Rebuilding the Youth Sector: Lessons from the Local Youth Transformation Pilot

September 2026

"I think that the new youth hub will be the start of something big and I'm glad to be a part of it and the opening of the hub just shows me that there is hope for the youth."

–Kodi Kondwani,
Young Futures Hub user, age 18



National Youth Agency

Why do youth services need rebuilding?

Youth services have lost £1.2 billion (73%) in funding since 2010, resulting in the closure of more than 750 youth centres and the loss of around 4,500 youth work jobs. At the same time, the challenges facing young people have intensified: more than one million young people are not in education, employment or training (NEET), and one in five young people now has a diagnosable mental health condition. As demand grows, local systems are increasingly struggling to provide the consistent, high-quality support that young people need.

Demand for targeted services continues to be a challenge, with **youth organisations reporting increased demand across several areas**, including:



79% Mental health and wellbeing support
61% Access to one-to-one support or a trusted adult
56% Employment, training and skills support
54% Information, advice and guidance

Creating the conditions for young people to thrive everywhere means investing in the opportunities, services and spaces that support their development, confidence and wellbeing.

Every local authority has a legal duty to secure sufficient services for young people.

Local authorities are required to secure enough youth services (educational and recreational leisure activities outside of school) to improve wellbeing and personal development for young people aged 13-19 and to 20-24 for those with learning difficulties or disabilities.

What are the challenges in implementing the statutory duty?

While the statutory duty applies to all local authorities, awareness and understanding of it varies considerably across the country. There is no clear definition of what meeting the duty should look like in practice, including sufficiency benchmarks for qualified staffing and local accessibility.

Responsibility for youth services often sits in different parts of a council, such as Early Help, Children and Young People's Services, or Community Safety and Youth Justice teams. This can lead to inconsistent leadership, fragmented accountability and uneven investment. For young people, the result is often a disjointed and confusing experience of support, with services that can be difficult to navigate, vary in quality, and fail to meet their needs in a joined-up way, particularly for those who need support most.

In many areas, there is no dedicated lead for the statutory duty or a clear, needs-led youth strategy. This can make it harder to demonstrate the value of youth work and to ensure that services are designed around the needs of local young people.

The result is that access to youth services can depend on where a young person lives, creating a **postcode lottery** in the support and opportunities available to them.

What is the Local Youth Transformation Pilot and how does it help local authorities deliver the statutory duty?

The DCMS Local Youth Transformation Pilot (LYTP) supports local authorities to re-build their youth offer and re-establish strong, local leadership of youth services that meet the needs of the young people they serve and deliver the statutory duty.

June 2025 saw the launch of the programme working across 20 local authorities in England, demonstrating how rebuilding local youth systems can strengthen youth provision, improve partnership working and ensure young people's voices shape local decision-making.

The National Youth Strategy commits to reviewing local authorities' statutory duty for youth services, assessing whether it is working as intended and how councils can be better supported to deliver it. Lessons from the LYT pilot should help inform this review, ensuring every young person in England can access high-quality local opportunities, support and services.

With a further roll out of local youth transformation beginning this financial year, LYTP is both timely and essential to the rebuilding of systems that support young people now and into the future.



Purpose of the Local Youth Transformation Pilot (LYTP)

LYTP helps local authorities rebuild strong local leadership of youth services, understand local needs, and meet their statutory duty. Youth voice is central throughout, so services reflect the needs and aspirations of young people.

Local Youth Transformation Pilot

What it is: All 20 pilot areas carried out a supported local youth services review and planning process to improve youth services.

Focus: Understanding whether current youth provision meets local need and whether the local authority has the capability to meet its statutory duty.

Support provided: DCMS funding and NYA and strategic partners support improvements to deliver local change.

Young Futures Hubs (YFH)

What it is: 8 local authorities also set up a YFH alongside their LYT review. YFH is a place-based, multi-agency hub model shaped by young people and local needs.

Focus: Creating a joined-up place where young people can access multi-agency support for mental health, careers and employment, and crime and violence prevention.

Support offered: LYT review improves the infrastructure and capability of youth services so local authorities can deliver a YFH, co-designed by young people.

Map of LYT Pilot Areas

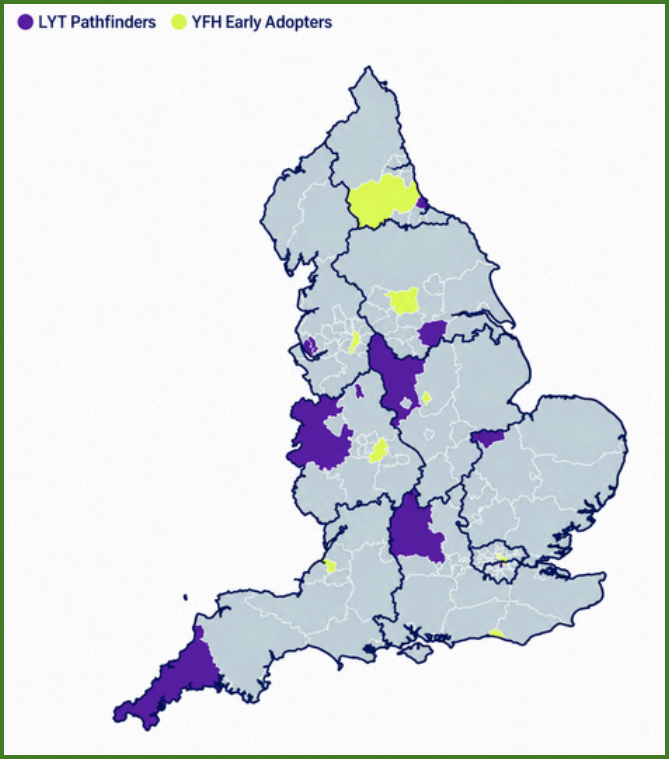
Pilot local authorities

Pathfinders:

Cornwall, Derbyshire, Doncaster, Hartlepool, Islington, Knowsley, Liverpool, Oxfordshire, Peterborough, Shropshire, Southwark and Stoke on Trent.

Early Adopters:

Birmingham, Brighton and Hove, Bristol, County Durham, Leeds, Manchester, Nottingham and Tower Hamlets.



The LYT pilot, which includes YFHs is a place-based solution, ensuring every young person, regardless of where they live, can access high-quality support, opportunities and trusted adults in their community. Expansion of the pilot will help local authorities to access support and investment to deliver on their statutory duty.

How is the Local Youth Transformation Pilot helping?

Through local reviews, strategic planning and, in some areas, the development of Young Futures Hubs (part of LYTP), councils are building more joined-up, youth-centred services that better reflect the needs and aspirations of young people.

The programme aims to ensure that every young person, regardless of where they live, can access high-quality support, opportunities and trusted adults in their community.

LYTP is a chance for local authorities to transform their whole youth offer and meet the statutory duty by offering preventative, integrated and youth centred provision. Through developing a coordinated, place-based network of universal, targeted and specialist provision, shaped by young people's voices, informed by local needs and delivered through strong partnerships with clear pathways, LYTP offers much needed opportunity and support for local authorities to be ambitious in their intentions to improve opportunities and outcomes for young people.



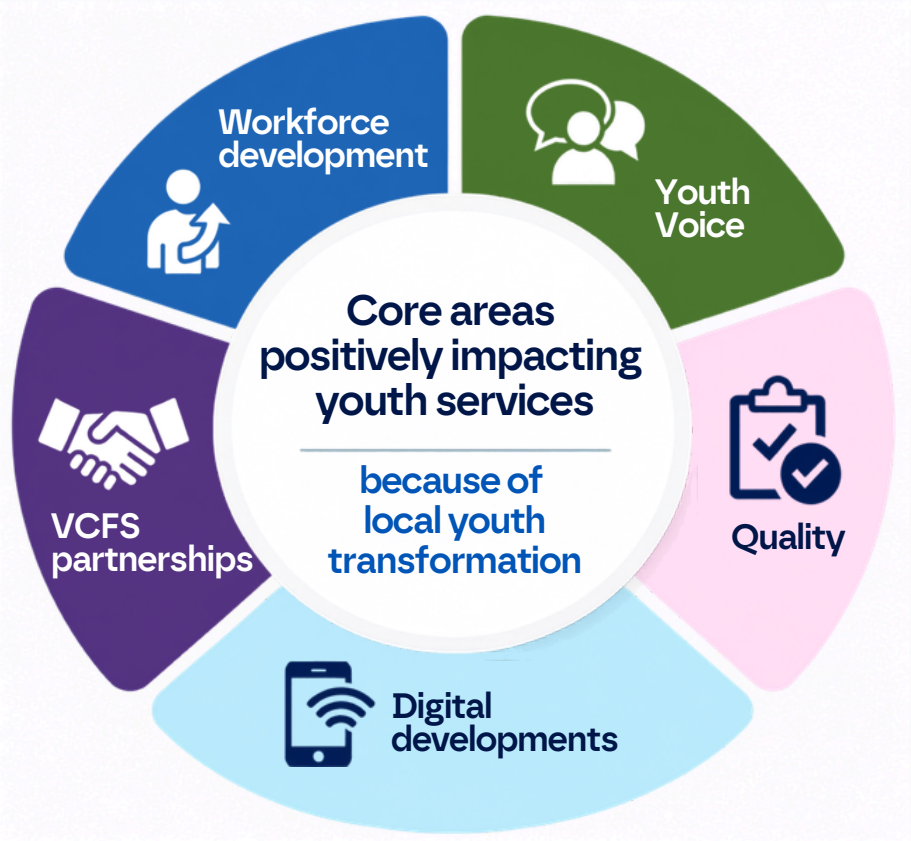
"Personally, the best way of improving youth services is not just decision makers determining what is best for young people, but actively working with them as young people brings a vital new perspective and ideas decision makers would not necessarily. I have loved being a Young Assessor, the people I have met and worked with have been so inspiring and the experience has been so rewarding. It has been so important that Young Assessors are in the room to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to shape their services and their community regardless of who they are or where they live in the local authority."

–Anna Gibson, Young Assessor for Knowsley Council

"The Young Futures Hub programme marks the most exciting opportunity in decades to champion the power of youth work and rebuild a strong, preventative offer for young people."

–John Miller, Case Lead for the National Youth Agency

Emerging findings from the Local Youth Transformation Pilot



Workforce

There is a significant qualifications gap in the youth sector workforce with under half of the voluntary and community sector having staff with a recognised youth work qualification. **All 20 LYTP LAs have invested in workforce development**, aiming to **strengthen capacity** and **raise standards** to ensure sustainable change.

After carrying out a full workforce audit, areas including Liverpool and Leeds have now put in place a Training and Development Network to oversee action planning and identify additional workforce needs. This has already **benefitted smaller organisations** unable to afford staff to access level 2 courses.

In Brighton and Hove, partnerships with Sussex University have supported a full workforce skills audit which has informed workforce development plans and future youth work training at the university.

Partnerships

Smaller, previously marginalised organisations and the communities of young people they serve are now part of a strategic network. A young person's life is not categorised neatly for different sectors, and needs cannot be met by one sector only. For the County Durham team, by positioning youth workers alongside youth justice, employment, health partners and local businesses, it will raise the visibility and credibility of youth work.

"By positioning youth workers alongside allied partner agencies, Young Futures Hubs have the potential to elevate the status and recognition of youth work and show the value of relationship-based, strength-based practice."

–Leanne Hopper, Strategic Manager, County Durham Youth Justice Service, Children and Young People's Service, Durham County Council, and Local Young Transformation Lead

> **Having someone to prioritise my voice whilst I was lost in my local authority's youth services would have hugely improved my experience as a young person. Having a young assessor does not only provide a young person's perspective to service development but it also encourages professionals to consider their own young people who access the service and should have the most say on the services that shape their lives."**
>
> **–Kiera, Young Assessor for Shropshire and Doncaster**

Youth Voice

Nigel Hogg, Durham's Young Futures Hub Manager, is working with Investing in Children, a Durham-based children's rights charity, to recruit a new youth voice council through local schools, youth provision and partner organisations.

"The Hub will bring together a range of young people from different backgrounds, including those with SEND and neurodiverse needs. Representatives from the youth voice council will link into the Hub Implementation Group, so young people have a voice at the highest level within the whole service."

–Nigel Hogg, Young Futures Hub Manager for Durham

Youth voice is a core theme underpinning LYTP and is most powerful where young people are not only consulted but actively participating in local development activities to shape delivery. A key part of the programme is the NYA Young Assessor role. These young professionals have supported local landscape reviews from the very beginning and are now working with LAs to shape future plans for YFHs.



National Youth Agency

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