



# National Youth Sector Census

Snapshot, Spring 2023

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

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>The youth sector workforce</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Key findings</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Summary of approach</b>	<b>6</b>		
		Organisations and safeguarding	22
Census coverage	6	<b>Next steps and future considerations</b>	<b>23</b>
Where do organisations operate?	7		
<b>Audience</b>	<b>9</b>		
Age range of audience that organisations engage with	9		
Participant groups organisations are engaging with	10		
<b>Service delivery</b>	<b>11</b>		
Organisations and open access provision	11		
Organisations and targeted activity	14		
<b>Financial health of the sector</b>	<b>16</b>		
Organisations and reported expenditure 2021/2	16		
Organisations and income for 2022/3	17		
Organisations and funding sources	18		
Organisations and financial reserves	19		
Organisations and capital expenditure requirements	19		

# Introduction

**In this report we provide a summary of data provided by the youth sector. Our analysis finds that youth provision is being delivered in over 28,000 locations or sub locations<sup>1</sup> across all parts of the sector and the country.**

This is our second annual report and we continue to fill in more gaps, not just in the level of data collected, but also from organisations that have not previously completed the National Youth Sector Census. The data that informs this report will be made open and available to all via Youth Work One<sup>2</sup>. Alongside this report we have developed a digital map to allow visualisation and searching of the data. This includes location data provided by uniformed groups. As our data continues to improve, so does the map.

Building on the work in this way will provide an increasingly complete national picture to inform policy and investment priorities for central and local government. It will also direct strategic and operational decisions for funders and national, regional, and local bodies.

---

<sup>1</sup> Where organisations have more than one delivery location to the main base of operations these are considered sub-locations. This includes uniformed groups' unit data.

<sup>2</sup> Youth Work One is a one stop shop for those working with young people, hosting guidance, resources and up to date information about events, funding opportunities and a discussion forum.

# Key findings

## On coverage

- Youth work organisations deliver youth activities in over 28,000 locations and sub-locations across England.
- Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations are nearly twice as likely to operate in the most deprived postcodes compared with less deprived postcodes and where they do, they are more likely to be providing a wider range of services and support to young people than in less deprived areas.
- Organisations deliver youth activities to young people aged from 8 years to 24 years. Most activities are available for all young people, but in addition organisations offer a range of targeted provision aimed at specific sub-groups.

## On delivery

- The primary function of youth organisations identified in the Census is to provide weekly open access youth provision. Local Authorities are less likely to be involved in direct delivery than VCS organisations but considerably more likely to commission provision, provide infrastructure support and provide grants for youth groups.
- Organisations offer a varied range of activities for young people. These include weekly open access provision alongside a wide range of targeted activities including physical and mental health support, employment and training support and support to address violence and crime to young people.
- The most common targeted activity is supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people. Upper Tier Local Authorities (UTLAs) are much more likely to prioritise activities focused on violence, crime and exploitation than VCS organisations.



---

## On financial health

- Predicted expenditure for 2022/3 remains broadly similar to expenditure reported in the previous financial year. In real terms this may therefore represent a decline in spending power. The median average predicted expenditure is £100,000, however this masks considerable discrepancy between the VCS and UTLAs.
- Across organisations there is considerable disparity in expenditure and budgets overall, and when considering targeted and open access provision. However, organisations that work in areas of greater deprivation typically report higher expenditure and predicted expenditure than those in the least deprived areas.

---

## On staffing

- Organisations in the most deprived postcodes employ more staff to deliver services but are less able to draw upon volunteers to support delivery.
- Organisations appear to value professionally qualified staff and employ staff with a range of youth work qualifications. On average organisations have a higher proportion of employed staff with a youth work qualification than not. In general the larger the organisation is, the higher the proportion of employed staff are qualified.



# Summary of approach

The National Youth Sector Census is a survey of youth sector provision across England. The Census was launched in 2021 to provide a clearer picture of where youth work is taking place, the nature of youth work delivery and how it is funded. The Census is located on the Youth Work One website<sup>3</sup>. To complete the Census, respondents are required to register on Youth Work One. Organisations that have previously completed the Census are automatically asked to update their submissions on an annual basis. The Census is a live survey, however, to inform this report, data received by April 2023 is included in this analysis.

Our report includes some cross analyses of data against a range of measures including by organisation type, region, and deprivation measures.<sup>4</sup> We report only where cross analysis highlights noticeable differences.

## Census coverage

We received responses from 920 organisations (Table 1). The majority of these (82%) are from organisations within the voluntary and community sector (VCS). We also received responses from 92 out of 152 Upper Tier Local Authorities (UTLAs)<sup>5</sup> and a further 28

respondents from District Councils, Metropolitan Boroughs and unitary authorities. Table 1, below, provides a full breakdown of submissions received.

While this response rate is encouraging, we are unable to ascertain how representative this is of the sector in its entirety. It may be, for instance, that larger organisations (from all sectors) with more resource have prioritised completion of the Census over much smaller organisations with little or no resource. **Care should therefore be taken when interpreting these results.**

Table 1: Breakdown of responses by organisation type

Voluntary and Community Sector <sup>6</sup>	754	82%
Upper Tier Local Authorities	92	10%
Local Authorities <sup>7</sup>	28	3%
Other public sector bodies <sup>8</sup>	28	3%
Private sector	18	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>920</b>	

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youthworkone.org.uk/>

<sup>4</sup> To examine deprivation we have used the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019) <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

<sup>5</sup> Upper Tier Local Authorities [UTLAs] are made up of 21 County Councils, 32 London Boroughs, 36 Metropolitan Boroughs and 63 unitary authorities.

<sup>6</sup> Where we refer to VCS this includes national, regional and local charities, faith groups, Community Interest Companies and individual submissions from uniformed groups.

<sup>7</sup> Local Authorities refers to District Councils and Sui Generis authorities [e.g. City of London Corporation]

<sup>8</sup> These include organisations such as a service supported by a Hospital Trust or Academy

As part of the process, we attempted to contact youth organisations directly and conduct a CATI (Computer-assisted telephonic interview) survey to collect Census returns. Using a list of approximately 3,000 youth organisations identified through desk searches we were able to generate a return of approximately 15% of organisations.

## Where do organisations operate?

Organisations deliver youth sector provision in at least 2,000 different locations (Figures 1a and 1b). When data provided by uniformed groups is included our map below (Figure 1c) it demonstrates that youth work is taking place in at least 28,000 locations and sub locations.

Figure 1b: Youth work organisation locations and sub-locations (non-uniformed VCS)

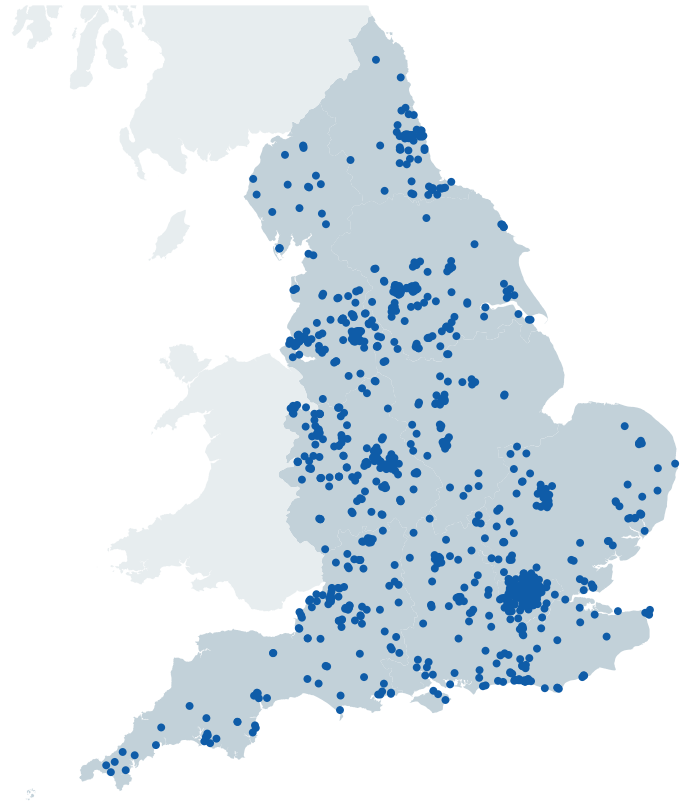


Figure 1a: Youth work organisation locations and sub-locations (LA)

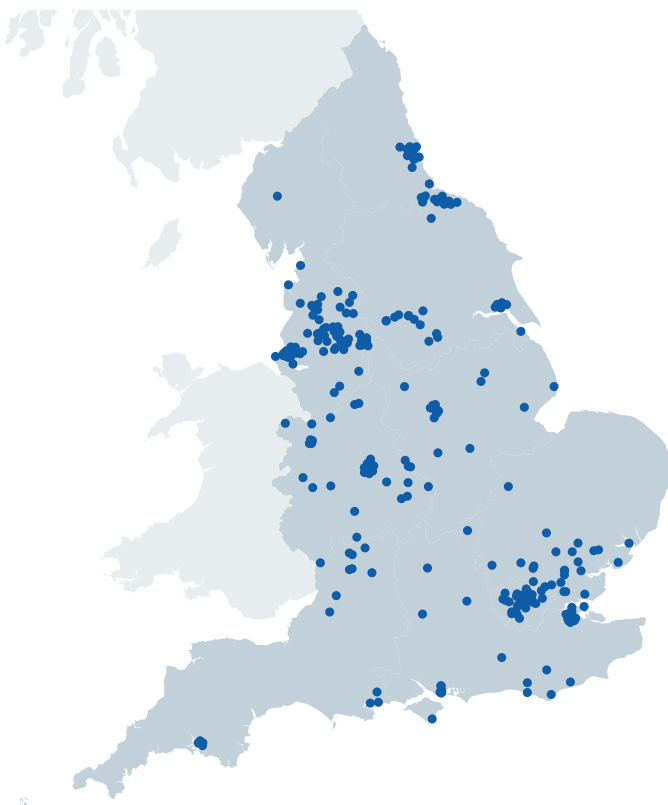


Figure 1c: Youth work organisation locations and sub-locations (uniformed groups)

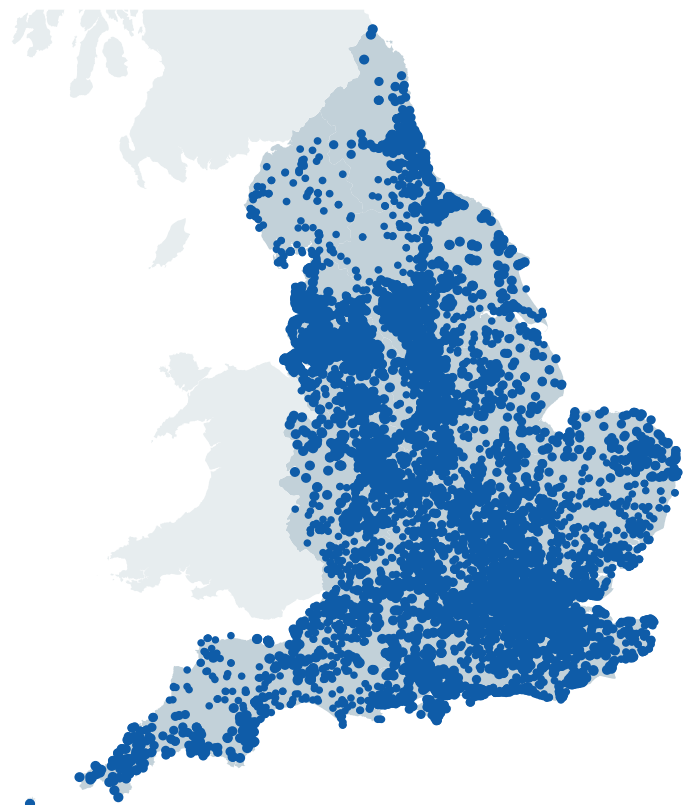
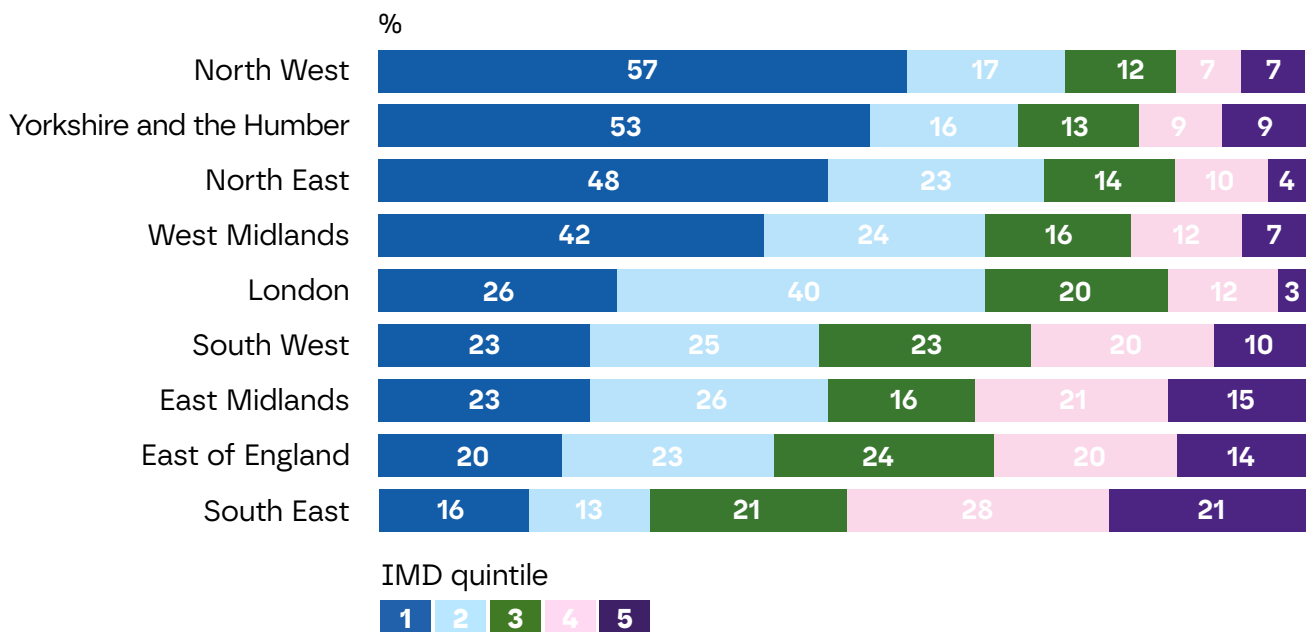


Figure 2 below provides a breakdown of responses in each IMD quintile across the nine geographical regions of England. Broadly, excepting London and the East of England, the further North in the country, the more likely an organisation will be based in areas of higher deprivation.

**57%**  
of organisations  
operate in the  
most deprived  
postcodes

**24%**  
of organisations  
operate in the  
least deprived  
postcodes

Figure 2: Proportion of organisations in each IMD quintile, by region





# Audience

**Age range of audience that organisations engage with**

**13 to 19 year olds**

remain the core audience for organisations. Most organisations also provide activities for younger people aged between 8 and 12.

**Over half**

of organisations deliver activities to young people

**aged 20-24,**

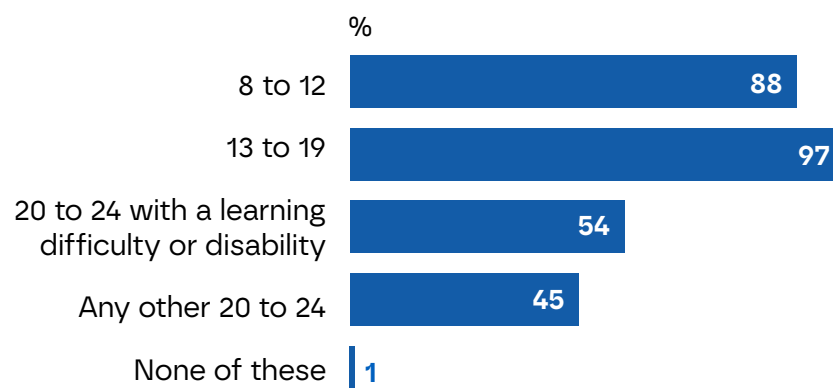
including those with a learning difficulty or disability.

UTLAs are almost twice as likely to engage with 20-24 year olds with a learning difficulty or disability than VCS organisations. Organisations operating in areas of higher deprivation are

more likely to work with 20 to 24 year olds with a learning difficulty or disability (59% in IMD quintile 1 and 2) than those based in less deprived areas (45% in IMD quintiles 1 and 2). This is worth exploring further – deep dives in selected areas could shed light on reasons for this.



Figure 3: Age ranges of audience organisations engage with



## Participant groups organisations are engaging with

### Most organisations deliver activity that is open to all young people (Figure 4).

Half (52%) deliver activities aimed at educationally or economically disadvantaged young people and about a third provide activities for young people with a disability. There are some differences in priority when considering organisation type and IMD. UTLAs are generally considerably more likely to offer activities to the main participant groups than VCS organisations. Organisations in areas of higher deprivation (IMD quintiles 1 and 2) are more likely to be delivering these activities than those from the least deprived areas (IMD quintiles 4 and 5). This is particularly noticeable in engaging with educationally or economically deprivation young people (59% versus 38%).

Organisations that indicated that they provide activities for young people experiencing racial or ethnic inequity tend to engage with a wide variety of ethnic minority groups. Nearly a third (29%) engage with young people with mixed

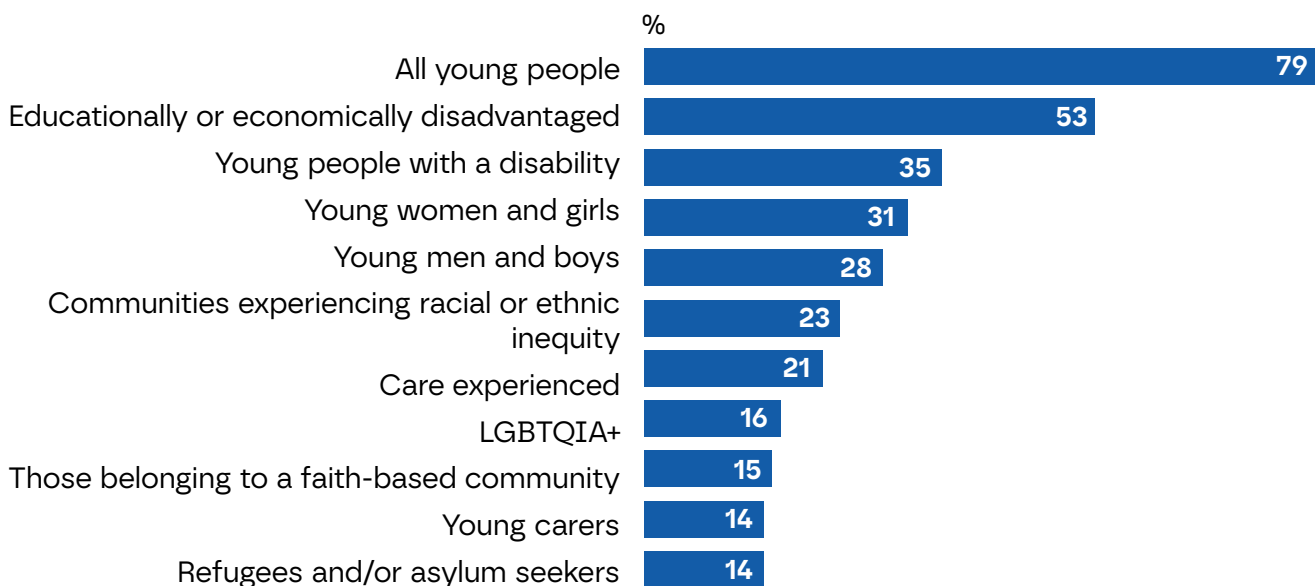
or multiple ethnic background, a quarter of organisations engage with Black/African and Caribbean young people and a similar amount (22%) engage with Asian young people.

### Organisations operating in the two most deprived quintiles are more likely to be supporting young people experiencing racial or ethnic inequity than those operating in the two least deprived quintiles.

Further analysis using Census data with relevant public datasets may allow us to understand the extent to which services are responding to local demographic need.

Over two thirds of organisations (69%) indicate that they do not currently have a waiting list or struggle to meet demand. 20% indicated that they had a waiting list of up to three months, 8% have a waiting list of between three and six months and 3% have a waiting list of over six months. There is no substantial difference in waiting times when we consider organisation type or levels of deprivation.

Figure 4: Participant groups organisations engage with



# Service delivery

## Organisations and open access provision

# 80%

of organisations provide direct delivery of open access youth provision.

Some organisations are also involved in supporting delivery in a range of different ways. About a quarter (27%) provide infrastructural support for youth provision, about one in five organisations (19%) contract or commission youth provision and one in four provide grant funding to organisations that deliver or support in the delivery of these activities.

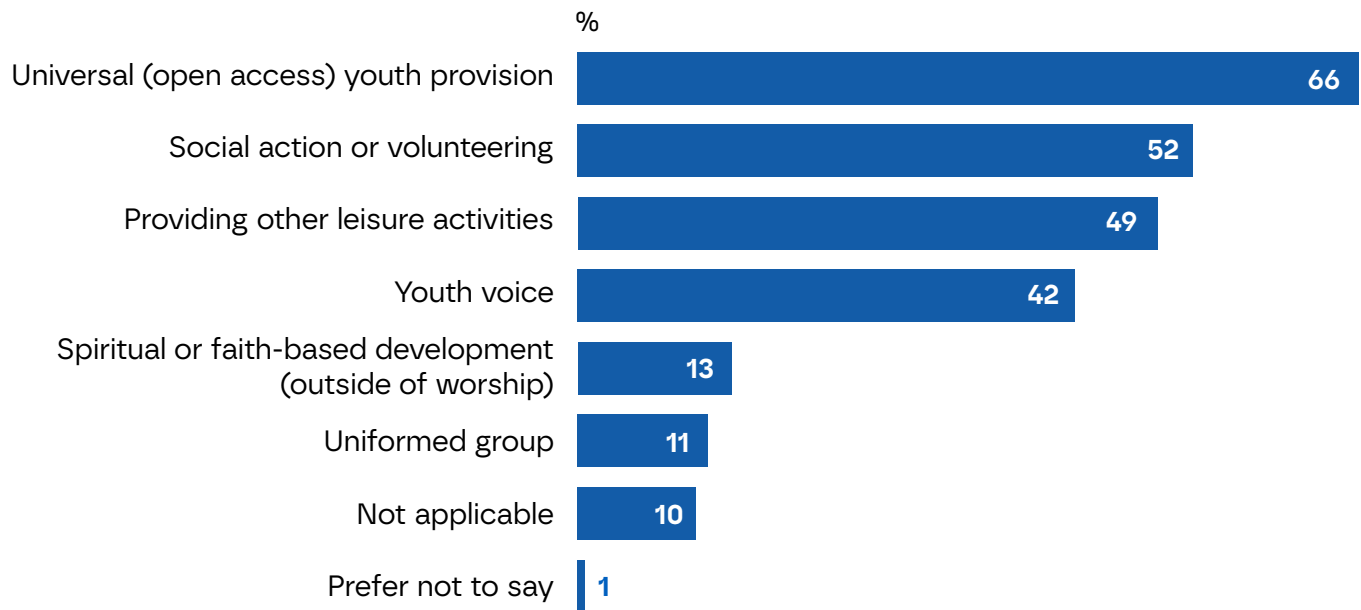
# 59%

of UTLAs provide direct delivery of open access youth provision.

UTLAs are much more likely to be involved in contracting/commissioning (64%), providing infrastructure support (51%) or providing grant funding to organisations which deliver or support the deliver of youth provision (51%). There is no substantial difference in main organisational function when considering region or deprivation.



Figure 5: Activity delivered on a weekly basis



Typically, organisations deliver a range of activities on a weekly basis to young people. Two thirds (66%) provide universal (open access) youth provision, over half (52%) offer social action or volunteering opportunities, and two in five (42%) offer youth voice or democratic participation (Figure 5). For the most part there is little noticeable difference in frequency of activity by organisation type.

UTLAs

**75%**

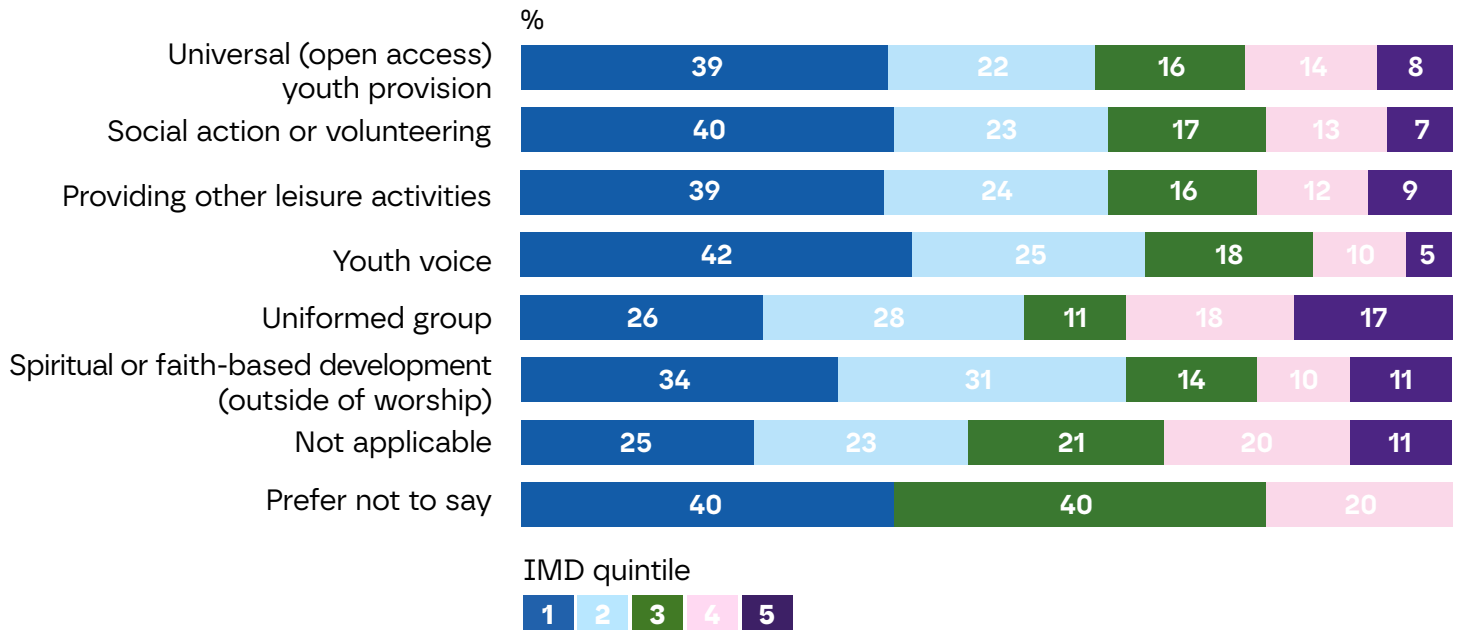
VCS

**39%**

**UTLAs are nearly twice as likely to prioritise delivering youth voice activities on a weekly basis than VCS organisations.**



Figure 6: Activity delivered on a weekly basis by level of deprivation



There are differences in frequency of delivery when considering deprivation (Figure 6).

**A considerably higher proportion of organisations in the two most deprived quintiles (IMD 1 and 2) are likely to be delivering activities on a weekly basis compared to those in the two least deprived quintiles (IMD4 and 5).**

This is most noticeable again in youth voice activity, where nearly twice as many organisations in IMD 1 and 2 are likely to deliver it (48%) compared with those in IMD 4 and 5 (26%).

## Organisations and targeted activity

Organisations deliver a wide range of targeted activities to young people (Figure 7). Mental health and wellbeing activities are prioritised by almost all, regardless of organisation type.

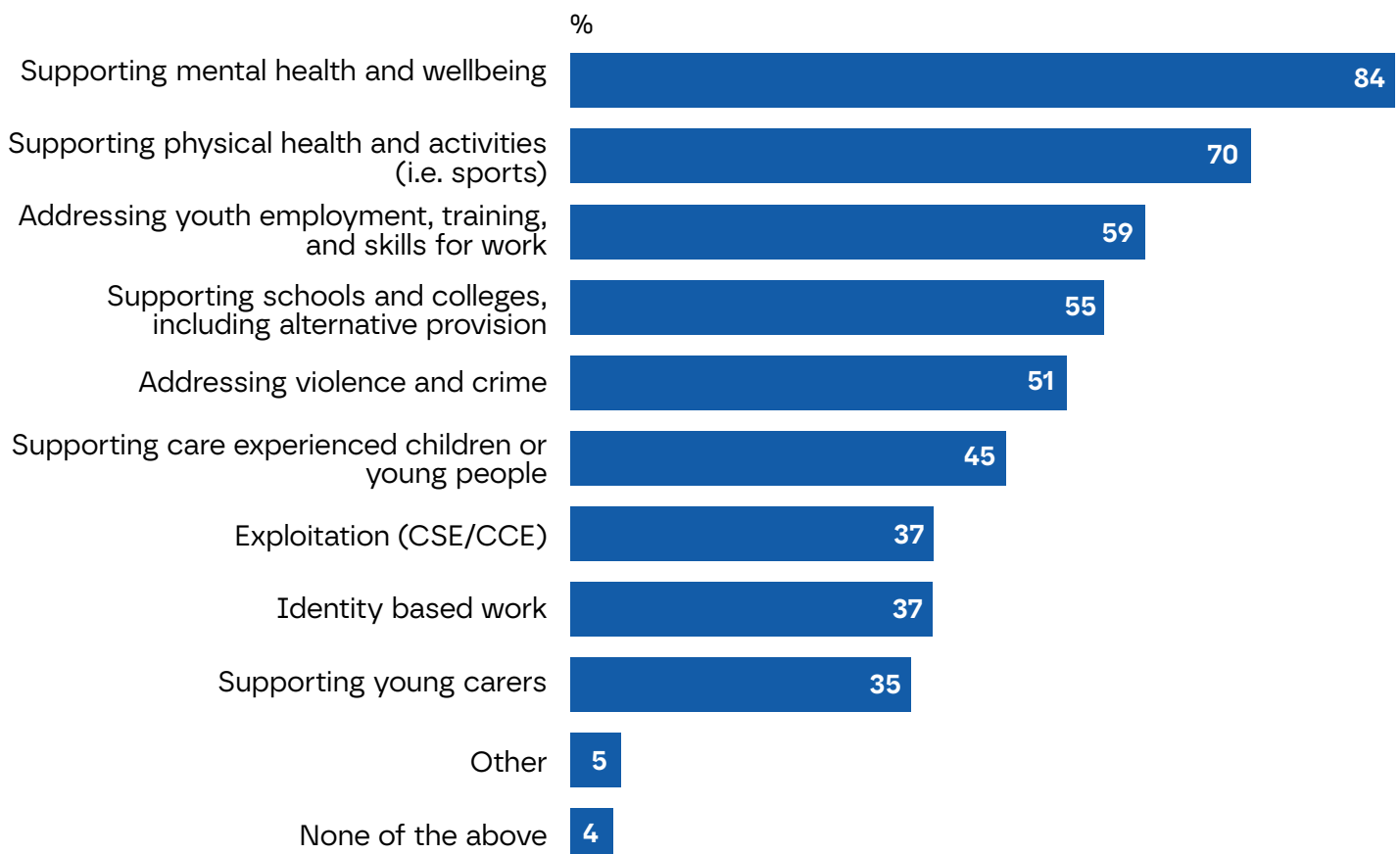
Activities addressing youth employment, training and skills for work are offered by nearly one in three organisations (59%).

% of organisations that prioritise activities designed to address violence and crime

UTLAs                      VCS  
**92%**                      **47%**

UTLAs are nearly three times as likely to prioritise activities designed to address exploitation as VCS organisations (92% compared to 31%). This is likely to include those services required to meet the range of statutory duties that Local Authorities have.

Figure 7: Targeted activities provided by organisations

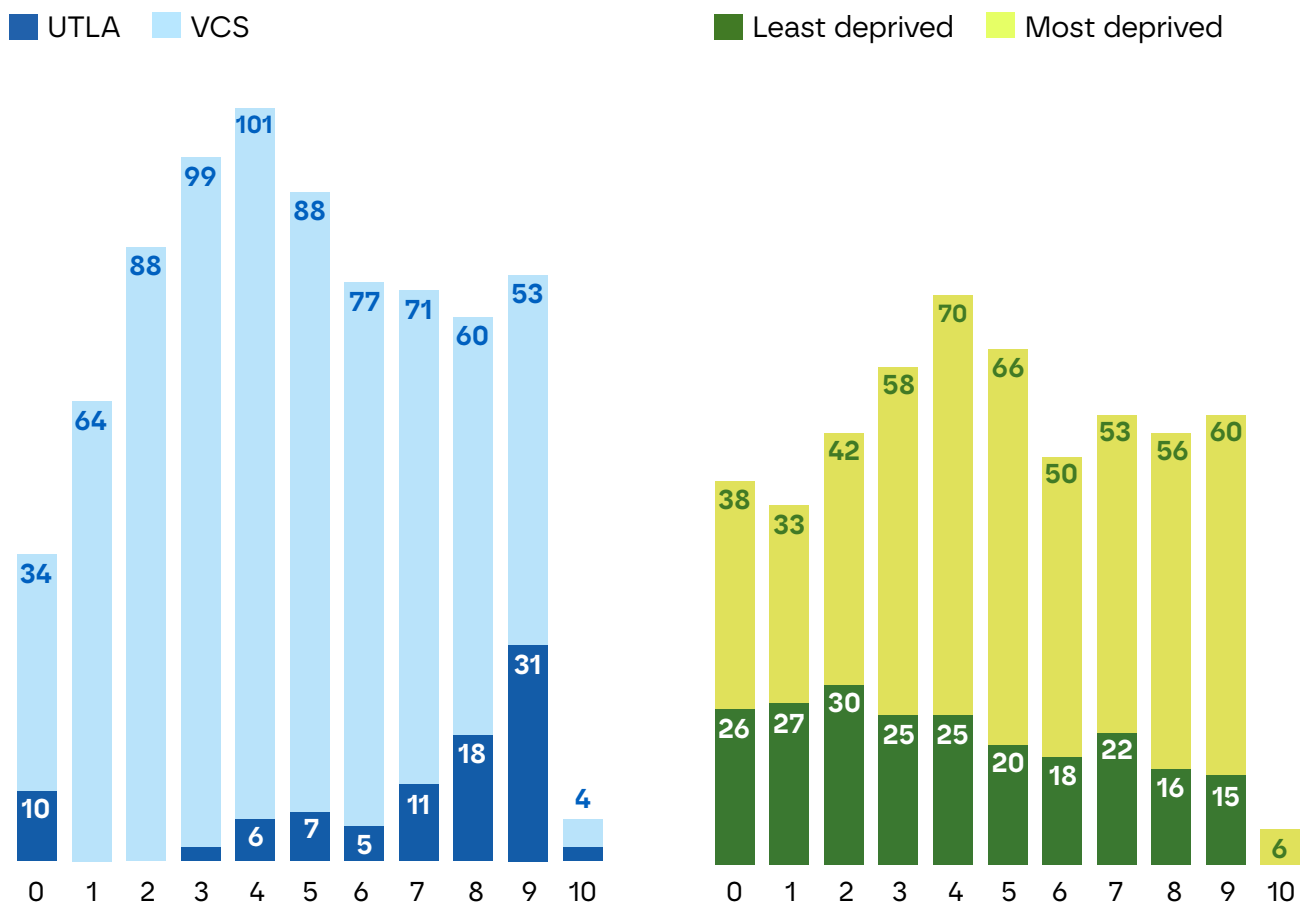


## All organisations offer multiple targeted activities for young people. UTLAs tend to offer more activities than VCS organisations (see Figure 8).

About a third (34%) of VCS organisations deliver up to three of these targeted activities, over a third (38%) deliver between four and six activities and about a quarter deliver between seven and 10. The majority of UTLAs (75%) deliver between seven and 10 activities.

As was the case for universal provision, organisations in the most deprived areas (IMD 1 and 2) are more likely to provide support across the range of targeted options than those in the least deprived areas (IMD 4 and 5). However, there is no difference in the order of priorities shown ranked in Figure 9.

Figure 8 and 9: Number of targeted activities organisations provide



# Financial health of the sector

## Organisations and reported expenditure 2021/2

Across all organisations the mean average reported expenditure in the last financial year was £443,000 and the median figure was £90,000.

The disparity between the median and the mean demonstrates how the average figure is influenced by a smaller number of organisations that provided larger annual budgets. There is very considerable disparity in reported expenditure overall, and by targeted and open access provision by organisation. Table 2 shows median average expenditure on targeted services was nearly double the expenditure of open access provision. However, lower base sizes mean

considerable care needs to be taken in drawing definitive conclusions from this data<sup>9</sup>.

**Organisations that work in areas of greater deprivation typically report higher annual expenditure in the last financial year than those in the least deprived areas.**

This suggests that there may be a link between need and expenditure, with organisations responding to local conditions as necessary. Further research through deep dives into local instances may help to understand this more clearly. As Table 3 demonstrates overall expenditure was on median average £120,000. Much of this additional expenditure is reported as being spent on providing open access activity.

Table 2: Median average expenditure in financial year 2021/2 by organisation type

Organisation type	Overall expenditure	Targeted service expenditure	Open access expenditure
VCS	£68,000	£62,000	£48,000
UTLA	£1,000,000	£750,000	£900,000
<b>Combined</b>	<b>£90,000</b>	<b>£100,000</b>	<b>£57,000</b>

Table 3: Median average expenditure in 2021/2 by deprivation measure

IMD Quintile	Overall expenditure	Targeted service expenditure	Open access expenditure
Most deprived (IMD 1 and 2)	£120,000	£100,000	£86,000
Least deprived (IMD 4 and 5)	£50,000	£70,000	£46,000
<b>Combined</b>	<b>£90,000</b>	<b>£100,000</b>	<b>£57,000</b>

<sup>9</sup> In the next iteration of the Census, questions relating to income and expenditure will be amended to further improve the accuracy of reporting of key financial data.



## Organisations and income for 2022/3

**Predicted expenditure for 2022/3 remain broadly similar to expenditure reported in the previous year. Within this, there is considerable variation geographically, by organisation type and by extent of deprivation.**

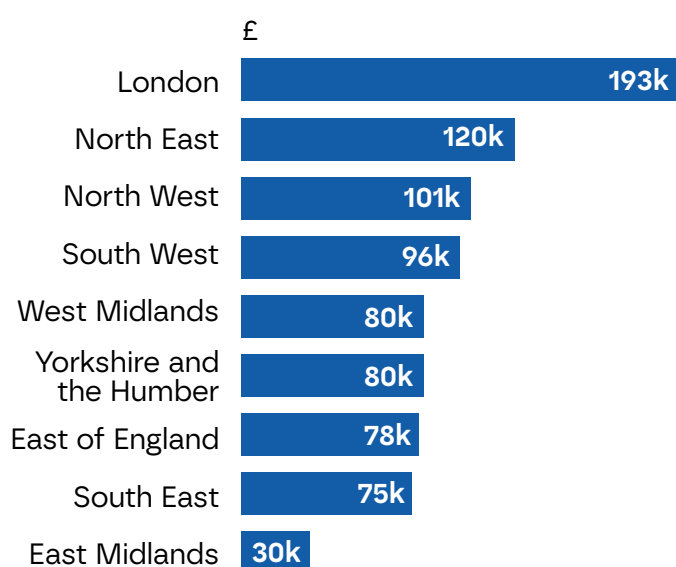
Again, we see considerable disparity between the mean and median averages and overall base size limits the extent of robust analysis into expenditure on targeted and open access provision that can be undertaken. The median average annual budget for delivering all youth activities is £100,000. Within this predicted expenditure for targeted activities is £40,000 and £45,000 for open access provision. There are considerable differences in budgets by organisation type, as Table 4 below shows.

Figure 10 below, considers reported budgets by region. Here we can see that London-based organisations typically report the highest median average budget. At £193,000, this is considerably

higher than the next highest regions, North East (£120,000) and North West (£113,000) respectively.

Extent of deprivation also has an impact on predicted expenditure in 2022/3 (Table 5). Organisations in the most deprived areas report considerably higher budgets for both targeted and open access activity than those in the least deprived areas.

**Figure 10: Average organisation budget for 2022/3 by region**



**Table 4: Median average predicted expenditure for 2022/3 by organisation type**

Organisation type	Overall budget	Targeted services budget	Open access budget
VCS	£80,000	£80,000	£50,000
UTLA	£983,000	£945,000	£974,000
<b>Combined</b>	<b>£100,000</b>	<b>£105,000</b>	<b>£66,000</b>

**Table 5: Median average predicted expenditure for 2022/3 by deprivation measure**

IMD Quintile	Overall budget	Targeted service budget	Open access budget
Most deprived (IMD 1 and 2)	£110,000	£105,000	£71,000
Least deprived (IMD 4 and 5)	£64,000	£80,000	£50,000
<b>Combined</b>	<b>£100,000</b>	<b>£105,000</b>	<b>£66,000</b>

## Organisations and funding sources

### Organisations typically receive funding from at least three different sources.

Nearly three quarters of organisations (71%) receive funds from charitable or voluntary

donations, and 67% receive funds from grant trusts and foundations. The other two main sources of funding are local authority grant funding (62%) and self-generated or trading income (51%) (Figure 11a). There appears to be no noticeable difference in sources of funding streams when considering the impact of deprivation. There is considerable difference in funding sources by organisation type as demonstrated by Figure 11b.

Figure 11a: Organisation income sources

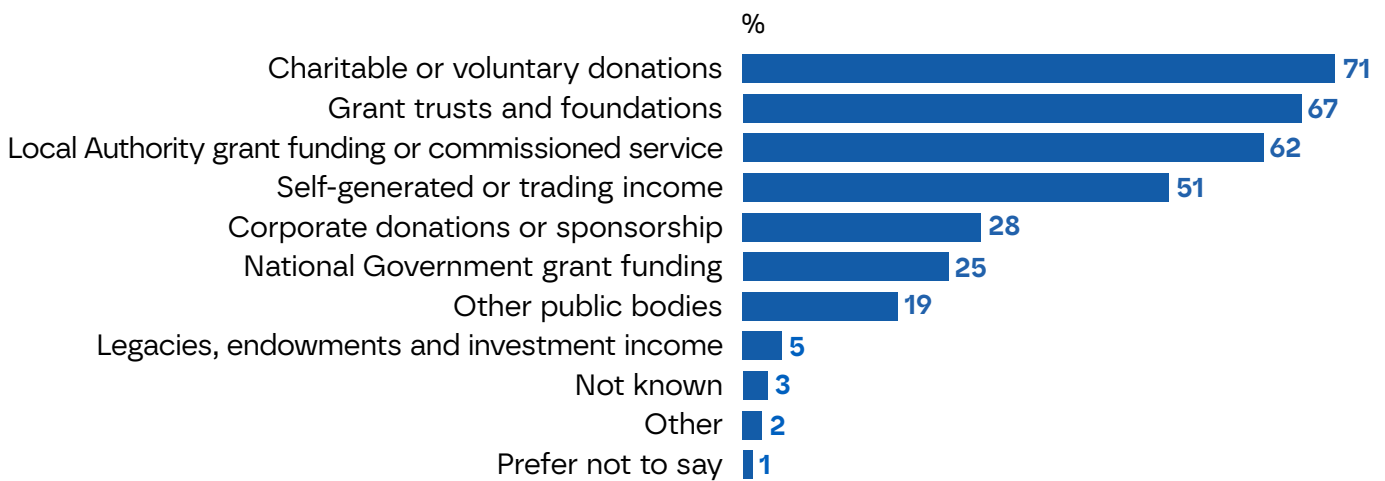
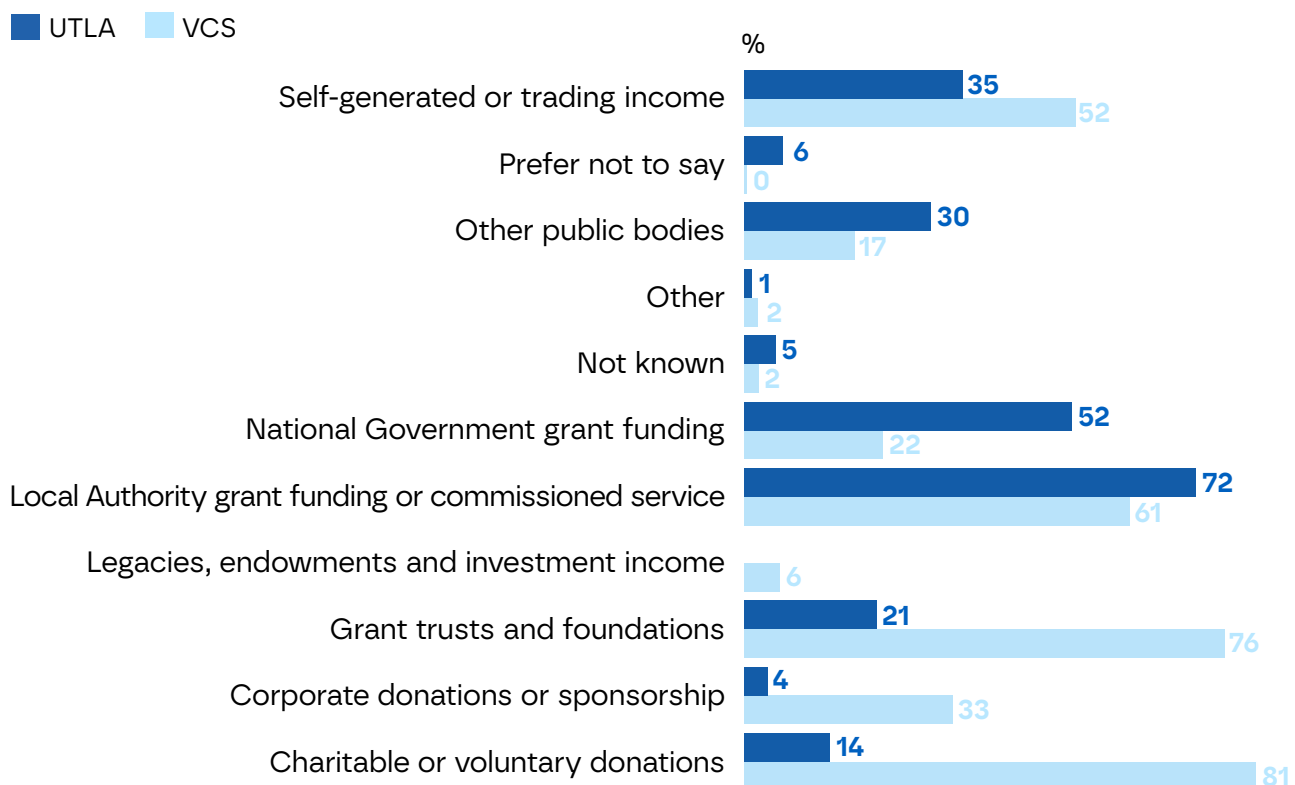


Figure 11b: VCS and UTLA income sources



## Organisations and financial reserves

About a third (35%) of VCS organisations report having reserves that would allow them to operate as normal for less than six months, a quarter (26%) have reserves of between six and 12 months, and one in five (21%) have reserves of over 12 months. More than one in 10 (14%) of organisations indicate that they do not know how long their organisation would be able to operate for as normal with their current level of reserves.

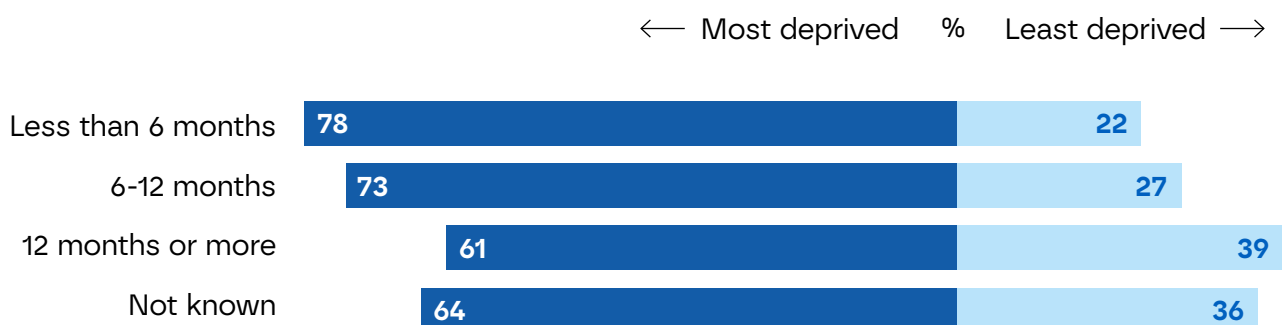
### Deprivation does have an impact on organisation reserve lengths.

Organisations operating in the most deprived areas (IMD 1 and 2) generally have slightly less reserves than average – this is despite the fact that their predicted expenditure for the year being considerably higher than in the least deprived areas. Organisations in the least deprived areas are also more likely to have reserves of over 12 months.

## Organisations and capital expenditure requirements

Approximately two in five organisations (42%) indicate that they require significant capital expenditure for buildings or facilities in the coming financial year. UTLAs are slightly more likely to require capital expenditure than VCS organisation. A similar proportion (40%) indicate that they don't require capital expenditure. Organisations in the most deprived areas are slightly more likely to require capital expenditure. Conversely only about a third (34%) of organisations in the least deprived quintiles are likely to require capital expenditure.

Figure 12: Reserve lengths for organisations in the most and least deprived areas



# The youth sector workforce

**On average, organisations employ four people who primarily deliver or manage youth provision and out of school activities.**

However, this median average varies considerably by organisation type, as Table 6 demonstrates<sup>10</sup>.

Figure 13 provides further information on size of organisation. The ratio of paid staff to volunteers differs considerably by type of organisation. As Figure 13 shows, VCS's rely much more heavily on volunteers to support their delivery with one volunteer per 0.4 paid employee, compared with one volunteer per 4.2 employees in local authorities.

Figure 13: Average organisation budget for 2022/3 by region

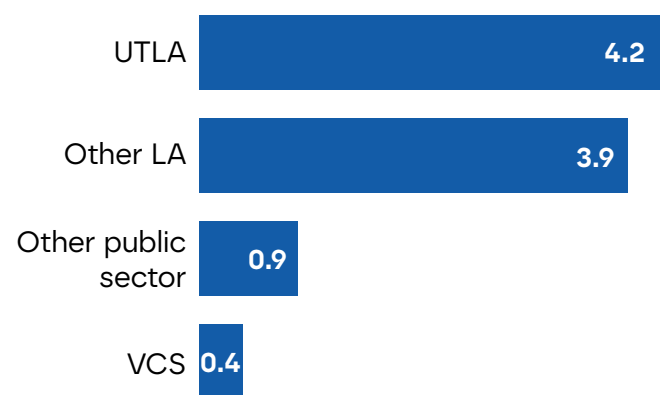


Table 6: Median average number of paid employees by organisation type

Organisation type	Number of paid employees	Number of FT employees	Number of PT employees	Number of casual employees	Number of volunteers
VCS	5	2	3	0	5
UTLA	23	10	18	6	4
<b>Combined</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>

<sup>10</sup> Different totals shown for median total number of paid employees and breakdown by employment type are due to different response bases.



**Levels of deprivation have an impact on staffing and volunteering levels. In the most deprived areas, organisations are more likely to have a higher number of paid staff, but a lower number of volunteers.**

As the level of deprivation increases so do the number of paid employees, rising from three (IMD 4/5) to six (IMD 1/2). Interestingly the number of volunteers declines as deprivation increases from six to four volunteers. This could be due to a range of reasons and needs further exploration. It may suggest that organisations find it harder to recruit volunteers in areas of higher deprivation, or indeed that they may require staff with specific skills to meet additional needs that young people may have.

**Organisations value professionally qualified staff and employ staff with a range of youth work qualifications. On average organisations have a higher proportion of employed staff with a youth work qualification than not.**

This equates to four employees with youth work qualifications. Of these, three have a youth work qualification at Level 2 or above and one employee with a JNC Youth Work Degree (level 6 or above) (Table 7). A further two employees tend to have no youth work qualification. There is no substantial difference in workforce qualification by region or deprivation.

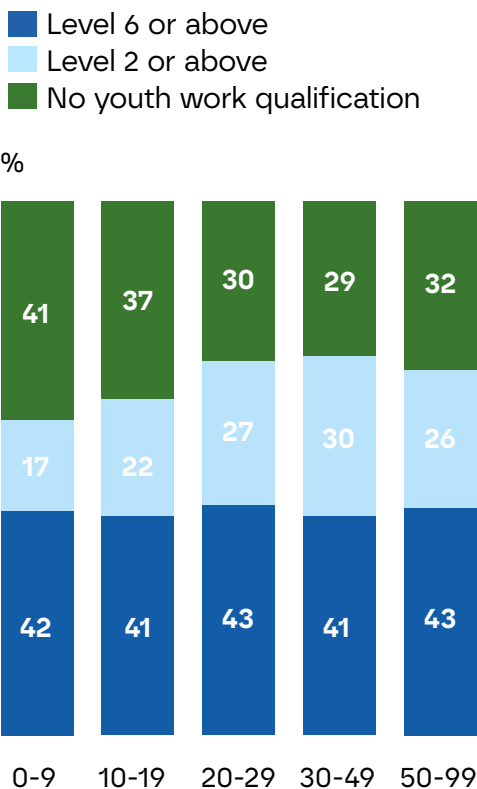
**Table 7: Median average number of youth work qualified staff by organisation type**

Organisation type	JNC Youth Work Degree	Youth Work qualification (Lvl 2+)	No Youth Work qualification
VCS	1	3	2
UTLA	6	10	10
<b>Combined</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>

**As Figure 14 shows, the larger the organisation is (in staff numbers) the higher the proportion of these staff are youth work qualified.**

In the smallest organisations (employing up to nine staff) 59% have some form of qualification. This rises to 69% in organisations employing up to 99 staff.

Figure 14: Proportion of employees by qualification level by organisation size



## Organisations and safeguarding

Almost all organisations (92%) have a Dedicated Safeguarding Lead or Dedicated Safeguarding Officer within their organisation. A further 5% have access to a DSL/DSO. Only 2% indicate that they do not have access to either role. There are no substantial differences to this when considering level of deprivation or geography. This is an interesting finding and one that requires further exploration. Anecdotally, we have found that access to safeguarding information is one of the most used services that we provide. Over 11,000 assets were accessed by individuals over the last year.



# Next steps and future considerations

Our plans for the Census in this financial year focus on four priorities:

## 1. Reviewing the Census survey and ensuring that technical aspects to completing the Census are simplified to encourage participation

This will continue to engage with key partners to ensure that we are collecting the right information and meeting the priorities for NYA and the wider sector.

## 2. Increasing the reach of the Census

Continuing to increase the reach of the Census is a key priority. Our approach so far has required the support of key sector organisations to reach out to their constituency and promote the value of the Census. The NYA has promoted the Census to subscribers to its network, on its various social media channels, as well as across its stakeholder network. This digital marketing collateral will be reviewed and refreshed with the updated headlines from this report.

We will continue to deliver marketing and communications activity to promote the Census. This will include a clear rationale for completing the Census and demonstrate the value of data capture.

Aligned to this, the proactive promotion of Youth Work One in the Autumn and Winter of 2023/24 to the wider youth sector is expected to increase awareness of the Census and help signpost users of the website to the survey.

### **3. Using the Census data to provide thematic learning**

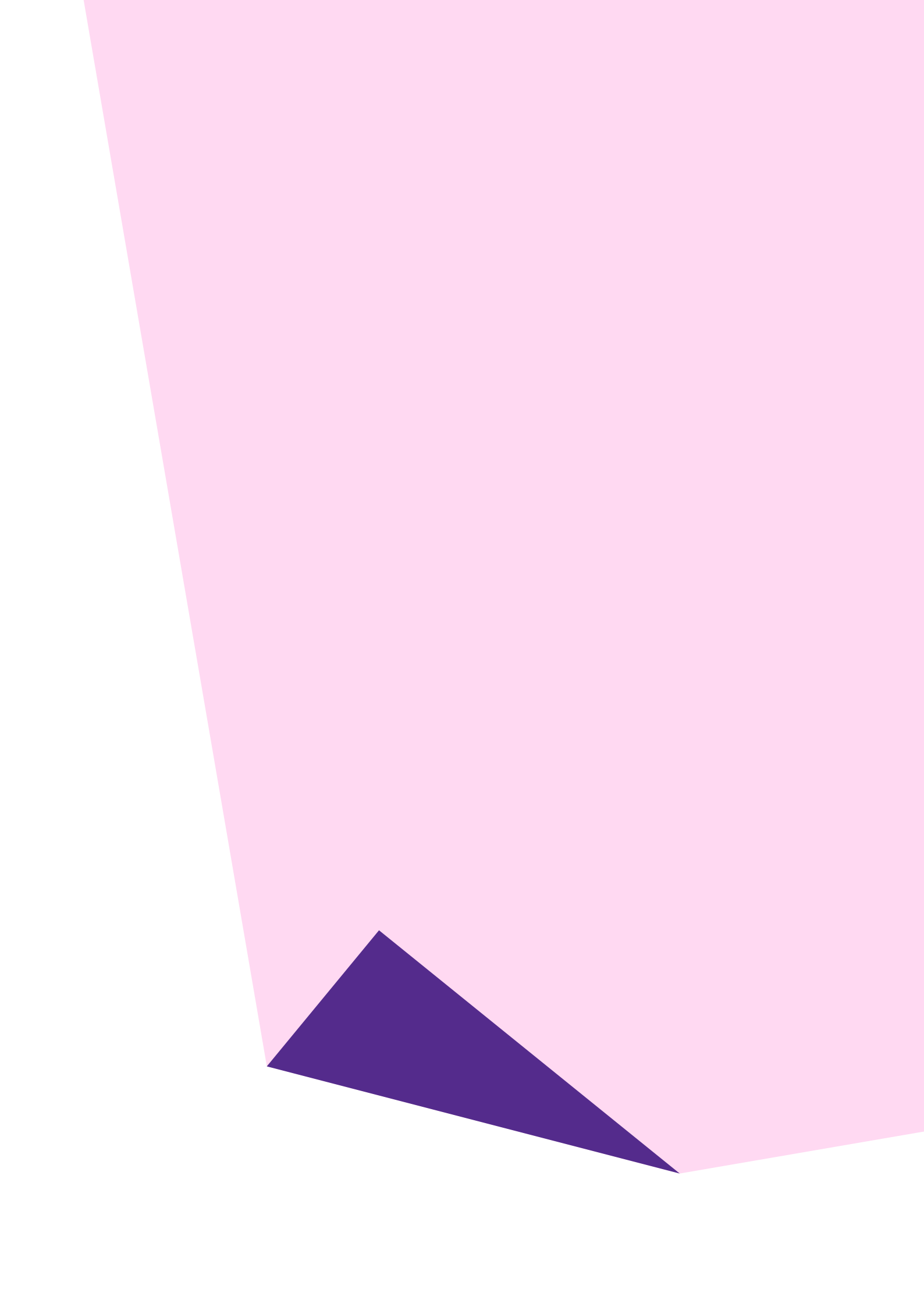
We will produce regular insights and promote through our network activity and appropriate events. This will include updating this report on an annual basis.

### **4. Ensure that the Census is at the heart of youth work thinking**

The Census is the largest dataset of its kind and as it grows will become more central to helping the sector to demonstrate the impact of youth work and the state of the youth sector. Key to this is ensuring that we continue to work closely as part of the Back Youth Alliance to standardise the way in which we record data. Furthermore, as part of the Healthy Data Ecosystems programme we have the potential to measure youth work impact across a range of interventions.

Increasingly we are also finding that other research initiatives are recognising the value of the Census and where practical, we will provide access to Census data to improve knowledge and insight for the sector.





**National Youth Agency**

9 Newarke Street, Leicester LE1 5SN

Company registration no. 2912597

Register charity in England and Wales no. 1035804

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