



Department
for Culture
Media & Sport

Pathfinder and Early Adopter insights

A report synthesising findings from the Local Youth Transformation and Young Futures Hubs areas as implementation begins

June 2026

Contents

	Introduction	3
1	Participating local authorities	5
1.1	Demographics	5
1.2	Funding	6
1.3	Involvement in other initiatives	6
2	Needs Assessment	7
2.1	Data collection	7
2.2	Priorities	7
3	Funding	8
3.1	LYT Grants	8
3.2	LYT Capital Grants	10
3.3	YFH Grant submissions	11
4	Development Themes	11
4.1	Workforce	11
4.2	Quality	13
4.3	Voluntary Sector Support and Partnerships	13
4.4	Youth Voice	14
4.5	Digital	15
4.6	Young Futures Hubs	16
5	Next Steps	18

Introduction

Between June 2025 and March 2027, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is funding the Local Youth Transformation **1** (LYT) and Young Futures (YFH) **2** pilot programmes in England. The delivery of the pilot is being led by the National Youth Agency **3** (NYA) alongside support from key strategic partners. Strategic partners working with NYA providing specialist guidance and expertise are UK Youth, Regional Youth Work Units, Young People Foundation Trust, Centre for Young Lives, StreetGames, Local Government Association, Youth Access and Solve. Figure 1 provides an overview of the two key elements of the pilot programme of LYT.

The LYT pilot supports 12 English local authorities, the 'Pathfinders', to assess to what extent youth provision meets local need. It also reviews local authority (LA) capability to meet the Statutory Duty as set out in section 507B of the Education Act 1996 and makes recommendations for system level change. This process has informed LA development plans and grant applications to DCMS to rebuild LA capability and high-quality local youth offers.

A further eight LAs, the 'Early Adopters', joined the LYT pilot in September 2025. In addition to undergoing the LYT review process, these areas received additional funding to set up a Young Futures Hub (YFH). This is a 'hyper-local' youth hub bringing together multi-agency services to provide support. Whilst the LYT pilot reviews addressed wider youth provision, the aims of YFH are focussed more specifically on addressing three outcomes: increasing opportunities, improving mental health and wellbeing, and reducing crime.

The intention of this report is to present insights gathered from the LYT and YFH programmes, from the perspectives of the NYA as delivery partner, across the 20 local authority areas participating in the pilot programme. The report is not an evaluation but draws insight from a range of sources including: data from the assessment of existing youth provision and needs (including a range of secondary data, youth provider and young people's surveys), LYT review of youth provision, LA implementation plans for LYTP and YFH and budgets. Independent evaluations of both the LYT and YFH pilots are in progress at the time of writing, with learning from the full programme to be published following completion of the pilot.

1 - For more information: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-local-youth-transformation-pilot>

2 - For more information: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/young-futures-hubs>

3 - The Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) for youth work in England

Figure 1: Local Youth Transformation Overview

Local Youth Transformation Explained	
Local Youth Transformation Pilot (LYTP)	Young Futures Hubs (YFH)
WHAT? LYTP aims to rebuild a high-quality, needs-led youth offer and re-establish strong local leadership in youth services.	WHAT? YFH are an extension of the LYTP, incorporating all elements of LYTP with the additional aim of setting up a locally designed Young Futures Hub. YF Hubs will blend open access youth work with targeted support. They will act as central anchor points for partnership working to offer coordinated, wrap-around support.
WHEN? June 2025 to August 2026.	WHEN? September 2025 to March 2027. Hubs in each area to open by March 2026.
WHO? The Pathfinders Cornwall, Derbyshire, Doncaster, Hartlepool, Islington, Knowsley, Liverpool, Oxfordshire, Peterborough, Shropshire, Southwark and Stoke on Trent.	WHO? The Early Adopters Birmingham, Brighton and Hove, Bristol, County Durham, Leeds, Manchester, Nottingham and Tower Hamlets.
HOW? Through a structured Local Youth Service Review, each area assesses current provision, identifies gaps, and co-develops a plan for long-term transformation. Area profiles and surveys of providers were developed by NYA to support in person reviews in each local area. Reviews were led by independent Local Authority Development Consultants (LADCs) and supported by NYA Case Leads, with NYA Young Assessors leading on youth voice. They reviewed youth services against nine essential themes and provided recommendations, which informed implementation plans and YFH co-design outcomes.	HOW? After following the same LYT structured review process and creation of a plan for long-term transformation, Young Futures Hubs are then co-designed locally. Every area creates its own YFH strategy and delivery model based on the needs of young people and opportunities identified through the review.
£££ Capital Grant LYT Revenue Funding	£££ Capital Grant (for digital developments and small-scale refurbishments) LYT Revenue Funding YFH Revenue Funding As part of the National Youth Strategy, the government has committed to establishing a total of 50 Young Futures Hubs by March 2029.

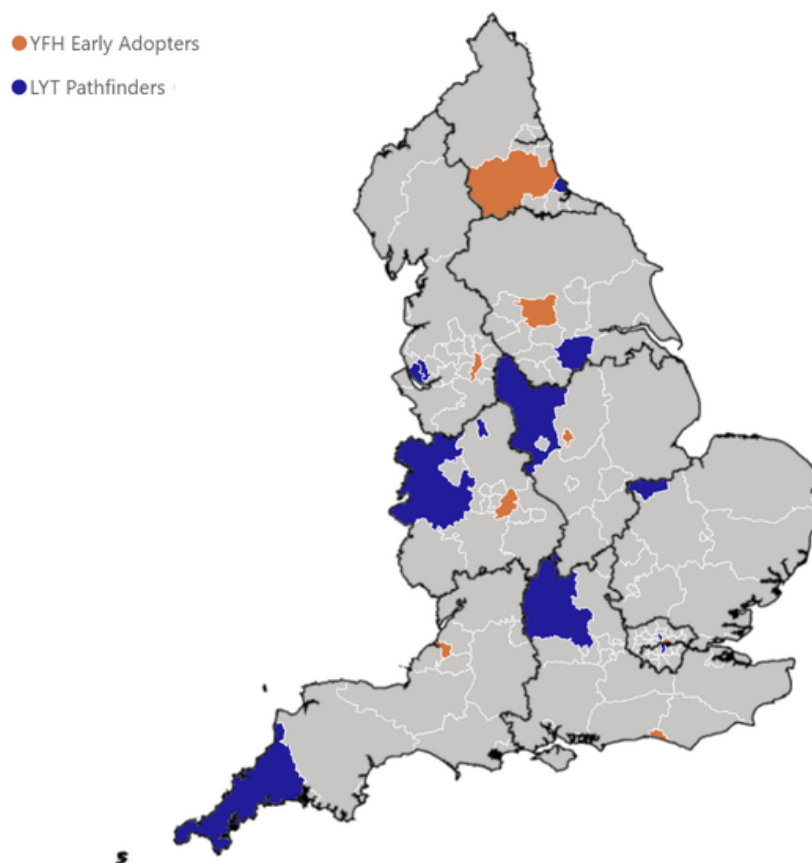
1. Participating local authorities

This section presents an overview of the 20 participating LAs, covering demographics, youth service provision and funding, and the extent of involvement in supporting government initiatives.

1.1 Demographics

All LAs in areas with the highest levels of young people living in families facing income deprivation were invited to submit an expression of interest (EOI) to DCMS for the LYTP ⁴. For YFH, areas were directly selected by DCMS based on specific evidence of high levels of anti-social behaviour and knife crime. Figure 2 shows the location of all the participating local authorities across England, with LYT Pathfinders shown in blue and YFH Early Adopter areas in orange. They comprise a combination of both urban, rural, coastal and inland areas. From County Councils to Metropolitan Councils, London Boroughs and Unitary Authorities, participating areas represent a range of local government structures and sizes across all the English regions.

Figure 2: Participating local authorities, by pilot programme



⁴ - The mini- EOI competition was agreed by Ministers to reflect the small size of the pilot and reduce administrative burden. Within each region, LAs with the highest levels of young people living in families suffering from income deprivation, as measured by Indices of Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), were invited to submit an EOI. These submissions were then reviewed by DCMS to understand the motivations for participation and the potential benefits for both the local authority and youth provision.

Area profiles produced to support the LYT review process in both Pathfinder and Early Adopter areas found participating areas often have higher than average rates of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). In addition, areas also experience rising numbers of mental health inpatient referrals for young people and pockets of areas with increasing numbers of young people entering the youth justice system.

1.2 Funding

LYT and YFH areas had varying proportions of targeted and open access youth provision when joining the programmes, with expenditure on youth services averaging £3.3m in 2023/24 according to Section 251 data ⁵. Some areas fund 100% open-access provision, whilst others are 100% targeted and some have more equal distribution of the two. Since 2015, some LAs have seen a shift from open access to targeted and vice-versa, and others have stayed the same. Historical data shows that, with the exception of just four areas, LAs have seen an overall decrease in expenditure on youth services since 2015, averaging £1.6m per local authority. In the most extreme cases, expenditure has fallen by up to 95% in this time, evidencing the importance of place-based investment in youth services through the LYT and YFH pilot programmes.

1.3 Involvement in other initiatives

All LAs participating in the LYT and YFH pilot are currently in receipt of other government funding for initiatives supporting young people. Initiatives vary, but tend to address issues around care, crime and community which will ultimately increase opportunities for young people to succeed. Improvements made to the youth offer through LYT and YFH will work alongside a range of targeted investment programmes and funding to deliver long lasting change:

- Over half (11 of 20) are in Youth Guarantee Trailblazer ⁶ areas
- Nine are part of Violence Reduction Units areas
- Sixteen areas are in receipt of the Million Hours Fund ⁷
- Sixteen are part of the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme ⁸

Other initiatives common to the pilot areas include the Better Youth Spaces Fund, Pride in Place Programme, NHS Neighbourhood Health Programme and the Supporting Children affected by Homelessness Uplift.

⁵ - Section 251 data from 2023-24 representing actual expenditure. Range = £175k to £9.6m

⁶ - Trailblazer areas are testing innovative ways to support young people aged 18-21 into employment or training opportunities and reduce the number NEET young people
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-of-young-people-set-to-benefit-from-new-support-into-work-and-training>

⁷ - Funding for organisations to offer extra support to young people in areas with higher rates of anti-social behaviour
<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/funding-programmes/million-hours-fund-phase-3>

⁸ - For UTLAs with high levels of deprivation, to continue delivery of a network of family hubs and start for life services
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69cd48665cf899414a0bc694/Withdrawn_-_Family_Hubs_and_Start_for_Life_programme_guide_2025-26.pdf

2. Needs Assessment

A key component of the LYTP and YFH programmes is the assessment of existing provision, needs of young people and the capability of local areas to meet that need. Led by independent LADCs and supported by NYA LA Case Leads and Young Assessors, these were essential to provide the evidence foundation from which to base later decisions. Surveys with youth providers and young people supported the in-person LYTP reviews in each area. In many areas, common themes were identified by both providers and young people, such as the high demand for mental health support.

The in-person reviews of youth services involved assessing LA capabilities against the nine essential areas from the NYA's statutory guidance toolkit [9](#). Reviews brought together a range of evidence including provider and young person survey analysis, local area profiles, LA plans and strategies and existing local consultation activity.

2.1 Data collection

In each local area, LAs disseminated an online provider survey to assess the current levels of youth provision and explore demand for services and provider priorities. A total of 672 responses were received across all 20 areas, averaging 34 per LA. Young people were also asked to complete a survey about their experience of using youth services in each area and identify barriers to participation, as well as areas they would like to receive support in. Overall, 4694 young people participated with an average of 232 per LA, although this did fluctuate considerably from area to area, from 29 at the lowest, to 971. Young people between 10 and 25 were given the opportunity to take part, and the average age of respondents was 14 years.

2.2 Priorities

Across the two surveys, respondents identified a range of areas in which support was required. Amongst these, three common support needs were found by both providers and young people. These were support for **mental health, careers and employment** and **education and schoolwork**.

Beyond these three core areas, young people also identified that they would like more support with financial advice and physical health, whereas providers revealed crime and violence, bullying and relationship advice, and safeguarding as priority areas.

Mental health is a prevalent issue for participating LAs. 42% of young people either currently or want to access some form of mental health support. However, the survey also revealed that just over a third (38%) of young people wanting support in this area do not yet receive it. Almost all (97%) of providers ranked mental health as a top five priority support area too, pointing to a real demand which the YF Hubs aim to address. Targeted mental health support currently offered by providers in Pathfinder and Early Adopter areas was found to be predominantly through the voluntary and community mental health sector compared to the NHS. Meeting demand for mental health support is critical, especially when it was also cited as a barrier to accessing other activities and support for over half (54%) of those young people affected by mental health issues.

Support for careers and employment advice was reported by providers overall as the second highest priority across participating areas. It is already fairly frequently accessed by just under a quarter (22%) of young people, and a further 19% would like support in this area. However, just half (51%) of providers offer targeted youth employment, training and skills support compared to 85% offering targeted mental health support, indicating a potential mismatch of provision to demand.

Providers also prioritise support for crime or violence and it is reported as the third highest ranked area behind mental health and employability support. Conversely, very few young people access or want support in this area compared to the other core YFH themes. Most young people do not access what they see as support specifically for crime or violence, indicating that it may be received through less obvious means such as behaviour support. Anti-social behaviour was found to be where providers offering targeted support focus their work, with 84% of them directly targeting anti-social behaviour and 88% supporting it indirectly.

3. Funding

£8 million has been pledged by the government to support the 12 LYT pilot Pathfinder areas and £4 million for YFH Early Adopter areas. **10** Both cohorts of LAs could apply for this LYT grant funding following the LYT review of youth services. An additional £2 million was available for YFH areas for the establishment of YF hubs. This section presents the amount of investment received across the participating areas.

3.1 LYT Grants

On average, Pathfinder and Early Adopter areas have received £553k each in grant funding to action development areas identified through LYT youth service reviews. These development areas are explored further in the next section. LYT grants ranged from £471k to £678k across all 20 areas, with little difference between Pathfinder and Early Adopter areas. **11** Just over half (11 of 20) of all areas also included some match funding in their plans, ranging from £24k to £500k, in most cases from within the local authorities. Full details of funding allocations are found in Table 1.

10 - "Guidance: The Local Youth Transformation Pilot" (5 November 2025)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-local-youth-transformation-pilot>

"Guidance: Young Futures Hubs" (9 December 2025)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/young-futures-hubs>

11 - Please note that grant parameters were changed following LYTP. YFH areas were able to bid up to £500k only

Table 1: Confirmed funding allocations, by LA and programme type

		Confirmed Funding Allocations 12		
Programme	Local Authority	Capital	LYT Revenue	YFH Revenue
Pathfinders	Cornwall	£0	£677,664.36	
	Derbyshire	£50,000 13	£550,000	
	Doncaster	£75,000	£565,000	
	Hartlepool	£75,900	£557,718.12	
	Islington	£61,000	£560,140	
	Knowsley	£60,000	£523,042.29	
	Liverpool	£50,000	£546,161	
	Oxfordshire	£50,000	£634,347	
	Peterborough	£50,000	£673,471.06	
	Shropshire	£74,000	£621,131	
	Southwark	£76,000	£471,443	
	Stoke on Trent	£71,877	£599,735.85	
Early Adopters	Birmingham	£125,000	£500,000	£300,000
	Brighton and Hove	£124,408	£499,800	£300,000
	Bristol	£124,020	£499,698	£300,000
	County Durham	£125,000	£495,466.46	£300,000
	Leeds	£125,000	£500,000	£295,218
	Manchester	£125,000	£500,000	£300,000
	Nottingham	£125,000	£500,000	£300,000
	Tower Hamlets	£111,194	£484,000	£299,811.46

12 - see above**13** - This was later withdrawn

3.2 LYT Capital Grants

Alongside the LYT grant funding, LAs could also apply for capital funding on both pilot programmes. LYT Pathfinders applying for capital received £63k on average and grants awarded ranged from £50k to £76k. The YFH Early Adopter areas received £123k on average with allocations ranging from £111k to £125k. For the Early Adopter areas, capital funding has been used to respond to both LYT review and co-design recommendations for YF Hub development.

The two key purposes of the capital grants for Early Adopters are to develop digital infrastructure and for building refurbishment and repurposing:

The digital developments look to improve communication and collaboration between organisations from different sectors. Digital development plans include data sharing improvements to support earlier risk identification and more effective joined up support through the YF Hubs.

Capital investment also looks to support the development of designated youth spaces for the YF Hubs, through converting buildings previously used for other purposes or refurbishing existing youth spaces for example. The grants look to make wider impacts beyond the physical buildings also, through facilitating more effective partnership support and improving access through transport or mobile outreach for example. Further details on the specific areas the capital grants have supported are in Table 2.

Table 2: Capital developments

Hub Improvements	Digital Developments
• Conversion of spaces previously used e.g. offices or leisure centres • Creation of multi-use spaces as well as specialist confidential areas • Signage and branding • CCTV, security doors • Furniture • Equipment • Mobile youth provision • Minibus Addressing need for: • Safe, inclusive, accessible and secure youth spaces • Appropriate spaces to facilitate work of specialist partners (e.g. CAMHS, young carers) • Access arrangements (e.g. transport barriers)	• Youth-led digital platform • Digital safeguarding system • Data and evaluation system • Digital outreach equipment • Staff training • Digital licenses Addressing need for: • Improved data sharing amongst organisations • Early risk identification • Streamline referral processes • Improve accessibility to services • Improve communication of services

3.3 YFH Grant submissions

To support with set up and delivery of the YFH, the eight Early Adopter areas were able to submit additional applications for funding. On average, areas received £311k to ensure their hub was operational by the end of March 2026, in most cases for staffing and specialist commissioned services. Half of the Early Adopter plans also included match funding between £40k and £134k, to bolster their plans for the hubs. Details of the focus of delivery can be found in Section 4.6 Young Futures Hubs.

4. Development Themes

The following section explores how LAs propose to spend their LYT grant awards, set out in their implementation plans. The following themes have been identified:

- Workforce Development and Strategy
- Quality of Youth Work
- Voluntary Sector Support and Partnerships
- Youth Voice
- Digital Developments

4.1 Workforce

All 20 areas have identified some form of workforce development in their plans showing the clear need for this to be addressed as a priority in both Pathfinder and Early Adopter areas. In many cases, plans are to be co-created with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) and not limited to formal youth work qualifications, but rather they incorporate wider skill development of the workforce in both LA and VCFS partners.

Leadership and strategy developments are just as prevalent as youth work training and are cited as key factors in ensuring sustainability beyond the LYT and YFH programmes. Full workforce mapping or skills audits are more common in Early Adopters with all but one having plans for such activities following the initial YF Hub set up and delivery. One LA for example, has commissioned a university to carry out their skills audit, which will inform their workforce development offer and future youth work training at the university. In another area, the skills audit has resulted in the commissioning of training providers to deliver training across the area including for the VCFS.

For the Pathfinders, workforce mapping or skills audits are less common, with just a third including these in development plans. Where workforce mapping has taken place, this has informed further workforce development and the commissioning of professional development opportunities in consultation with the VCFS. A Training and Development Network in these three areas aims to ensure that progress continues and allows for additional needs to be identified and solutions found quickly. A key benefit so far has been a more inclusive training offer, particularly for smaller organisations.

Figure 3: Overview of Workforce Development plans

Workforce Development Overview for Pathfinders and Early Adopters

- full workforce skills audit or mapping exercise to inform Youth Work pathways
- workforce strategy/framework development
- collaborative workforce planning with voluntary sector or with a neighbouring area
- creation of new roles or appointment of consultants including Lived Experience Level 3 Apprenticeships, Youth Democracy Worker, Youth Work Coordinator, Youth Work Quality Assurance Officer, Engagement and Outreach Officer and Partnership Development Officer for example
- skill development and qualifications
- youth work curriculum development

Qualifications and training

17 LAs are funding a range of qualifications and training. This includes programmes to upskill the sector outside that of youth work qualifications. Plans include focusing on upskilling the voluntary sector alongside local authority staff including co-creation with the VCFS in one area. Planned courses include mentoring, volunteer training, emergency first aid, mental health first aid, contextual safeguarding, county lines and supervision and reflective practice. Some Pathfinder areas also plan to support organisations to access and apply for funding through bid-writing training. In one area, VCFS organisations have started to access courses to support them in finding bidding opportunities, identifying competitors and constructing a bid. The LA in this area provides additional support through drop-in sessions to review draft bids.

There are also new youth work pathways and qualifications planned in some LAs, to establish clear routes into youth work for these areas. These range from volunteer training and introductory youth work courses to apprenticeships and degree level training delivered in partnership with higher education institutions (HEIs). The focus is on developing a skilled workforce for youth work, with established entry points and continuous professional development opportunities for both young volunteers and those already qualified or those in leadership. Links with the VCFS are common, and two neighbouring Pathfinder LAs have also identified the opportunity for collaborative workforce development.

Youth Work Curriculum development

Most Pathfinder areas and one Early Adopter plan to develop their youth work curriculum through the LYT funding allocation. Work includes strengthening existing systems to align with national standards and quality frameworks for example, as well as ensuring new training and qualifications include the youth work curriculum. ¹⁴ In this way, the curriculum will be embedded in training from the start.

In one Pathfinder, existing provision is being mapped against the National Youth Work Curriculum with the aim of developing culturally sensitive, curriculum aligned tools to build understanding across communities. Additionally, the intention is that quality standards are set (based on the Youth Work Curriculum) against which commissioners will be able to measure provision. An Early Adopter area has focussed on supporting the VCFS with this area and plans include the appointment of a VCFS Partnership Development Officer to support commissioned partners to understand the implementation of the curriculum.

4.2 Quality

Almost all Early Adopters and three quarters of Pathfinder areas plan to develop their approach to quality monitoring and evaluation. Some areas specify a quality mark to work towards, whilst others seek to develop a locally specific framework or impact measurement tool. For example, One Early Adopter local authority has received 40 applications from organisations in the VCFS to work towards a quality mark. By developing quality, participating areas are looking to address recommendations from LYT review concerning consistency of delivery across different organisations and sectors for commissioned services.

Moreso, particularly for Early Adopters, the focus on quality seems to be more about a shared approach and common standards, with a small number of areas planning to support delivery partners with workshops and training. For example, in one area a mentorship and buddy system is planned, which will see the upskilling of key staff in larger VCFS organisations through a 'train the trainer' programme. Linked closely with the development of the youth work curriculum, they will act as 'Curriculum Champions', offering one to one or group mentoring support. This approach has been planned due to the youth work curriculum supporting the achievement of the Quality Mark and on future commissioning.

4.3 Voluntary Sector Support and Partnerships

In the majority of areas, implementation plans across both Pathfinders and Early Adopters have a strong focus on partnerships with the VCFS and capacity building. Support offered to the VCFS includes qualifications and training, as identified previously, but also plans for co-producing commissioning frameworks.

¹⁴ - Nine Pathfinder areas specify aligning with the NYA's Youth Work Curriculum. Other quality frameworks such as the QLIP Impact Measurement Framework are also noted in plans

Supporting sustainability, two Early Adopter areas plan to deliver bid-writing support for example and a further three note collaborative bids with the VCFS to increase opportunities for partners in the future.

In other areas (predominantly Pathfinders) partnership development is planned through establishing structures to enable collaborative work in the first instance, for example by setting up a Youth Partnership Trust, a Youth Service Network, hosting a Provider Summit or creating a Partnership Development Officer role. Partnership development also threads through other areas of work specified in implementation plans such as workforce development, quality assurance, service mapping and youth voice.

4.4 Youth Voice

All of the Early Adopters and over half of the Pathfinders have identified plans to improve the infrastructure and systems for youth voice. Plans include a wide range of work from mapping existing youth voice structures and opportunities and strengthening the role of existing Youth Ambassadors, to the design and implementation of a new county-wide youth governance model. For example, one Early Adopter is ensuring young people are assessing bids for pilot activities, whilst also working more strategically to develop links between existing youth voice activity in the area.

To illustrate the breadth of work planned, further detailed case studies can be found in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Examples of Youth Voice development

Pathfinder – Three tier Governance (rural area)	Early Adopter – Funding and Participation (rural area)
Introduce Youth Democracy role. Design and implement a place-based, three-tier youth governance model including: 1. Four Youth-led Local Youth Partnerships to create a coordinated, place-based structure for planning and delivery of services. Including 80 Young Advisors 2. Area Youth Assemblies to identify local priorities for higher level discussion 3. Area-wide Strategic Youth Partnership to feed into system-level decision-making	1. Design and pilot a County-wide ‘Youth Grant Board’ Recruit young people from across all localities to the Board which will: ◦ identify local priorities ◦ development funding criteria ◦ test participatory funding processes 2. Audit current youth voice provision and co-produce a county-wide ‘Participation Framework’

Pathfinder – Coordination of youth participation (urban area)	Early Adopter – Review and strengthen youth voice (urban area)
1. Map current youth participation 2. Create an eco-system of youth participation to bring together existing forums, schools, providers and other groups 3. Introduce local youth forums 4. Introduce youth ambassador programmes The above work will then support a youth-led communication strategy and development of campaigns, podcasts and digital resources.	1. Map existing youth voice structures 2. Identify gaps and underrepresented groups 3. Strengthen partnerships 4. Develop a coordinated youth voice framework 5. Increase participation opportunities 6. Use framework to collect insights from young people 7. Influence practice, including a new digital ‘front door’ to improve accessibility and engagement

To support the work, some areas are also investing in the creation of designated staff roles for Research, Youth Voice, Outreach, Youth Participation and Youth Democracy.

4.5 Digital

Digital developments, like for youth voice, are also more prevalent across the Early Adopters with six out of the eight planning work in this area compared to seven of twelve Pathfinders. As noted in section 3.2, capital funding particularly for Early Adopters, was split between YF Hub refurbishment and digital development, which may account for it being more common in these areas. That said, there is still variation in how it is being invested. Early Adopters plan to use the capital to establish a range of new systems including new digital safeguarding and data sharing systems; creative virtual reality (VR) to support outreach work; and public access computers for a YF Hub.

In some areas, new youth voice structures and systems will be used to support the co-design of new digital platforms or dashboards to improve the communication of the youth offer. A digital ‘front door’ or gateway to increase accessibility to services is also part of most Early Adopter plans.

Where digital work has been planned, ten areas (across Pathfinder and Early Adopters equally) have focussed on updating or creating a digital platform to communicate youth services and events; offer youth social prescribing; and signposting to specialist services for example. As noted previously this work links strongly to youth voice developments and is planned to be youth led in those areas. In one Pathfinder area, a new data dashboard is being developed which brings together data and information from across different statutory services to support the VCFS and LA to plan provision for young people. Local VCFS partnerships have been developed and will play a crucial role in keeping the information up to date. The dashboard aims to map all provision and identify trends for the benefit of professionals, with downloadable reports to inform bids for funding for example, but plans also include the intention to use it to communicate the local offer to young people and parents/carers.

Digital developments are not just prioritised for online platforms and processes, however. In two of the larger, more rural Pathfinder areas the focus is on digital youth work itself, not just the communication of youth services. New roles are being funded to deliver and lead digital youth work in these areas and will be supported by digital youth work training for both council and VCFS staff. A referrals-only Digital Youth Club has already been launched in one area, open five days a week for young people outside of mainstream education. Longer term plans are for it to operate more like an open-access Virtual Hub.

4.6 Young Futures Hubs

The LYT programme has supported the establishment of YF Hubs in the eight Early Adopter areas as a pilot for future roll out. Each LA designed their own individual hub or 'hub and spoke' model based on local need, with the LYTP youth service review and co-design elements key to this process. As such the plan in each area is unique, based on existing partnership arrangements and workforce needs. Three areas plan one main YF Hub, whilst the remaining five have a range of hub and spoke models planned, with phased rollout. Where one area has a single city centre hub planned, another has three hubs in key areas to be supported by six spokes across the city region. Another has one main hub to be supported by a series of spokes delivered by partner organisations.

Location of the hub(s) and model chosen has been made based on local considerations and barriers. For example, one area has chosen a city centre location due to the proximity to public transport. In another area, the hub location was chosen primarily due to its proximity to other youth services and activities to encourage referrals and increase engagement with the central hub. The main hub location is crucial to be able to test referral pathways and partnership arrangements, as all hubs will operate a 'no wrong front door approach'. Parallel digital developments both in safeguarding and data sharing as well as online engagement platforms, as discussed, are expected to support this approach.

Although the hubs have been planned based on local considerations there are key consistencies across all areas and a focus on joining up the wider youth offer. These centre on workforce development, partnership working and method of delivery planned.

Workforce Development

A skilled, trained workforce is central to the success of YF Hubs and all areas have detailed workforce development plans for both hub staff and partners. Core elements of **training and qualifications** planned include a minimum expectation for youth work qualifications for YFH employed delivery staff, trauma informed training, contextual safeguarding, first aid and mental health first aid.

Responding to **local needs**, some areas have additional skill development for careers support, cultural awareness training, anti-racism, Prevent and violence against women and girls (VAWG) training. This is done both through local providers but also through new collaborations with universities.

Partnership Approach

All hub models include the **co-location** of different services. Hubs will be supported by improved digital safeguarding systems to facilitate effective data sharing and referral routes.

Hub governance includes a **multi-agency** steering group or project board and youth voice is to be embedded in a range of ways through forums, advisory boards and youth ambassadors.

Method of delivery

All YFHs seek to **increase access and engagement** in youth services and to reach marginalised groups. Service delivery is wide-ranging including **free, open access** provision, **targeted support** (in the hub and through outreach or digital work), **specialist** partner support and a **wraparound** offer.

Using a whole system approach, services will be **delivered collaboratively** both in hubs and through outreach with Early Help, schools, Youth Justice, Public Health, Police and Community Safety and Post-16 employment and support organisations all delivering support.

The range of services offered through each model all address the three core themes of mental health, careers/employment opportunities and crime/violence. How this support is offered and delivered does depend on local context as demonstrated by the three examples below:

Single Hub example: Here an urban hub is focussed on developing a strong partnership approach and will host weekly sessions delivered by partners including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), careers advisors, English, maths and science tutors, combined with workshops and referrals with the Police, youth justice service and the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU).

Hub and Spoke example: Here the main open access hub is located in an area with high levels of NEET and moderate crime and violence. Each spoke will focus on detached and outreach work specifically in different localities.

Multi-Hub and Spokes example: Here there will be three main city centre hubs, each offering open access activities alongside an existing specialism such as mental health and wellbeing. These three hubs will be supported by six youth centres.

Responding to local need, some individual hubs will also include targeted outreach to underrepresented groups, or plan to offer female only sessions for example. In other areas there was high demand for free, fun activities so it was a priority to offer activities including cooking, crafts, sports activities and safe, open spaces for young people to access freely. Early Adopter plans acknowledge the importance of this range of activities to ensure increased engagement and access to support at the main YF Hub locations.

Sustainability of YF Hubs beyond the programme has been considered by all Early Adopters and aims to be secured through wider investment in workforce development or commissioning support to the VCFS and partners for more secure funding pipelines. Investing in these areas using the LYT funding allocation is common across the Early Adopters.

5. Next Steps

The first YF Hubs were operationalised at the end of March 2026 in the areas of Birmingham, Brighton and Hove, Bristol, County Durham, Leeds, Manchester, Nottingham and Tower Hamlets. These local areas will continue with activities outlined in their YFH implementation plans to deliver the full range of YF Hub services over the next 3-6 months and the YFH Pilot will formally close in March 2027. The LYTP programme closes earlier, in August 2026. All areas continue their journey to transform local youth services in their areas, using LYT revenue funding as a catalyst for innovation and development to make lasting change and work towards sustainability.

As pilot programmes, LYTP and YFH aim to share best practice and develop learning. As such, a comprehensive, needs-led programme of support and learning will continue to provide a forum to share and learn from each other, as well as from strategic partners involved in the programmes. As the delivery partner, NYA will provide the support detailed in Figure 5 to help LAs reflect on progress, strengthen delivery and embed sustainable change as they move through the implementation phase. In addition to this support, a two-day, in-person learning event for both Pathfinders and Early Adopters will be held to provide a practical and engaging opportunity to support the continued development of strong, sustainable local youth systems. The event will cover six topics:

1. Leading and Sustaining Change within a Local Authority Context,
2. Measuring Outcomes, Impact and 'What Matters',
3. Systems Thinking and Whole-System Youth Offers,
4. Partnership Working across Statutory Services and the VCFS,
5. Negotiation, Influencing and Working with Senior Leaders, and
6. Commissioning Frameworks and Long-Term Investment in Youth Services

Lessons from both programmes will be instrumental in bringing about transformational change for youth work in England, and as the government works towards the National Youth Strategy commitment to rollout a network of 50 YFH, by March 2029.

Figure 5: Continued programme of support for LYT and YFH LAs

Pathfinders	Early Adopters
Quarterly Reviews Young Assessor led online review sessions where LAs present and reflect on their progress against delivery plans each quarter, sharing achievements and challenges while receiving feedback and support to strengthen implementation and youth voice. Final Review All twelve Pathfinders will have a one day in-person review with their Case Lead and Young Assessors, focusing on overall delivery against the implementation plan, impact on young people, youth voice influence on LYT, the level of capability and systems change experienced, and assessing sustainability plans. Each LA will receive a final report with recommendations from both NYA Case Leads and Young Assessors.	Quarterly Reviews Young Assessor-led sessions where LAs reflect on their quarterly progress against delivery plans, including the development and performance of their YF Hub, and receive feedback to strengthen ongoing implementation and youth voice Final Review As with the Pathfinders, the review will take place with their Case Lead and Young Assessors, mirroring the process from the Pathfinders, likely with some improvements based on the learning from the first round of final reviews. It will also include an element of measuring the effectiveness of the YFH and how LYT enabled this success.
Communities of Practice	
LYT Community of Practice sessions are peer-led spaces that bring LA leads together to share experiences, surface good practice and challenges, and collectively reflect on implementation, supporting alignment and system leadership as the programme evolves.	
Communities of Learning	
LYT Community of Learning sessions are expert-led webinars designed to support LAs to implement their LYT plans by providing targeted input on key topics, sharing sector expertise, and building capability in areas such as quality practice, partnerships, and workforce development.	

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