools here offering free activities, supervised by qualified and quality staff, with food, and snacks, and links to all kinds of other opportunities and services. We do that for free, but there doesn't seem to be an interest in it, it's just not valued. …. I think that is it, and I think it's probably talking more about the way that the world works and the way that our society is going, that we associate value with stuff that we can spend money on, rather than associating it with other things than have a different meaning, and I don't know the way out of that.*
> - **[Youth Organisation, Islington]**

More substantial fees are often charged for residential trips, with some bursary or hardship funds available. Several organisations said they received public donations or drew bequeathed income. For example, some church groups, youth clubs and uniformed organisations mentioned that they received donations from previous beneficiaries of their work or from parents who had attended when they were younger and wished to give something back. Some organisations benefit from people's life-long associations with a club or society, which sometimes resulted in bequeathed income.

Generating operational income and capital funding was a significant administrative activity for all organisations and necessary to fulfil their function. Some service-level organisations exist that manage this process centrally and sub-commission delivery to other partner organisations.

Local authorities

Funding streams for local authority youth services are different, in the main because they do not received grants from funding bodies or charities. In addition to the core government funding discussed in the introductory section, local authorities also discussed several other youth service funding routes. Discretionary funding is provided by some local authorities for specific youth work projects, usually via community funds. Some examples include building a skatepark, providing new equipment for youth clubs and setting up a boxing club run by qualified coaches and youth workers. These are sometimes jointly delivered across several local authority departments or in partnership with youth organisations with a specialist focus or other statutory bodies.

Councillor budgets can be allocated to specific communities. These may include provision for youth projects within a community-wide offer. Councillor budgets were rarely used for projects solely targeting young people in communities, with small amounts also for hyper-local governments through parish budgets or similar.

'Reduced profit' funding is also used. Examples include local authority leisure centres offering free passes for young carers and looked after children or discounted access to private or third sector provision for targeted groups. Such offers were not universal to all young people.

Access to funding

Youth work organisations

Funding is split into two categories. **Project funding** is used for specific, time-bound activities (often weeks or months) or for specific projects. Youth organisations may partner with other organisations or statutory bodies in respect of project work.

Core funding is operational and allows organisations to offer services and activities with fewer pre-conditions. Some organisations apply for grants to support the mission and purpose of the organisation. The mission is typically aligned to that of the granting body, e.g. to tackle homelessness, to reduce violence against women and girls, to improve sporting ability, to reduce the social isolation of those with disabilities.

Approaches to accessing finance

A key finding of this piece of research is that youth work organisations are displaying agility by adapting to reduced government funding. Many well-established organisations have diversified their income streams as either alternative or addition to local authority funding. For example, one youth organisation has a county-wide local authority contract to deliver detached youth work and support for volunteer-led youth clubs. They supplemented this income from the proceeds of a charity bike ride organised by the patron of the charity and charging for other organisations and the public to use an outdoor education centre.

Youth organisations who did not own their own venue therefore could not generate income from rental. Youth organisations report that funding bodies often set restrictive eligibility criteria for funding. Pre-conditions often exist that guide who can draw down the funding and how it can (and cannot) be used. For example, a domestic violence charity running a children's service did not meet the threshold for one charity's funding because children's services accounted for less than 70% of their core work. A youth organisation was not eligible to apply to a funder because it was struggling to employ qualified youth workers.

> *Ten years ago the funding got cut from youth services completely, youth workers that were experienced, trained and fully qualified went and upskilled in other professions. There is a real shortage and gap for experienced, qualified youth workers……some of the contracts stipulate that they have to be fully qualified youth workers, but we come across that many good people that have got brilliant skills or we feel we could invest, it's a shame. We can signpost them and say go on to this course, you need it and sometimes it can be a bit of a paperwork hang up, because you know that that person could be amazing for young people, but they haven't got it on paper. You need them to have it on paper to offer them the job because it's one of the contract agreements put in place.*
> — **[Youth Organisation, Middlesbrough].**

Successful funding applications often need to demonstrate how outcomes and impact will be measured. Some smaller organisations and local authorities talked about the difficulty of finding the time, requisite skills and resources to create robust outcomes and impact data that could be used in future funding bids. This was exacerbated in instances where different measurements were needed for different funding. The following local authority interviewee said they made decisions to prioritise delivery over evaluation because resources were so limited.

> *We do evaluations of the projects which are funded because we need to. We don't do evaluations of the projects that aren't [from a generic pot of money] because we haven't got the resource to and, on balance, it's better that we deliver something else, rather than evaluate something we've already done because at least that's another service that we can provide. And the evaluation, although useful, doesn't deliver a service to a young person. The young person doesn't care whether there's an evaluation or not, that's not giving them anything, whereas another project would. You have to be pragmatic about it, yes. If you've only got a finite amount of resources, we have to be pragmatic about it.*
> — **[Urban Local Authority].**

Successful projects sometimes attract additional money from funders who identify a project as aligning with their aims. This approach can build sustainability into projects, enable more partnership working and improve relationships between statutory agencies and young people. For example, the Premier League Childhood Fund supports projects that use football training with Premier Clubs to take young people off the streets and reduce anti-social behaviour. The success of this project in one area has attracted additional funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner, enabling it to continue for a further three years and adapt by placing police officers within football training sessions, in an attempt to break down barriers between young people and the Police.

Currently, the police and crime commissioner has decided that what we are doing is good enough to fund us for three years without bidding again. This is really good for us. He gives us funding that adds value to our programme. Because of the partnership with the police, we have regular attendance from police officers to these football sessions. A lot of the young people who we work with see the police and run. But we built up the partnership with the police where they are seen differently when they attend our sessions. Now, they are seen differently because they wear a different kit. The police have this kit, but instead of the football club badge on the left-hand side, they have a police badge. So, when they turn up to the session, they look like a football coach. But when you get closer, they are not.
— **[Youth Organisation, Middlesbrough]**

Some organisations diversify their activities in response to need and as a strategy to broaden funding sources for which they are eligible. These organisations can then pool income streams, increase delivery and reach more young people. For example, a charity with roots in supporting young people and their families in the field of substance abuse employed mentors offering advice around mental health, homelessness and trauma.

Smaller charities compete with specialist national bodies for local contracts. Whilst national bodies understand less about local areas and local partnerships, smaller organisations may not have the scale to compete. Examples of the challenges from competition faced by smaller organisations where limited space that is fit for contract's purpose and finding staff with the right mix of skills, attributes and qualifications.

Local authorities

All have central government allocations; some local authorities wholly fund youth provision through this budget. These allocations have diminished over the last decade which has led to increased targeting to young people in areas of high socio-economic deprivation. Local authority offers now focus on targeted, preventative and diversionary provision rather than universal, open access services.

There are some examples of local authorities drawing funding from other central government projects, e.g. Department of Education's Holiday Activities and Food Programme. This funding delivers targeted support to children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals.

Some local authorities jointly fund and commission youth work projects with other bodies, e.g. Police and Crime Commissioners, Violence Reduction Units, Health Authorities, and NHS bodies such as Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Using funds and capital expenditure

Youth work organisations

Funding is clearly used to deliver the varied service offers described in Section 1. This includes the activities themselves, supporting materials and necessary equipment or youth

enrichment activities like day trips, residential visits or overseas trips. Other specific activities and items mentioned in organisation interviews include:

- **Venue and premises costs** such as the upkeep of buildings and renting rooms, space or offices. Some organisations have free access to space, e.g. faith-based groups or uniformed organisations linked to a church. Others access premises at reduced or nominal 'peppercorn' rates.

- **Operational costs** such as workforce salaries, recruitment, staff and volunteer training and continuing professional development. Administration is a big cost for some organisations and encompasses researching and writing funding bids, networking and marketing. Other operational costs include insurance, IT infrastructure and utility bills. Infrastructure support companies in the youth sector can sometimes provide funding or direct support in the following areas: DBS checks, training for volunteers, first aid equipment, access to customer relationship management tools.

- **Monitoring and evaluation costs** – this work is particularly important, as evidence of need and / or successful impact is often required to access certain pots of funding. Infrastructure support companies and larger area contract holders can offer support in regard to sharing evaluation methodologies and providing customer relationship management tools to track progress, but generally, this can be a time-consuming process, which competes with delivery time.

Local authorities

Some local authorities directly deliver youth work activities, such as local authority universal access youth clubs. Where offered, the number of clubs varies and all local authorities rationalised provision because of ongoing reductions in funding. A few local authorities have no direct, universal provision. Some fund the upkeep of buildings and premises used for youth work, including premises used by contractors.

Local authority contracts and commissioned services are usually operational, especially for universal access provision. Targeted youth work is sometimes funded on a project- by-project basis with fixed timing. Youth work organisations will usually tender for these contracts. A few local authorities tender service-level contracts which are taken up by larger organisations fulfilling similar types of contracts in other local authorities.

All local authorities provide direct grant or project funding for diversionary activities delivered by specialist youth organisations, e.g. typically responding to a specific safeguarding issue, e.g. knife crime, child criminal exploitation, racial or cultural tensions.

Central allocations cover workforce costs (staff salaries, recruitment, training and continuing professional development of paid staff and volunteers). This includes the detached youth workers employed by all local authorities. Detached workers fulfil and important role as described in section 1.

Partnership working

Models of partnership working

There are two organisation partnership models for delivery for youth work organisations based how responsibilities were distributed amongst partner members.

The equal partners model

All partners offer a broadly equal contribution to a service or project and related decision making. Each partners area of expertise is typically distinct i.e. the service offer of one partner differed to that of the others. Partners will share a common goal such as a commitment to a location, a shared target outcome for young people or similar views on how to achieve positive outcomes. Each partner has a specific role in a collective outcome.

> *We've just begun a process of working with [an arts body] and [a sports body]. We've come up with a collaborative non-legal entity… and what we're doing is attempting to see how the three organisations which are county-wide… can actually come together to try and provide services and meet the needs of young people. It came out of COVID, when we were trying to get some resources out to young people.*
> — **Youth work organisation, North Yorkshire**

Lead partner model

One or two organisations act as the driving force for the project or service collective. Other partners are used to deliver specific aspects of a service or specialist support. The "specialist" element includes some instances of social and personal development support and/or technical, health or social care services that fall beyond the scope of the lead partners' purpose. In activity-based PSD, this means separation between the activity and the personal or social development.

> *It's a really good [collective] where we can either share best practice or resources [or] staffing. A gap for any training needs, the staff, sharing access for relevant funds that might come through that one partner might be eligible for because that's their specialism, that they'll actually then bring that into our provision.*
> — **Youth work organisation, Coventry**

A single organisation may operate different models for individual projects or services. They convene suitable partnerships to meet particular target outcomes or conditions of funding.

 Some youth work organisations operate across multiple local authorities or manage national networks delivering a service in many areas. These organisations often separate some or all fundraising and administration functions to a head office. The main operational differences between organisations operating regionally or nationally is in service delivery.

- Well-known, national organisations operate a large network of sites managed locally. For very large organisations, an additional tier of regional management exists.

- Some organisations use freelancers or sub-contracts to deliver services that require specialist skills such as drama workshops, or supporting youth work intervention services.

- The was one instance of an organisation introducing a franchising model for their service to become less reliant on grant funding.

Working in partnership with young people

A few youth work organisations operate a partnership delivery model where young people lead some service delivery. This means they are responsible for organisational and management decisions. Interviewees say this gives young people agency in the design of the activities they undertake and develops participants' experience of working with others through collective decision-making, and develops their operational and management experience. This partnerships model is an extension of the youth voice concept and is similar to some local authorities' youth parliaments. They key difference is young people enjoy more responsibility in a co-management delivery model compared to a youth parliament. However, one organisation said that getting funding for truly student-led projects was rare because most funding has significant stipulations about its use. Funders do not usually allow young people to make spending decisions.

> *All the stuff that we do is in partnership with young people. So, the projects can start in varying ways. In the main, it comes from young people suggesting stuff and from the new steering groups of young people that we've got…. our most famous [10-year-old] project [is led by young people]. We pay for it … out of our reserves. We never try and seek funding for it because it is young person led and we find it very difficult every year finding funding.*
> — **Youth work organisation, Bury**

Local authorities

The local authority structures used to manage youth work delivery were varied and sometime complex. Most operated some variant of a hub and spoke partnership model. Local authorities maintained relationships with various delivery organisations. This model allows the local authority to directly commission and design youth services based on specialist needs, community requirements and socio-economic circumstances.

Three broad types of partnerships were present in local authorities. Like youth work organisations, local authorities did not exclusively operate a single model. They create partnerships suitable for objectives related to a project, service or objective.

Inter-departmental partnerships

Partnerships between different local authority departments and / or public-funded agencies were present in some form in all local authorities. Local government and administrative bodies all shared information and resources to diagnose, design, manage and deliver youth services. Relationships with smaller administrative units (district and parish councils, ward

councillors, etc.) were sometimes used to understand more about specific neighbourhoods and communities.

For example, some local authorities jointly deliver youth work projects with other bodies, e.g. Police and Crime Commissioners, Violence Reduction Units, Health Authorities, and NHS bodies such as Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). This may also involve other non-local authority delivery partners.

Commissioning service-level organisations

Commissioning is a strong part of current local authority service design. Several local authorities used service-level organisations to administer and manage youth work across the authority. These organisations were responsible for administering youth services and some delivery. They would also "subcontract" some youth work delivery to smaller organisations. Service-level agreements were either with a single organisation, or a local partnership of two or three organisations working together. Some larger organisations held service level agreements across multiple local authorities.

> *[The commissioned organisation] really understand what youth work is and they are also partnering with a local youth provider so we were getting great [local] expertise, so learning from other boroughs but also building capacity locally … their contract will be handed over to the local youth provider at the end of year 3. It's quite a long contract, it's up to 7 years, but it means that we're building capacity locally.*
> **— Urban Local authority**

Internal contract management

The other main management type were local authorities managing youth work internally i.e. some services remain in house. Most local authorities mixed direct contract over some services with commissioning. Youth clubs were the most likely universal provision to remain under local authority control. All local authorities still directly managed at least some detached provision which was used to target vulnerable or disadvantaged young people. One local authority planned to eventually bring all management and delivery for youth services back to direct local authority control.

> *So, we have a [detached] team who are exactly that. Doesn't mean that they don't work in buildings, they'll be in and out of schools and stuff like that, but they go to where we need them to go to, in essence. That need could be from police sector tasking that have had reports of antisocial behaviour, it could come from members who have said to us they've got an issue in a particular area. It could be just that we're working an area where we know generally, we're picking up vibes around young people, knife crime, those kinds of things.*
> *- [Local Authority, Slough]*

Benefits of partnership working

The sum is greater than the whole

Organisations working together share expertise and resources or benefit from complementary strengths. For many youth work organisations, partnerships help personal and social development through increasing the breadth of support and experiences available to young people. This is inherent in the types of partnership models described earlier and helps deliver a well-rounded service that better meets the statutory "sufficiency" criteria. Examples of benefits given by interviews include organisations with a good understanding of a local community partnering with another providing a bespoke youth service offer. Some organisations possess excellent grant application and management expertise and may provide administrative support to other service providers.

> *We've come up with a collaborative non-legal entity [called North Yorkshire Together], and what we're doing is we're attempting to see how the three organisations which are county-wide, art, sport and youth, can actually come together to try and provide services and meet the needs of young people.*
> — **Youth work organisation, North Yorkshire**

Youth work organisations which can access supporting and/or complementary services can increase the value derived from their activities / services. This is an inherent component of the activity-based PSD model. In some cases, the PSD elements of youth work organisations is delivered by partner agencies or freelance youth work specialists. Many smaller youth work organisations lack the staff or requisite skills to support all personal and social development needs. Not all activity-based youth work organisations had staff with youth work qualifications; fewer still directly employed staff or engaged volunteers with wide-ranging support skills like counselling. Partnerships with others helped address this gap.

> *The lady that used to work for the colleges with counselling grew tired and wanted to set up something on a voluntary basis. So, she runs our counselling service, and we take in the trainees from their last year who need to get their counselling hours out. She monitors them and supervises them and that way we can offer a free counselling service.*
> — **Youth work organisation, Dorset**

Working with local authorities can introduce new communities or young people to the organisation's services. Introductions raise wider awareness of the youth service offer leading to growth. Numerous organisations described organic growth in their service offer. One aspect of growth was based on "proof of concept" with the local authority who, when satisfied a service had impact, suggested new communities or youth audiences.

Local authorities

Effective partnerships working between government bodies helps local authorities identify and actively manage wider safeguarding and statutory requirements. Youth work activities form part of a wider ecosystem of services within the local authority. As noted in Section 3,

all local authorities' budgets reduced overall, including budget for youth work. Functioning partnerships are necessary to create complementary services that meet a series of statutory aims in addition to that of youth work.

Commissioning gives local authorities access to a variety of specialist services and innovative offers. Most expertise that remains within local authorities concerns detached youth work and provision, or universal provision through youth clubs. To deliver "sufficient" educational and recreational outside of school hours, local authorities use commissioning to create a broad, diverse offer that which responds to local / community needs.

The recent increases in commissioning and reduction in youth work staffing across local authorities means there are fewer staff with youth work delivery expertise working for local authorities. One local authority aiming to bring more direct provision in-house but faces challenges due to the loss of expertise over the past ten years.

Impacts arising

Impacts arising from service delivery and design

Most youth organisations state the voluntary nature of their offer means they provide a different way to support young people compared to formal education for example. Section 3 shows how trust between staff and young people leads open conversations about personal and social needs. Activity-based PSD uses the young person's interest in an activity to build trust through which conversations and actions to develop personally and socially result. Most organisations connect a young person's choice to participate in an activity to their subsequent choice to open up about their wider concerns, aspirations or ideas. Better personal and social development results because the organisation has an accurate read on young peoples' motivations. Trust also facilitates honest conversations about behaviours. Several organisations noted changes in behaviour amongst young people using their services. Some of these behaviours such as improved confidence (and other softer skills) are by their nature hard to measure. It is worth noting that many interviewees often referred to one or more of the outcomes initially captured in the Every Child Matters White Paper as outcomes young people using their services.[16] Organisations tended to provide anecdotal evidence of examples of positive impact resulting from engagement with their service(s).

> *One of the things his [young person involved in the service] parents said was, 'Well my son used to talk about how hard he was finding-, and basically he used to talk about ending his own life.' She said, 'He no longer does that, he's no longer in that dark spot.*
> — **Youth organisation, Bury**

Organisations relate these observed changes to trained workers taking an interest in the young person, actively listening to what they say and believing in young peoples' abilities without judgement. Organisations again cite institutions like schools as a comparator because they lack the element of choice and, for some young people, trusting relationships with adults. Most organisations discussed the positive relationship between confidence and personal and social development and cite increased confidence as a key impact. Confidence covers many aspects of young peoples' lives: the willingness to try new things; comfort in discussing things openly and freely; interaction with peers; self-expression, etc. The aim of all youth services discussed by interviewees is to give an opportunity to a young person that is otherwise closed to them: one interviewee called it learning by stealth. The offer of something different allows that person to learn more about themselves though engaging in an activity. When successful, that exploration leads to the young person thinking about themselves in a positive way. Confidence is therefore a central purpose of youth work delivery.

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[16] Published in 2003, Every Child Matters identified five outcomes which mattered most to young people: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and economic well-being
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/272064/5860.pdf

Using data to monitor services and impact

All youth work organisations and local authorities recognise the value in using data to monitor services and demonstrate impact. However, many interviewees highlight the limitations of currently available data, and of standard tools in measuring the 'softer' impact of youth work – as demonstrated by the following quotation,

> *You have got things like a phone call from a young person that will meet you at their back gate because they don't want to leave the house because of their levels of social anxiety, working with them for a period of nine months, to them then ringing the mentor and saying, 'I'll get an Uber and meet you in town.'*
> **— Youth organisation, Slough**

Local authorities tend to have the most comprehensive systems in place and use a wider array of datasets. Some describe databases and metrics they created to monitor youth outcomes. The metrics recorded statutory outcomes relating to other elements of local authority governance such as youth violent crime, reoffending rates and social care measures. The databases allow the local authority to understand relationships between a wider youth offer across a local authority, of which youth educational and recreational provision is one aspect. Changes in service design and delivery can be compared against key youth metrics to anecdotally assess the impact of the wider youth offer.

Most youth organisations interviewed include some data collection practices within their services. However, the robustness of the approach can vary, with larger, more well-resourced organisations likelier to utilise more comprehensive monitoring and impact systems such as Views[17] to assess demand for services and measure impact. (See more in Section 3) Larger organisations are also more likely to include validated measures within their data collection practices. The most common approach is through self-completion surveys at the end of the activity – to collect impact data and experience of activities. These tend to be self-designed. However, some organisations perceive that data collection activities can interfere with service delivery and are therefore not prioritised. There is a sense across some organisations that the extent of data collection is influenced by requirements of funders - consequently this can mean impact data is not always collected.

Whilst the demands of funders have therefore helped contribute to a widening acceptance and culture of data capture there is little sense of standardised practice in data collection across the sector, either in the taxonomies or typologies used, or in the format and standards applied to how data is collected or used beyond this. This would make comparing or aggregating existing data difficult.

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[17] Views is a platform designed for charities, non-profits and social purpose companies to manage data and measure impact. https://www.substance.net/views/

Enablers and inhibitors of good practice

There are a range of factors that enable good practice in working with young people. These can broadly be identified at two levels. The first regards providing equitable access to services, the second regards enablers *within* those services.

Young persons' views - equitable access to services

Where youth provision exists, young people told us that the two main barriers to attending were transport and feeling safe in the neighbourhood. Whilst these are often not within the control of youth service providers some are providing support to mitigate these and enable attendance. Other factors included the timing of provision, charges

1. Transport

Outside of London, where plentiful travel opportunities are free or discounted for children and young people, transport was a barrier to a lot of young people. This was especially so in rural areas with restricted timetables or where fares were unaffordable. The extra availability of transport options in urban areas was not a guarantee of easier attendance. For example, in Slough young people told us of the expensive bus fares, and in Bury the tram link was not subsidised for younger passengers. Further, not everyone felt safe getting to or from public transport.

2. Feeling safe locally

In some urban areas, especially Slough, Middlesbrough and Bury, young people talked about knife crime and drug taking as particular concerns when moving between places.

> *"I don't really go to Slough just because it's not as safe [as Windsor]." "I was born here, so, whatever, if I get stabbed, I get stabbed".*
> — **Young person, Slough**

> *"We all feel unsafe … [the] biggest problem is probably knife crimes".*
> — **Young person, Bury**

> *"A lot of people carry knives and stuff"*
> — **Young person, Middlesborough**

In Islington and Beeston young people voiced concern about certain estates or 'post codes' which were feuding, and that there was a danger of being caught up in these innocently.

An issue raised by young people in all areas was the impact of dark nights and poor street lighting on their evening activities, whether in a dedicated youth setting or elsewhere.

"It's specifically when it gets darker. I still get scared going out when it's dark".
— **Young person, Slough**

"they need more lighting around Bury. Especially near the (inaudible) and things like that, it's really dark … and it makes me feel really unsafe."
— **Young person, Bury**

"I think at a lot of the parks, there's not a lot of lighting. A few of them there is, but the skatepark and stuff, there's not a lot of lighting and it's dangerous. And also, when kids are playing out and then it starts to get dark and you have no option but to go inside".
— **Young person, Portland**

"I hate it when it's dark nights because you don't know who's about, and anyone could be about doing anything".
— **Young person, Middlesbrough**

3. Timing

Timing of sessions related to both availability of public transport and dark nights, but was also mentioned as a standalone factor. There was no consistent finding across groups. Whilst some would have preferred earlier sessions others found earlier sessions harder to fit in especially where, in some cases, school hours had been extended to catch up after the closure. For some others, later sessions clashed with 'dinner'.

Because of these differences drop-in sessions appear to work well for most young people.

Outside of regular times there were a number of young people who told us they preferred, or would have benefitted from provision on the weekends and outside of term-time, especially summer activities.

4. Charges

Costs are a potential barrier, but when young people were asked about fees, subs, and other charges most of them were accessing free services. Where a charge was made, such as at the Rural Arts Club in North Yorkshire, it was to cover materials. Those attending considered the charges reasonable although they recognised that they might be off-putting for families on low incomes. Most of the focus group participants were also taking part in paid-for activities outside of the youth service, such as other sports and dance. In Islington many local activities for young people were free or heavily subsidised.

5. Tackling barriers

Youth clubs had options to support young people going home in the dark and/or through unsafe spaces.

In Islington, one of the youth clubs had set up a buddy system where older members saw the younger ones home after the sessions.

Some organisations arranged conversations with other local agencies to address barriers outside of their control or influence. For example, conversations with local PCSOs and other police representatives sometimes helped, as in Middlesbrough, where a PCSO visited the youth club once a month. In Middlesbrough the PCSO was highly thought of because "Like, if you have any problems, she will literally sort them out straight away". However, inter-agency working was not always successful; a trainee youth worker told us that an attempt at multi-agency problem-solving in Southend did not provide any solutions as the police had views about improving lighting in case that attracted young people to congregate.

Timings of youth activities are open to adjustment if it works better for the local transport conditions and drop-in sessions were widely popular as young people could attend at the times that suited them, rather than for fixed sessions. Wider local policy and funding issues regulate the timing, fares, and availability of transport and also whether activities need to charge fees or not. These barriers may not be within the remit of local youth providers to tackle.

Enablers to providing a good service
Enablers create power to make decisions within young people and offer them an alternative to their other life experiences. Where these are not present, they can inhibit the ability to work effectively with young people. We explore these factors below.

Developing trust with young people
Developing meaningful and supportive relationships with young people is at the heart of youth work. These relationships are based on trust and respect. The voluntary participation of young people is key to this. Organisations that establish trusted relationships with young people are likely to be more impactful than those that do not. This can be more challenging for local authorities who also often have responsibility for statutory service delivery. Some local authorities point to negative prior experiences of young people with statutory service staff, for example social workers or education welfare officers as inhibitors to establishing meaningful relationships with young people. Here, some local authorities point to the use of detached youth workers as ways to facilitate these relationships. Engaging with young people where they chose to meet, understanding their needs and working with them to an agreed outcome, helps to develop trusting relationships with young people.

We would have youth workers on the streets delivering outreach work. So they would be the eyes and ears of the community […] so if young people needed some support or something would help signpost or be an advocate for young people in the community People used to call it detached youth work […] but I would probably call them outreach and youth work intervention workers.
— **Youth service, Nottinghamshire**

Interviewees suggest that environments in which young people attend voluntarily find it easier to establish these relationships. Some organisations report having maintained these relationships over multiple years, with some ending up volunteering or working at the organisation. This acts as a further enabler for future cohorts of young people. That is not to suggest that these relationships cannot be established through referrals to activities. Indeed, several organisations delivering targeted interventions also report successes in developing relationships with young people. In these instances interviewees often highlight the importance of the activity offered and the skill of the staff involved in delivery.

Listening to young people

Listening to young people is a key precursor to trust. Many interviews describe listening as a reciprocal activity which creates agency for the young person. Listening is a significant part of generating confidence and hence personal and social development. Nearly all youth work organisations emphasised the importance of listening to young people. Interviewees describe listening alone is insufficient. Most recognise the need for supporting promises and reactions to young people's views with positive action.

We wanted to consult our young people, it's about getting a feel for them in regard to what their interests are and what they're doing. […] We've got a 12-month plan of structured youth activities, but it's all good having plans, but if it's not relevant to your cohort then you might as well just pop them in the bin.
— **Youth organisation, Coventry**

All local authority interviewees believe that young people are involved in creating their local youth offer. Most local authorities had some form of Youth Parliament, although membership criteria and representation differed. Most local authorities had methods to collect the views of young people directly through conversation, committees, surveys or via youth staff and volunteers. However, the extent to which service design and commissioning is genuinely led by young people appears variable and is challenged by some youth organisations interviewed.

We have got a really strong participation model […] In each district we have a local youth forum, and we have young people that meet to look at local issues, to work to take things forward as working group. These local forums feed into other [local council] boards […] We also have members of youth parliament, with a representative from each district.
— **County local authority**

Some local authorities had a structured approach to managing youth voice evidence. This means creating administrative mechanisms and assigning resources to manage evidence from young people and act on their requests where appropriate. For example, one local authority described community profiles created by youth workers which summarised youth views within those communities. However, not all local authorities subsequently explained the decisions they made from this evidence to young people.

Providing activities that young people want

Engaging activities based on the genuine interests of young people are strong enablers. Providing activities that interest young people offers the medium through which wider social and personal development is achieved. This review found a considerable range of activities available to young people within the deep dive areas. As an example, one organisation supporting wider mental health issues used drama to help young people think about their experiences. The organisation said drama allowed young people to explore their situation indirectly without feeling directly exposed or expressing their personal experiences.

Young Person's Views – Participatory decision making

Young people who were provided with opportunities to have their voice heard and to participate actively in providing their views on 'demand' felt this was an important part of successful youth provision, enabling providers to tailor their offer, which in turn helps to drive engagement and build trust. Further, it often provided a sense of ownership or belonging to the service.

Our discussions with young people identified voice and influence at different levels

1. Influencing youth service activities and workforce

Young people may be involved in being consulted on or deciding the activities and provision that takes place in their own provision, and further still in providing 'management' style decisions in putting these ideas into practice. Where this was the case, young people were able to elaborate at length. This was particularly apparent at one centre in Islington where the young people helped to select a new staff member including being on the interview panel and spoke about a range of inclusion in decision making and planning at the youth club level.

> *"We also sometimes have a say on the timings. Sometimes [Name Redacted] will be like, 'Oh we're going to make a new timetable, is there any suggestions of the timings and what activities shall we do on certain days?' So we do get quite a big say in stuff … if we have trips, or anything that we want to do, we can voice our opinions".*
> **— Young person, Islington**

On the other hand, several settings did not give young people complete flexibility in their choice about what activities they would like to do at the club, but instead provided a list of possible options from which young people could choose from or vote for.

2. Influencing the provision of services

In Bury, the young people we spoke to had more of a say on what services were provided in the town. Young people in the Bury Youth Cabinet appreciated the opportunity to give feedback on local young people's wishes and had been involved in deciding how to refurbish a skatepark. Young people also mentioned looking at a variety of societal issues and voting on which one would take priority, before influencing how services were provided to support that

> *"So, we've done projects on knife crime before, we had a circle meeting here last year, and then one again this year. It's around PSHE, environment, how to involve young people more. And discussions within in school as well."*
> — **Young person, Bury**

The young people involved told us that in some schools there was a whole day per half-term dedicated to providing information and support around PSHE.

In Middlesbrough the young people had been part of a levelling up exercise.

> *"We have decided to try and make that a hub for the homeless people so they can learn how to do stuff, learn how to do bills, social skills, write a CV, loads of other stuff, even work experience. Other projects looked at electrifying buses.*
> — **Young person, Middlesbrough**

In Nottingham, Slough and Southend young people did not feel able to influence local decision making even though one of the focus groups was hosted by the Slough Youth Council, and in Southend and Nottingham young people *had* been consulted about their views.

> *"Research more about what children actually like, not just think about what their own kids like or what their kids' friends or their friends' kids like"* … not just take it as, 'Oh, we're just listening for our job.'
> — **Young person, Southend**

> *"The council, they came into school and talked about how they were going to change our community and this and that, and they never did anything, so I don't think they're great".*
> — **Young person, Beeston**

Some young people also perceived that there were inadequacies within youth decision-making forums because the people who became youth council members were a select

group, perhaps not like them, and that schools were involved in the selection process about whose views were put forward.

Young Person's Views - Preferred activities.

The type of activity on offer was often a factor in young people's decision about whether to attend provision or not. A lot of young people attended sports activities which were often paid for. These were in addition to youth club sports which might include informal provision. Arts were also attractive to young people and at youth clubs there was sometimes an opportunity to take part in dance for example in Islington where they had chosen the type of dance they wanted to participate in, and script writing or film clubs in Slough.

Gaming was also popular, and the provision of activities such as a PlayStation, table-tennis, pool, or other game-related activities were attractive to young people who might not be able to access these at home or elsewhere.

Youth clubs could signpost other activities that they did not provide in house. A young woman in Islington was taking part in a six-week animation course which she had learnt about from leaders at the youth club who helped her to apply.

A lot of the young people would have liked more outdoor activities than they had access to. There is demand for something which is like an adventure playground but which can also cater for older ages and this type of venue was mentioned by four groups in different locations.

Young people also regularly voiced a preference for more trips and residentials, especially as there had been fewer opportunities over the last two years because of Covid restrictions. For most young people it was essential that these were subsidised as they were unable to participate in school trips and other organisations' camps and residentials which were usually at full cost. Trips mentioned ranged from residentials to outdoor pursuit centres to day trips to theme parks.

Being adequately resourced

Resourcing is a key factor in the ability to deliver youth work activities. While funding is central, interviewees also highlight staffing and access to premises are also regularly cited.

Funding is a key enabler/inhibitor for all interviewees. Local authorities highlight the financial constraints they face and persistent falls in funding for many services, including youth services. One has a section 114 notice indicating their spending is likely to exceed their allocated budget and consequently faces additions limits and freedom to allocate all its resources, including for youth work. Limited funding inhibits good practice because availability of resources strongly influences decision-making. Other factors such as local need and the youth voice may exert subsequently less influence in decisions. This is made

more difficult by the vague definition of "sufficient" in the statutory guidance which makes it hard for local authorities to consistently devise services.

Type of funding matters as much as amount of funding, particularly for youth organisations, and there is significant variation in balance between revenue from sales of services and grant funding received. However, grant funding remains central for the majority and in the best examples enables organisations to deliver activities for young people. In one instance receipt of grant funding was cited as having kept the organisation afloat through the pandemic when sales of services dried up. However, in other instances provision is funded and/or subsidised through revenues generated for services. In all cases activities are acknowledged by most interviews as remaining at risk due to the vagaries of funding availability.

Grant funding in particular can act as both an inhibitor and an enabler of practice. It is positive to note that most interviewees resisted chasing less relevant grants that would move them away from their core mission. However, many state that lack of reliability on grants to fund activity can be problematic. Furthermore, many report that the application process can be onerous and detrimentally impact on other core tasks, including delivering existing activities. This is a particular challenge for smaller and newer organisations that have yet to establish a footprint.

> *Even though I'm the director, I do the majority of the delivery and the organisation, plus managing the staff, procuring new work, bids and all the rest of it. I work stupid hours. It's just hard.*
> — **Youth organisation, Coventry**

Length of funding awards can also inhibit delivery. Many organisations point to the decline in long-term grant periods - although there is recognition that local authority funding tends to be longer-term. Shorter funding periods can result in organisations 'chasing their tail' to secure funding – to the detriment of other activities.

> *It's lack of security, it's very hard to make long-term decisions without necessarily knowing what is going to happen in the future. We're holding our own fundraising activity, there's no way that we're going in to the next financial year with the only thing that's secure is £10,000 from Children in Need.*
> — **Youth organisation, Slough**

Longer term funding offers other benefits. It offers more time to address sometimes challenging and engrained behaviours in young people engaging with their activity. The time that can be required to establish positive relationships should not be understated. There are also wider benefits to the organisation themselves. Some highlight the positive impact of longer delivery contracts on staff morale as well as on their ability to recruit new staff. This is important, as some interviewees struggle to fill vacancies with appropriately trained staff. This may be one reason why many organisations are filling voluntary and paid roles with young people that previously engaged with their organisation.

Access to appropriate premises impacts on the ability of organisations to deliver effective youth activities. A mixed picture emerges across deep dive areas. A significant minority report being unable to source an appropriate facility to operate from. This they argue

restricts the nature and level of activities that they can offer and consequently, the extent to which their organisation can grow.

> *It just would be nice if that translated into an actual building because that's one of our limiting factors now… Yes, our space the amount of different types of provisions we could offer young people would be absolutely insane with our cohort of staff that we've got.*
> **— Youth organisation, Bury**

Local authorities may offer a partial solution. Some local authorities indicate that they do make available local assets for youth groups, often for seed corn rents at the outset to encourage growth. Others highlighted capital building programmes for new schools that include conditions for facilities to be available for community usage.

A supportive local environment

Commitment from senior stakeholders towards a particular issue or youth work topic can be an enabler or inhibitor, depending on the strength of commitment. For local authorities, strong leadership, alongside political support from elected members is thought to have led to stronger youth offers and better synergies with other statutory partners. A few youth organisations indicated that commitment from local authority leaders had provided support additional support and impetus for their delivery offer.

> *We have a good partnership model which then leads to joined up objectives. Councillor [name] is on the well-being board. One of the priorities of the board is strong, healthy and attractive neighbourhoods… [the councillor] can ask which neighbourhood are you looking at? What are the needs? How are you involving the community? How do we take that as a collective and make that into a strong, healthy, attractive neighbourhood?*
> **— Urban Local Authority**

Having a strong VCS infrastructure also helps. Some organisations suggest that a voluntary organisation acting as an umbrella infrastructure organisation can enable a more joined up approach across communities and provide better opportunities for networking, communication, and information sharing. This they suggest, also lessens the chance of unnecessary duplication of activity and in some instances generate additional informal referrals to services. Some interviewees point out that a community led activity is less susceptible to the vagaries of stop/start council priorities. There is also a sense that community led structures are better able to facilitate the local voice than manager-led structures.

SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

Initial descriptive findings from manual searching

CFE Research considered the population and composition of youth work organisations for NYA in 2021. CFE Research concluded the quality of existing data available with which to identify youth work organisations was variable. Subsequent exploratory secondary research has estimated the number of youth work organisation operating in eighteen local authority areas. This research also assessed the quality of data available from public sources. The ultimate purpose was to use search returns to estimate the total number of youth work organisations operating in England, and the sort of activities they are most likely to deliver.

The analysis comprises three parts:

1. A descriptive analysis of 18 upper tier local authorities (UTLAs) selected for manual searching compared to all other local authorities. Metrics available from public sources (the Office for National Statistics, NYA) were used for this analysis. The findings show that the purposive sample of 18 UTLAs (two selected per region) is broadly comparable with all other UTLAs.

2. A comparative analysis of the data collected through manual searching compared to that collected from the Charity Commission Register in 2021. This analysis shows some specific differences in the composition of the sample using subjective coding. These differences look systemic and there are reasonable explanations for variance.

3. Finally, weighting strategies were tested to assess whether they were needed to estimate the total number of youth work organisations operating in England. These tests found grossing weights made little difference to the estimates derived from unweighted data. There are significant margins of error based on the current data available.

Comparing UTLAs used for manual searching versus all other UTLAs in England

Methodology

NYA collated government data on youth service spend and some other social indicators by UTLA. CFE Research supplemented this data with government statistics. Although collated at lower tier local authority level, estimators were used to gross up to upper tier level where necessary. Some longitudinal statistics were derived from the government data including:

- The change in spend per head on youth services between 2010/11 and 2020/21;

- The change in the youth population of 11- to 17-year-olds[18] between 2010/11 and 2020/21;

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[18] NYA used this measure to remove university students from data

- The proportion of economically active adults (aged 16+) who were unemployed; and

- The proportion of households in England with at least 1 early-years or school age child.

Eighteen UTLAs were selected across England for the manual searching exercise. An initial sample was randomly drawn after stratifying by the total number of people aged 9 to 24 living in the UTLA. A probability proportional to size method was used to select randomly select a shortlist of 2 UTLAs from each English Government Office Region (GOR). This resulted in a selection of 18 UTLAs. This list was presented to NYA to manually adjust based on internal criteria. A few UTLAs were substituted from the initial list.

Main findings

A comparison of descriptive data for the 18 UTLAs versus all others was then undertaken. The analysis considers mean (average) and median figures. The median (the middle value) is useful as it indicates any skew in the data for smaller populations. Analysis (Table 1 overleaf) shows:

- The mean population of young people aged 11 to 17 was 9% larger in the selected 18 compared to other UTLAs. The median population was 18% larger.

- The average change in the population of young people aged 11 to 17 was broadly similar although the median change was lower in the selected 18 UTLAs. This suggests the selected 18 have static or declining populations of young people aged 11 to 17 compared to other UTLAs.

- Average spend per head of population is markedly higher (by 23%) in the selected 18 compared to other UTLAs. The median spend is 26% more. The selected 18 also experienced a relatively smaller fall in funding per head between 2010/11 and 202/21. Average funding still fell by 61% in the selected 18.

- There were no differences in the other measures shown in Table 1 (population density, economic inactivity and the proportion of households with early years of school-aged children).

Table 1: Comparative socio-economic measures between UTLAs selected for manual searching and others

Metric	Measures	18 selected UTLAs	Other UTLAs	All UTLAs
11- to 17-year-old Population Mid-2020	Mean	32,586	29,990	30,302
	Median	26,691	22,602	22,638
	N	18	132	150
Percentage change in 11- to 17-year-olds between 2010/11 and 2020/21	Mean	5%	6%	6%
	Median	1%	3%	3%
	N	18	131	149
Spend per head on youth services, 2020/21	Mean	104.53	85.00	87.36
	Median	87.30	69.23	69.46
	N	18	131	149
Percentage change in Spend per head	Mean	-61%	-70%	-69%
	Median	-62%	-73%	-71%
	N	17	129	146
Population density - People per km2	Mean	2,955	2,860	2,871
	Median	1,583	1,636	1,636
	N	18	131	149
Percent economically active unemployed	Mean	4%	4%	4%
	Median	4%	4%	4%
	N	18	129	147
Proportion of households with at least 1 early-years or school age child	Mean	23%	23%	23%
	Median	23%	23%	23%
	N	18	129	147

Sources: ONS Population Profiles for Local Authorities in England; Spending returns from s251 documents

The purposive selection of UTLAS also means the representation of London boroughs in the selected 18 is low whereas the representation of counties is higher. Representation of rural locations is also higher because of purposive selection.

Comparing manual searches to secondary data and 2021 survey returns

Method

CFE Research conducted a survey of youth work organisations at the end of 2021. The survey sample was derived from the Charity Commission Register (the Register)[19], the government list of all registered charities in England and Wales. The Register contains some factual data on charity operations. However, the Register lacks any variable to identify organisations that deliver NYA's definition of youth work.

CFE Research's early work on the Register coded open text variables to identify the types of organisations that may deliver youth work as per NYA's definition. The primary method for identifying such organisations was open text string searching on the description of services held on the Register for each charity. Evidenced-based, subjective decisions were made to classify potential youth work organisations. CFE Research's separate report outlines this process.

The Register is the most comprehensive list of English (and Welsh) charities available. However, not all youth work organisations have charitable status and hence the whole youth work organisation population is not described in the Register. Further, the measures used to identify youth work organisations from the Register were subjective. One rationale for conducting manual searches in 18 selected UTLAs was to compare findings from such searches with data held on the Register and make value judgements on whether manual searching identifies more youth work organisations than database searching alone.

Manual searches were conducted in three stages.

1. Visiting the 360Giving[20] website to identify all organisations receiving grants from funding organisations since 2019 in each of the 18 selected UTLAs.

2. Using search engines to find organisations in the same UTLAs based on a series of pre-agreed key words.

3. Using social media platforms (primarily Facebook) to search for youth work organisations.

Returns were collated into separate UTLA spreadsheets. Organisations were coded using the same coding frame applied to the Register exercise described earlier to allow some high-level comparison.

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[19] https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/register/full-register-download

[20] This link provides a example of the search strings used:
https://grantnav.threesixtygiving.org/search?query=%22youth+work%22+OR+%22youth+centre%22+OR+%22youth+club%22+OR+%22youth%22+OR+%22Community+Centre%22+OR+%22Youth+provision%22+OR+%22young+people%22+OR+%22after+school%22+OR+%22outdoor+education%22+OR+%22outdoor+adventure%22&default_field=%2A&sort=_score+desc&awardDate=2020&awardDate=2019&awardDate=2021&awardDate=2022

Analysis

Initial analysis shows three significant structural differences between data on the Register and manual search returns.

1. A significant proportion of the organisations identified on the Register are Charitable Trusts (14% of all coded organisations), which are less likely to directly deliver youth provision. The manual search concentrated on delivery organisations hence few financial trusts were identified (just 7, or 1% of all). Charitable trusts (and the smaller group of charitable funds) were therefore excluded for this comparative exercise.

2. Similarly, Rotary Clubs were included in the Register search and comprise 6% of all identified organisations. Rotary clubs are a national organisation and were excluded from the manual search selection criteria.

3. Some uniformed groups are present in the Register data. However, subsequent work with such bodies in 2021 shows that the coverage of individual uniformed groups (Scout troops, Girls' Guide groups, etc.,) on the Register is incomplete. Over a quarter (28%) of the organisations on the Register were uniformed groups and are also excluded for this exercise. Separate data on some national organisations is included in national estimate presented later.

Table 2 (overleaf) compares the number of organisations found through manual searches on coded category of youth work with those coded from the Register, minus the exclusions discussed above. Interpreting the data requires caution for four reasons.

Firstly, all coding exercises are subjective. CFE Research used joint coding (two people coding some of the same organisations) to create a consistent approach. Back checking exercises monitored codes applied to organisations. However, some level of subjective error will remain within and between coded Register data and manual search returns.

Secondly, the 360Giving data has some connection to Register records. Record identifiers in the 360Giving data use a Charity Commission Registration number. This means there is a pre-existing relationship between some records in the manual search and the Register. Nearly half (47%) of the records found in the manual search were derived from the 360Giving data.

Thirdly, some organisations can be classed in multiple categories. The coding exercise subjectively coded a main category first. The choice for manual searches was based on the how activities were reported on an organisation's website or social media page. Register searches used the open text description provided in the data.

Fourthly, the data available to search against in each data set is not consistent. The Register data can be searched against a description of the 'Charitable Objects' or 'Activities' of an organisation, the 360Giving Data can be searched against a description of the 'Grant' being provided, whilst internet searches are less structured unless an organisation has specific meta-data describing its purpose.

Table 2: Difference* in the distribution of youth work coded organisation types between Register and manual searches

Code	Register Searching - All		Register Searching - Selected 18 UTLAs		Manual searching - Selected 18 UTLAs		Difference in Selected 18, Manual v Register	
	n	%	N	% (A)	n	% (B)	Gross Difference	Ratio (B/A)
Community	229	3%	23	2%	166	14%	143	5.52
Youth projects	237	3%	23	2%	118	10%	95	3.92
Youth other	77	1%	4	0%	19	2%	15	3.63
Vulnerable audience	191	2%	23	2%	72	6%	49	2.39
Faith based	276	3%	31	3%	89	7%	58	2.20
Nation or race	73	1%	3	0%	7	1%	4	1.78
Youth Club / Group	225	3%	33	4%	76	6%	43	1.76
Sport and leisure	962	12%	111	12%	171	14%	60	1.18
Wellbeing	365	5%	37	4%	56	5%	19	1.16
Arts and culture	541	7%	47	5%	71	6%	24	1.16
Housing or accommodation	148	2%	10	1%	15	1%	5	1.15
Other (CCR n < 50)	242	3%	24	3%	35	3%	11	1.12
Disabilities	432	5%	47	5%	65	5%	18	1.06
Venue	793	10%	111	12%	147	12%	36	1.01
Junior Play	72	1%	9	1%	9	1%	0	0.76
Youth General	311	4%	30	3%	29	2%	-1	0.74
Poverty and disadvantage	189	2%	18	2%	12	1%	-6	0.51
Medical	183	2%	14	1%	9	1%	-5	0.49
General Club	341	4%	46	5%	19	2%	-27	0.32
Employment or economic	508	6%	89	10%	23	2%	-66	0.20
Educational	1240	16%	162	17%	35	3%	-127	0.17
National organisation	344	4%	41	4%	1	0%	-40	0.02
Totals	7979		936		1224			

*Please note, the methodological differences as explained below.

To visualise this more usefully the following graph shows a ratio derived from the proportion identified via manual searching (B) divided by the proportion of each organisation type identified by the Register (A).

FIGURE 2: Likelihood of an organisation being found via manual review by organisation type
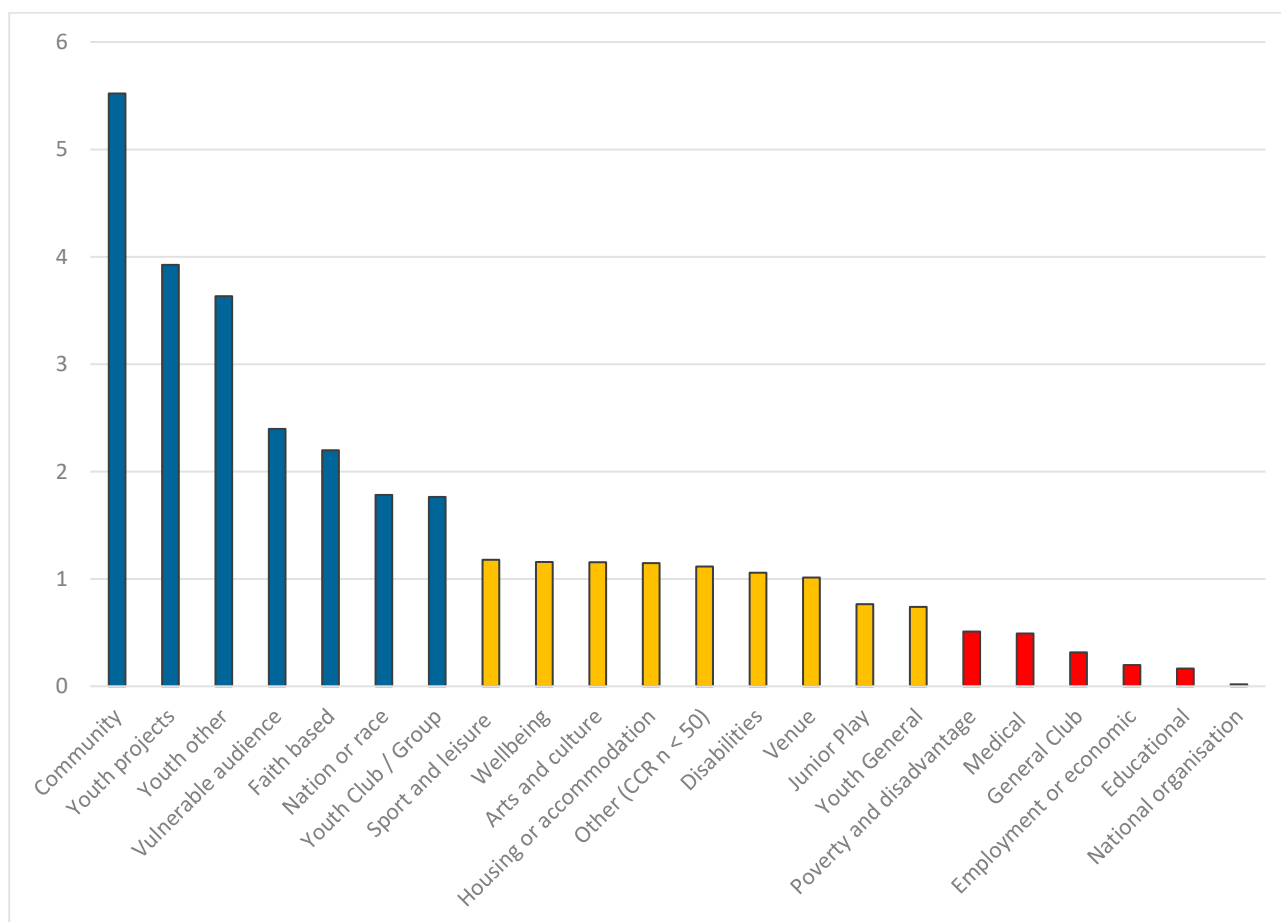
There were several different types of organisations that made up a greater proportion of all results returned via the manual review (Blue in the graph). These include those coded as:

- "Community", which were more than 5 times more likely to appear in the manual searching compared to the Register,

- "Youth projects[21]" and "Youth Other" – which were over 3.5 times more likely to appear in a manual search compared to the Register

- "Youth Clubs / Groups" were nearly twice as likely to do so.

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[21] The AND represents a Boolean operator in the original search – this is distinct to "youth project" which was a separate search term

These results suggest that the more intensive manual searching methods were better for identifying these target organisations, and thus that this method is an improvement upon the initial coding of the Register.

The authors state that there are three main reasons for this:

Firstly, the use of more data sources used in the manual searching, online and social media searches was more conducive to identifying youth clubs / groups. The manual searches nearly doubled "Community" organisations already found in the 360Giving grant data and tripled the number of youth clubs and groups.

Secondly, there is systemic difference in the types of organisations found in the Register when compared to the 360Giving Data and manual searches. For example, the Register only includes registered charities; the manual search also includes smaller community-led organisations without charitable status. 360Giving Data includes both. Many youth clubs are not registered charities and are hence less likely to be registered with the Charity Commission. These are often coded into the "Community" or, when youth-specific, "Youth project" categories.

Thirdly, the method of manual searching using targeted key words – for example "youth" – alongside the AND operator for a location is also likely to be a factor behind the increased identification of such organisations relative to those which were not identified to as great a degree.

Estimating the number of youth organisations in England

The impact of purposively selecting UTLAs

The 18 selected UTLAs are not wholly representative of all England's UTLAs. As shown in Table 1, a representative sample would include more London boroughs and fewer counties. Within these differences are elements of natural variation, and systemic variation because of the sampling method. For example, the spend per head in selected UTLAs is skewed and not normally distributed when compared to all UTLAs. This was not fully adjusted in stratification, as other variables were also accommodated in selecting the sample, including variation to satisfy the criteria of qualitative work alongside this exercise.

However, the differences are small enough to allow grossing estimates if other factors are favourable, and thus these estimates can provide a reasonable estimation. Further reviews in more local authorities would provide a greater level of confidence in estimations, especially if the local authorities were chosen to rebalance the sample towards being more representative.

Designing a weighting scheme

The statistical method for adjusting unrepresentative samples is the weight data. The process modifies data based on whether a member of the sample (the selected UTLAs in this case) is under- or over-represented compared to the population (all UTLAs). A prerequisite of weighting is data that describes the whole population of interest. Table 1 lists ONS metrics available to describe the background conditions that are germane to youth work for all UTLAs in England.

There are some clear and expected relationships between data that affect which variables should be used for grossing weights. Weighting schemes should consider collinearity and exclude some variables with linear relationships. Only one of a pair of correlated variables should be used in a weighting scheme.

The following variables from Table 1 correlate which means excluding one of the related pair is advisable when designing weights (a sign is used to express positive (+) and negative (-) relationships):

- Percentage change in 11- to 17-year-olds between 2010/11 and 2020/21 ⇆ Spend per head on youth services, 2020/21 (+)

- Percentage change in 11- to 17-year-olds between 2010/11 and 2020/21 ⇆ Percentage change in Spend per head (-)

- Population density - People per km2 ⇆ Percentage change in 11- to 17-year-olds between 2010/11 and 2020/21 (-)

- Population density - People per km2 ⇆ Percentage change in 11- to 17-year-olds between 2010/11 and 2020/21 (+)

- Population density - People per km2 ⇆ Rank in Index of Multiple Deprivation (-)

The first consideration in choosing variables for a weighting scheme is representation. When the distribution in the sample is like that in the population, there is no need to weight using that variable. Earlier, Table 1 showed the main differences in representation between the 18 UTLA sample and the population were for the *mean population of 11- to 17-year-olds in mid-2020* and *the spend per head on youth services, 2020/21*. Including other variables in the weighting scheme is unnecessary.

Secondly, we consider collinearity. The main purposive choice in sampling was selecting two local authorities per Government Office Region. The weighting should therefore adjust for the type of local authority to address this selection bias. The only other variable to introduce into the weighting scheme is therefore *the spend per head on youth services, 2020/21* because this is the only relevant variable that differs between the sample and the population.

Analysis

The 18 sampled UTLAs account for 12% of all English UTLAs. The manual searching found 1,208 youth work organisations in these local authorities. Simply aggregating up this figure to the UTLA population estimated 1,208 / 0.12, or around 10,130 youth work organisations operating in England.

A rim weighting method was used to account for the differences between the sample and the population. Rim weighting is an iterative model which repeats until stable weights based on the variables input into the model are achieved. The mean weights for the sample compared to all other UTLAs are then compared.

The mean weight for all unselected UTLAs was close to 1 (0.9921). This means there is very little difference in the estimate of all youth work organisations based on a simple aggregation (1,130) and the weighted estimate (1,060). In summary, the sample very slightly over-represents national youth work organisations.

Improving estimates

Manual searching was effective in finding organisations not held on national registers. Nearly half (47%) of all organisations found using manual searches were not listed in either the Register or the 360Giving grant database. Manual searches were particularly useful in identifying organisations which did not have registered charity status, those that do not use grant funding, and other smaller youth clubs and community venues.

Identifying and classifying youth organisations remains a subjective exercise. Estimates derived from qualitative coding approaches remain prone to potentially significant error. However, the distribution of organisations by coded classifications was broadly similar between the Register and the manual searching once certain types of organisations (such as charitable trusts) are excluded. The remaining differences have plausible, systemic explanations.

The main issue with the current estimate is the margin of error. The number of observations from manual searching (18) is too few to impute data for other local authorities hence only crude grossing estimates are possible. More observations would allow imputation whereby algorithms could guess the number of organisations operating in unobserved local authorities.