

# **The Future of Youth Provision in East Staffordshire**

**December 2020**

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**"Young people are not a homogenous whole - there are clear distinctions of where young people are in their development pathways i.e. across age or transition points of adolescence"**

**(Interviewee)**

# Executive Summary

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## Background to the project

This research is the fourth piece of work commissioned by the East Staffordshire Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) on behalf of the local Community Safety Partnership (CSP). All four themes have been identified as priorities by partners, and would benefit from some additional insight prior to determining the best and most relevant interventions moving forwards.

Findings and recommendations from the three previous reports indicated a level of need for:

- ◆ A greater variety of positive developmental activities for children and young people that meet their current needs and wants
- ◆ Creating and developing new youth spaces that complement and enhance existing provision
- ◆ Increased promotion of existing youth activities and understanding why some choose not to access them.
- ◆ More trusted adults who can help young people feel valued, included and involved in their communities.
- ◆ A change in the perception of young people.

At a time when youth provision is coming back into fashion, people recognise the

critical link of support it provides for some of our most vulnerable and challenging young people. The risk is re-establishing an outdated approach which needs remodelling for current and future generations of young people.

## Research Aims

The scope for this research is framed around three key aims:

- ◆ To understand how youth provision has evolved across a variety of settings
- ◆ To determine whether the current offer of youth provision is fit for purpose
- ◆ To identify what a future youth offer might look like for young people aged 8-18 (extending to 25 for those with learning disabilities) in East Staffordshire

## Evaluation Methods

Utilising qualitative research approaches, the following evaluation methods were used in the compilation of this report:

- ◆ **Desktop analysis** of local and national studies, reports and articles
- ◆ **1-2-1 semi structured interviews** conducted with youth work practitioners from both the statutory and VCSE sector
- ◆ **Online survey and interviews** with young people

## Key Findings

- ◆ Real terms spending by local authorities on youth services had fallen to £398m, a 71% reduction (80% in the West Midlands) since 2010/11.
- ◆ The resurgence of the profile of youth work at a national level has emerged due to the work around serious youth violence, with a lack of good youth services being cited as one of the contributing factors to this.
- ◆ It is believed as many as two thirds of youth organisations will not be able to continue supporting young people in the next quarter, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- ◆ 3,695 young people aged 8-19 regularly engage in youth provision and support in East Staffordshire across 37 SCVYS member organisations (equivalent to 136 units of provision)
- ◆ 46% of young people attended their youth group because they enjoyed it or were interested in what was on offer with 79% of respondents saying they had a good relationship with their leaders.
- ◆ Practitioners interviewed overwhelmingly responded that the current provision in their area was not adequately addressing the needs of all young people.
- ◆ Youth work encourages the power balance to be equal and young people have the voluntary choice to participate, meaning relationships are required and led by how the young person wants to interact.
- ◆ 25% of the young people not attending a youth group said it was because there was none in their local area or they couldn't travel to attend to a youth group.
- ◆ Interviews with practitioners suggested that there are much deeper reasons for non attendance such as a mistrust of adults and the fear or anxiety of trying something new.
- ◆ 38% of young people not engaged in youth provision said that knowing they would make new friends would encourage them to attend a youth group, followed by 36% who would attend a sports based youth group.
- ◆ Youth leaders want support to access clear learning and development pathways and encouragement to broaden their learning experience across different types of provision and sectors.
- ◆ Partner organisations have a key role to play in identifying activities or support outside of school and being reassured about signposting young people to these.
- ◆ There is a need for better cross sector collaboration to ensure the holistic needs of young people are being considered rather than taking a single issue based approach.
- ◆ Innovative youth provision has emerged using different approaches, including both digital and collaborative partnership working, to meet locally identified issues.

- ◆ For a digital offer to be engaging, the methods used need to be both interesting and accessible for young people, but simple and easy to manage for youth leaders.
- ◆ Most youth provision had to shut due to the spring lockdown, with some organisations providing a virtual or telephone support offer to young people. Group leaders are concerned about funding as income normally comes via the collection of subscriptions linked to face to face delivery.
- ◆ Youth worker burnout is a concern as individuals are having to work harder and differently over a prolonged period of time. Retention and recruitment of volunteers is equally challenging under the circumstances.

## Recommendations

Based on the results from this research the following recommendations are made:

### Strategy & Investment

- ◆ Develop a strategy for Children & Young People in East Staffordshire / Staffordshire.
- ◆ Greater cross-sector working that considers existing provision and local intelligence.
- ◆ Invest in young people holistically to support longer term outcomes.
- ◆ Include young people in designing a future youth offer.
- ◆ Meaningful recognition of the role the voluntary sector plays in supporting communities.

### Digital

- ◆ Explore and evaluate models of digital youth work and how to support staff and volunteers in delivering an effective local digital offer.
- ◆ Offer a central support fund for organisations in overcoming digital poverty.
- ◆ Create a safety / quality mark for online platforms in the delivery of youth provision.

### Workforce & Organisational Development

- ◆ Offer bespoke learning and development pathways for youth leaders.
- ◆ Establish a local youth leader / youth work peer support network in East Staffordshire.
- ◆ Wider more standardised promotion of youth activities, support and the associated benefits of youth work.

# 1. Introduction

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This research project was commissioned by the East Staffordshire CSP who were seeking to gain some insight into the types of youth provision that could be locally commissioned in the future.

## 1.1 Research Aim & Objectives

The research aims and composite objectives were outlined as part of a research proposal submitted to the East Staffordshire Strategic Delivery Manager (on behalf of the LSP) in June 2020. The proposal was subsequently agreed and work commenced in mid-June with an anticipated completion timescale of six months.

The research aims and objectives are as follows:

**Research Aim 1:** To understand how youth provision has evolved across a variety of settings

**Objectives:**

1. Define and provide an overview of youth provision spanning the last 100 years, across a variety of settings.
2. Understand the key principles to a successful youth-friendly approach.

**Research Aim 2:** To determine whether the current offer of youth provision is fit for purpose

**Objectives:**

1. Provide a brief overview of the national youth provision landscape.
2. Review what the local landscape looks like, including demographics of users of youth provision.
3. Research the views and opinions around current youth provision. This will include young people and their families, leaders and volunteers, and other practitioners and stakeholders.
4. Explore the current role of the youth leader, young people's expectations of their leaders in supporting them and how these relationships differ from other settings.
5. Research the range of reasons why young people may not attend positive developmental provision.

**Research Aim 3:** To identify what a future youth offer might look like for young people aged 8-18 (extending to 25 for those with learning disabilities) in East Staffordshire.

**Objectives:**

1. Explore the future style and shape of youth provision for young people aged 8-18 (extending to 25 for those with learning disabilities), including the skills and role of youth leaders.
2. Seek to understand how the approach to youth provision should be different for the various youth subcultures that exist
3. Look at the needs of vulnerable young people; especially those experiencing social exclusion and how to support the participation of these young people.
4. Demonstrate examples of innovative and contemporary youth provision from other regions and countries, and how this compares to the local approach.
5. How youth provision can be delivered locally, considering cultural diversity, urban and rural environments and, replicating and developing approaches from other countries.
6. What the impact of COVID-19 has been on the delivery of youth provision in the short term and what can be learnt to inform future provision for young people.

## 1.2 Research Parameters

### 1.2.1 Definitions

Due to the broad scope of youth provision across the country there are many varied definitions of what this constitutes. For the purpose of this research it is important to be clear on how we are defining the use of the following terms:

**Youth Provision:**

The umbrella sector of activities for young people comprising:

- Open access youth clubs and centres based in communities and urban centres, voluntary or statutory organisations.
- Activities, groups or support focused on young people with specific identities or needs (e.g. LGBTQI youth groups; young carers' clubs, mental health support)
- Initiatives aimed at enabling young people to have a voice in issues that affect their lives (e.g. local youth councils, youth campaign groups)



- Detached and outreach youth provision which aims to engage young people who may not take part in more organised activities
- Uniformed and faith-based youth organisations that provide activities, support and challenge to young people (e.g. Girlguiding, Scouting, Boys Brigade)
- Projects that use sports and creative arts to engage young people in creative and physical activity.

**Source:** The Centre for Youth Impact (2019)

### **Youth Work:**

Youth work helps young people learn about themselves, others and society through activities that combine enjoyment, challenge, learning and achievement.

- It offers its services in places where young people can choose to participate;
- It encourages young people to be critical in their responses to their own experience and to the world around them;
- It works with young people to help them make informed choices about their personal responsibilities within their communities;
- It works alongside school and college-based education to encourage young people to achieve and fulfil their potential; and
- It works with other agencies to encourage society to be responsive to young people's needs.

**Source:** National Youth Agency (2004)

**Youth Group:** Any individual session offering activities for young people

**Youth Leader:** Any adult delivering youth provision, regardless of qualification.

### **Youth Worker:**

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

the purposes of this report, we will use 'youth worker' to describe any adult leader who has achieved an accredited qualification in youth work practice and is delivering within a paid role.

**Source:** National Youth Agency (2019)

**Volunteer:** Any unpaid adult delivering youth provision (as defined above), regardless of qualification.

**Young Leader:** Any peer leader aged 17 or under, supporting the delivery of youth provision.

### 1.2.2 Target Demographic

The target demographic for this research piece is young people aged 8-18 (extending to 25 for those with learning disabilities) in East Staffordshire. The starting age of 8 was chosen given that the under 10s will be using youth provision in the next 4-5 years and is reflected in the population data we have included.

## 2. Desktop Review

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This section will provide a brief analysis on what has already been published in the context of the research aims and objectives, pulling on local, national and international material where available.

### 2.1 The evolution of Youth Provision and Youth Work in the UK (Aim 1: Obj.1)

#### 2.1.1 Youth Provision - A Timeline

Specific provision for young people has been around since the mid to late 1800s, focussing on the development of young people. Over the decades and centuries this evolved and adapted into what we now see as youth provision across the UK. Changes in legislation reflecting the needs of the country (such as after the World Wars) and a move to recognise the importance of extra-curricular development of young people has shaped the variety and accessibility of the provision and activities that is available to young people today. The timeline below highlights key points in the history of youth services, including the formation of some recognisable organisations and changes to legislation and governmental guidance on youth services.

Year	Key Youth Service Developments
1844	YMCA is founded
1853	YWCA is founded
1883	Boys' Brigade is founded
1907	Boy Scouts Association is founded
1910	Girl Guides Association is founded
1911	National Organisation of Girls' Clubs (NOGC) is founded
1916	Government encourages Local Authorities to support Juvenile Organisation Committees (JOCs)
1918	Education Act empowers Local Authorities to make grants to clubs and youth groups
1921	Board of Education circular allows Local Authorities to set up their own JOCs
1925	National Association of Boys' Clubs (NABC) is founded
1926	NOGC becomes National Council of Girls' Clubs (NCGC)
1936	Standing Conference of National Voluntary Youth Organisations (SCVNYO) is founded
1938	Club Leaders' Association is formed
1940	National Conference of Youth Service Officers is established
1942	NCGC become National Association of Girls' Clubs (NAGC) Board of education Youth Advisory Council set up
1943	HMI inspection of youth organisations is introduced
1944	Education Act (1944) NAGC becomes National Association of Girls' Clubs and Mixed Clubs (NAGC&MC)
1948	British Youth Council (BYC) is founded

<b>1956</b>	Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is launched
<b>1960</b>	Albemarle Report published Youth Service Development Council set up
<b>1961</b>	National College for the Training of Youth Leaders (NCTYL) founded NAGC&MC becomes the National Association of Youth Clubs Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Youth Leaders and Community Centre Wardens set up
<b>1964</b>	Youth Service Information Centre set up NCTYL is given an extension until 1970
<b>1968</b>	Young Volunteer Force Foundation is launched
<b>1969</b>	Milson-Fairbairn Report is published
<b>1970</b>	NCTYL is closed. Two-year qualifying courses are set up nationally
<b>1971</b>	Milson-Fairbairn report rejected by Department for Education and Science (DES). YSDC is disbanded DES ends 50% grants to voluntary capital projects Youth and Community Work Training Association is formed
<b>1972</b>	SCNVYO becomes the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS)
<b>1973</b>	National Youth Bureau set up. Creates Youth Social Work Unit Youth service lobby for a 'Minister for Youth'
<b>1974</b>	NYB Young Volunteers Resources Unit set up
<b>1975</b>	Four new two-year qualifying courses are approved
<b>1976</b>	Prince's Trust is established
<b>1977</b>	Youthaid established Youth Charter 2000 conference held NAYC appoints Girls' Work worker
<b>1978</b>	Youth Affairs Lobby set up NYB Youth Opportunities Development and Youth Work Units established Campaign for Rural Youth formed
<b>1979</b>	Youth Service Forum is abolished A Joint Council for Teenagers is established
<b>1980</b>	NAYC establishes Rural Youth Work Education Project
<b>1981</b>	Youth Call launched to lobby for national community service for young people
<b>1982</b>	Publication of the Thompson Report Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS) formed
<b>1983</b>	Council for Education and Training in Youth and Community Work (CETYCW) set up
<b>1984</b>	DES responds to the Thompson Report
<b>1985</b>	International Youth Year National Advisory Council for Youth Services is established
<b>1986</b>	Introduction of the Local Education Authority Training Grants Scheme (LEATGS) for in-service training
<b>1988</b>	NAYC becomes Youth Clubs UK HMI report on Effective Youth Work
<b>1989</b>	First Ministerial conference on a core curriculum for the Youth Service DES reforms the grant system of voluntary organisations Prince's Trust announces plans for Young Volunteers scheme
<b>1990</b>	Second Ministerial conference on a core curriculum for the Youth Service

<b>1991</b>	NYB and CETYCW merge to become National Youth Agency (NYA)
<b>1992</b>	Third Ministerial conference on a core curriculum for the Youth Service NABC renamed NABC – Clubs for Young People to reflect female members
<b>1993</b>	Commencement of Department for Education (DfE) three year Action for Youth plans NYA promotes first Youth Work Week
<b>1996</b>	First National Lottery grants for youth work
<b>1997</b>	Creation of National Forum for the Development of Rural Youth Work
<b>1998</b>	Youth Service audit
<b>1999</b>	NABC changes to National Association of Clubs for Young People (NACYP)
<b>2000</b>	UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) formed, managed by the British Youth Council
<b>2001</b>	Youth Clubs UK becomes UK Youth on 90 <sup>th</sup> birthday
<b>2002</b>	Launch of £52 million Transforming Youth Work Development Fund – In Staffordshire, investment supported Junior (8-12s) Youth Work, workforce development and capacity building the local voluntary youth sector
<b>2005</b>	NACYP becomes Clubs for Young People
<b>2006</b>	Youth Opportunity Fund – Young people deciding where and on what to spend the money on locally
<b>2008</b>	First 7 Youth Zones opened, with 8 more in development and an ambition to create 100 centres within a generation
<b>2009</b>	UKYP debated in the House of Commons for the first time
<b>2010</b>	Positive for Youth Strategy announced including new National Citizenship Scheme, 63 MyPlace projects, 14 youth innovation zones and the statutory duty for sufficient youth provision was put onto local Government.
<b>2012</b>	Clubs for Young People renamed Ambition (3,500 clubs helping 350,000 young people)
<b>2013</b>	Responsibility for Youth Services moves from Department of Education to the Cabinet Office. NYA launches the Institute of Youth Work
<b>2014</b>	Delivering Differently for Young People programme enabled local authorities to rethink youth service delivery leading to youth mutual's such as SPACE, Community Interest Companies, alignment with targeted services and commissioning out. Centre for Youth Impact launches
<b>2015</b>	Staffordshire Youth and Community Service is closed down
<b>2016</b>	NCVYS merges with Ambition Responsibility for Youth Services moves from the Cabinet Office to DCMS. #iwill Social Action Fund and targeted Youth Investment Fund announced.
<b>2017</b>	UK Youth and Ambition merge
<b>2019</b>	Launch of the £200m Youth Endowment Fund to tackle serious youth violence Youth Futures Foundation launched to overcome barriers to employment using the £90m released from dormant assets £500 million Youth Investment Fund announced but not implemented 15 months on
<b>2020</b>	National Youth Agency publish the National Youth Work Curriculum Youth services were recognised by Government as an essential service for young people in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## 2.2 Key principles to a successful youth-friendly approach (Aim 1: Obj.2)

While we would assume that any work with young people is youth work, the general consensus is that youth work is underpinned by four cornerstones: education, empowerment, equality and participation as per the Youth Work Curriculum. (National Youth Agency, 2020)

Informal **education** provided by youth work complements more formal learning young people experience. Youth provision can provide young people opportunities to learn about themselves, the wider world, issues they care or are concerned about and importantly, their place within society and their communities.

Young people should also be **empowered** to make decisions and act on issues that affect their lives and the wider world. Youth work accomplishes this by developing the skills and confidence of young people engaging with provision and give them the opportunity to take control and have a voice.

All youth work should be open to all young people. **Equality** of access is key in providing youth work, taking into consideration differences between groups and individuals, whilst building connections amongst them. It should also encourage young people to reflect on their understanding of themselves and their behaviour towards others.

Finally, youth work is a voluntary relationship from young people. **Participation** is not expected and is on the young person's terms, allowing them to become partners and leaders in their own learning and engaging with their communities and democratic processes.

Using the above cornerstones explains our reasoning in eliminating some other types of provision for the purposes of this research. For example Youth Offending Services are not based on a voluntary relationship with young people, and sports clubs tend not to include a wider informal education aspect into their provision. However, these types of provision often share some of the other qualities of youth work and can greatly contribute to the development of individual young people and follow similar principles for successfully working with young people.

The Big Lottery Fund (2017) published a range of good practice guides for organisations working with young people in different contexts. These were evidence based built on the learning and evaluation of projects they had previously funded under the Young People's Fund. They concluded that the following principles are key to delivering successful interventions with young people. Approaches need to:

- Be enjoyable and engaging leading to voluntary participation from young people;
- Provide opportunities for personal and social development;

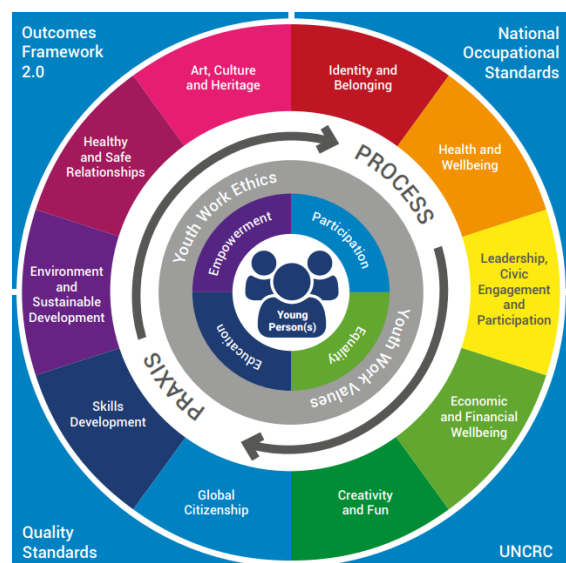
- Break cycles through positive peer, role models and trusted adult relationships;
- Offer opportunities for active and meaningful involvement – including opportunities to contribute back to their communities through social action, volunteering, etc;
- Intentionally intervene as early as possible;
- Involve the wider community and all relevant stakeholders to increase mutual respect including intergenerational programme elements;
- Sustain positive behaviour change through ongoing engagement – joining a club, etc;
- Look at underlying factors such as unemployment, debt, substance misuse, poor relationships and social networks.

***“Active involvement can develop the technical, personal and social skills of young people. Active involvement also makes young people feel valued and can bring about greater engagement and motivation for participation more widely.” (BLF, 2017)***

Example projects cited as having a positive impact in the report include sports programmes, environmental projects, opportunities for intergenerational connection, acts of community service, opportunities to learn new skills, taking on responsibility and peer leadership etc.

In a sense the specifics of the activity (sports, arts, outreach, skills programmes, mentoring, counselling, etc.) are less important than the need to meaningfully involve young people in activities that they choose to engage with and that offer them opportunities to progress towards the life they want to live. The youth practitioner or trusted adult role here is therefore key in building positive relationships and providing support and challenge to young people to become the very best versions of themselves.

The NYA Youth Work Curriculum (2020) highlights that young people and the four cornerstones of youth work are at the heart of good youth work. It suggests areas that youth work should support young people in exploring (e.g. healthy and safe relationships, creativity and fun, global citizenship) but by no means mandates youth work to cover these topics. The diagram on the right displays how youth work fits around the young person and within wider subject matter, policy and frameworks (both nationally and internationally).



Recent research (YouthLink Scotland *et al.*, 2020) undertaken on the impact of community-based universal youth work in Edinburgh highlighted the positive impact youth work has had on young people's skills, confidence, wellbeing and access to opportunities. Some of the key findings included:

- ◆ 74% of young people said that youth work had provided them with skills for life
- ◆ 4 in 5 young people benefited from improved confidence
- ◆ 71% of young people said youth work helped them develop and maintain positive relationships
- ◆ Almost a third of young people credited youth work with helping them vocalise thoughts and emotions

This further reinforces the value of youth work on the lives of young people and demonstrates why community-based youth work needs continued investment for prevention and early intervention.

## **2.3 What does the current offer of youth provision look like?**

### **2.3.1 The National Landscape**

YMCA England and Wales (2020) reported that in 2010/11, an estimated £1.36bn in real terms was spent on youth services in England by local authorities. Youth services accounted for 13% of the total local spend on all children and young people's services.

However, by 2018/19, real terms spending by local authorities had fallen to £398m, a 71% reduction since 2010/11. The picture in the West Midlands is worse than that nationally, where youth services have seen an 80% reduction in spending since 2010/11. Interestingly, the YMCA note that the reduction in spending on youth services is not in keeping with other trends in spending on children and young people's services. In 2010/11, local authorities in England were spending £10.61bn a year on children and young people's services, but by 2018/19 this had increased by 7% to £11.32bn per year. Their analysis of spending found that most of the spending was on addressing the urgent needs of young people in crisis. They conclude that across England in 2018/19, only 4% of the children and young people's budget is spent on youth services, compared to 11% in 2010/11.



The data for reduction in funding was found by the YMCA by analysing local authority submissions of spending on children and young people’s services to the Department for Education. In terms of specific data on how many young people are actually accessing youth provision in England, UK Youth report they currently support a network of 7,000 organisations who work with approximately 4 million young people.

### National Population comparison

The population of young people aged between 8 and 18 in East Staffordshire (13%) is greater than both Staffordshire (12.1%) and England (12.8%) as a whole.

Area	Total Population (all ages)	Total Population (aged 8-18)	% of population aged 8-18
East Staffordshire	119,754	15,582	13.0%
Staffordshire	879,560	106,437	12.1%
England	56,286,961	7,217,002	12.8%

**Source:** Staffordshire County Council Strategy Team (2020), ONS Mid-year population estimates for resident populations

### 2.3.2 The Staffordshire Landscape

In 2014, Staffordshire County Council made the decision to close their in-house youth service. The youth service budget was identified as £5.9 million per annum, out of a total investment by the County Council in youth related services of £275.5 million. This overall figure includes all aspects of children’s social care as well as youth offending services. This was 2% of the overall budget for youth related services, lower than the average for England.

At the time, SCVYS sought to mitigate the adverse impact of the closure by supporting both the young people and the youth organisations that were affected. Through an additional contract worth £181,000 (as part of the Achieving Excellent Outcomes for Young People transformation), SCVYS provided infrastructure support for voluntary groups to accommodate new participants and signpost young people to local provision. This additional resource also included retaining some Youth Voice programmes as well as the annual Bremen Friendship Camp which had been running for over 50 years in partnership with the German War Graves Commission. The

County Council also provided a one off investment of £400,000 for youth organisations to bid in, to increase voluntary sector youth service provision.

### Local Population comparison by Age Range

The table below highlights the number of young people at each age between 8-18 in East Staffordshire, Staffordshire and England. The percentage is the proportion of each age as part of the youth population (8-18) as a whole (e.g. 9.7% of young people aged between 8 and 18 are aged 8). The percentages show that East Staffordshire has similar proportions of young people to Staffordshire and England, with slightly larger variations at ages 9, 12, and 17.

Area & Age	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
<b>East Staffordshire</b>	1,508 (9.7%)	1,509 (9.7%)	1,477 (9.5%)	1,469 (9.4%)	1,383 (8.9%)	1,410 (9.0%)	1,392 (8.9%)	1,400 (9.0%)	1,339 (8.6%)	1,388 (8.9%)	1,307 (8.4%)
<b>Staffordshire</b>	10,102 (9.5%)	9,936 (9.3%)	9,981 (9.4%)	10,191 (9.6%)	9,847 (9.3%)	9,744 (9.2%)	9,582 (9.0%)	9,597 (9.0%)	9,191 (8.6%)	9,001 (8.5%)	9,265 (8.7%)
<b>England</b>	712,204 (9.9%)	700,200 (9.7%)	689,733 (9.6%)	695,753 (9.6%)	673,789 (9.3%)	660,928 (9.2%)	634,043 (8.8%)	624,590 (8.7%)	607,496 (8.4%)	599,393 (8.3%)	618,873 (8.6%)

**Source:** Staffordshire County Council Strategy Team (2020), ONS Mid-year population estimates for resident populations

The youth service reported it was supporting over 18,000 young people at the time of its closure in 2015. Approximately 350 jobs were lost, of which over 50 were full time or substantive posts, and the remainder part time sessional staff.

Staffordshire County Council is a key stakeholder with regard to local youth provision. Firstly because of the statutory duty around sufficiency and secondly because of the critical role universal, prevention and early help services play in reducing demand into higher tier targeted and complex needs services. Since 2010, the Council has been on a transformational journey from service delivery to commissioning out, and more recently taking further steps to encourage individuals, families, communities, voluntary organisations, parish councils and the private sector to take more responsibility and ownership of their own health and well being, supporting those around them and looking after their environment.

This Place Based approach has community support as a core principle, and seeks to work collaboratively with all partners to identify and problem-solve shared local needs at the earliest opportunity. There is a growing bank of good practice examples emerging which has only increased during Covid-19. Places to go, things to do and trusted people to talk to are integral to this approach for everyone, including young people.

Following the development of an Early Help Performance Framework, data and local intelligence are aligned to identify key priorities for local action and investment of resources. If youth provision were to be identified as one of these priorities, then the County Council would be an active partner in supporting local solutions, and can help scale up countywide approaches where consistent themes emerge.

The Council has also indicated it will use insights from this report in shaping the delivery of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme funded by the Department for Education, that they are developing locally ready for Easter 2021.

### 2.3.3 Youth Workforce Investment v Young People Population Ratio

To understand the monetary value of running a youth service (statutory or otherwise) we have calculated the number of youth workers and the total salary required. Unite (2013) suggest that to be sufficiently covered, there should be one full-time qualified youth worker per 400 young people aged 13-19. As detailed in the table below, this would equate to 24 youth workers (rounded to the next whole number). The minimum cost below has been calculated using £25,313 as a minimum pay for professional youth worker, as per the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) Youth and Community Workers Pay Agreement (2020).

	No. of Young People aged 13-19	Youth worker FTE requirement	Minimum Cost on basic rate pay
<b>Staffordshire</b>	65,212	163.03 (164)	£4,151,332
<b>East Staffordshire</b>	9,277	23.19 (24)	£607,512

The NYA also provides a rationale for measuring the sufficiency of youth services. They suggest that there should be two full-time equivalent youth workers per secondary school catchment area. The NYA suggestion states that the youth workers should be located in the catchment areas, along with a team of four youth support workers and trained volunteers. The table below outlines the sufficiency calculations for East Staffordshire and Staffordshire. We have also included middle schools in this calculation due to the nature of the education tiers in Staffordshire. The professional youth worker salary has been calculated at the minimum of £25,313 and the youth support worker salary calculated at £19,308 (JNC, 2020). These have been combined to calculate the minimum cost on basic rate pay.

	<b>No. of Secondary and Middle schools</b>	<b>Professional Youth worker FTE requirement</b>	<b>Youth Support worker requirement</b>	<b>Minimum Cost on basic rate pay</b>
<b>Staffordshire</b>	70	140	280	£8,950,060
<b>East Staffordshire</b>	12	24	48	£1,534,296

The table below displays the number of young people who regularly participate in provision and the roles that support this to happen within SCVYS member organisations from the most recent Census (2020). These numbers cover the 37 organisations and their 136 units of provision delivering in East Staffordshire.

	<b>No. of Young people aged 8-12</b>	<b>No. of Young people aged 13-19</b>	<b>Active volunteer roles supporting</b>	<b>Paid adult roles supporting</b>
<b>East Staffordshire</b>	2,729	966	1,530	174

It is important to recognise that whilst some sources (Unite, 2013) suggest there is a minimum number of youth workers required to provide a sufficient youth offer, the current offer is sufficient for those currently attending. This is for a variety of reasons as detailed later in this report. When considering a new youth offer for the future, what is already available should be recognised as working for those young people who are attending.

It must be noted that the SCVYS Census does not collect the number of volunteers but the number of active volunteer roles. An individual volunteer may in fact hold several roles within their organisation (or even across multiple organisations). The paid roles again reflect the breadth of the SCVYS membership and paid adult roles tend to be part time or sessional when employed in a Youth Work setting, or are employed within a specific project or targeted service and so may not be working in a universal setting. It should still be recognised that these numbers are much higher than the recommended minimum number of youth workers and youth support workers, however the number of young people aged 13-19 accessing provision is only 10% of the population.

Whilst not all of these adults will be trained in youth work, some have an accredited qualification, or have attended other youth work skills training. It suggests that the lack of engagement is not down to the number of adults available, but what they are able to offer, where provision is delivered, or what the young people expect from a youth group. It should also be noted that many of the existing paid roles within the sector will be funded for the short

term and may also disproportionately relate to more targeted interventions around mental health, anti-social behaviour, homelessness, alternative education, etc. therefore not providing open access universal youth provision.

In 2016, the investment into SCVYS to build capacity within the local youth sector was pooled with £400,000 of funding designed to capacity build the wider voluntary sector particularly around community managed libraries, country parks and what is now the Supportive Communities agenda around vulnerable adults. Using expertise and learning from the Achieving Excellent Outcomes for Young People contract, SCVYS remit was broadened to cover the Children's Transformation agenda, whilst sustaining the positive direction of travel achieved to date around voluntary sector youth services. In 2019, this investment decreased further with an annual budget of £242,000 allocated to undertake the Children, Young People and Families transformational work streams.

During the four-year period spanning August 2016 to September 2020, voluntary sector providers in Staffordshire have secured just over £11.526m (av. £2.88m per annum) in external funding to enable them to continue delivery, start new provision or provide targeted support for the benefit of children and young people across the County. Firstly, this significantly increases an already very impressive Social Return on Investment by SCVYS, (£11.90 funding return for every £1 invested / 13 pence per regular participant in member group activity) but more importantly means that many children and young people in Staffordshire have opportunities for personal and social development that otherwise may not have been available, thereby somewhat mitigating the adverse impact of the local authority youth service closure in 2015.

However, this should not be viewed as any kind of utopia. Some young people now do not have access to provision which is local, accessible and appealing to their personal choice, and this is particularly true in some of the areas that need it most. Whilst voluntary sector youth services have gone over and above anything that could have been expected of them especially taking into account the level of resource available, they were never going to be able to fully replace a £6 million youth service.

The short-term nature of grant funding means projects come and go, exacerbated by a focus on funder-led priorities rather than fully understanding and responding to the needs of young people. Voluntary-led activities have been unable to meet all of the complex needs of some young people who attend, and access to training and progression pathways has also been severely impacted by reduced investment. Youth Work is a profession, with a unique set of skills and methodology, which needs acknowledging. This is evidenced by a rise in "trusted adult" roles or those able to engage or re-engage "hard-to-reach" young people which are

increasingly being recruited across education, social care, health and criminal justice support services.

## **2.4 A Youth Offer for the Future**

The biggest consideration to developing a new youth offer in the future is investment, whether this is local, regional or national. Without further investment into developing new provision, or supporting organisations to manage an adaptation to their current offer, there runs the risk that the young people currently accessing provision will become disengaged.

There is also a place for a refreshed policy direction in the youth arena. As seen over the Covid-19 pandemic, youth work has become recognised as essential work and a service that has demonstrable benefits for young people. Continued support through policy and legislation would reinforce these benefits and encourage a move to find ways to engage with those young people outside of the current offer. This report highlights three key areas that should be considered when investing in a youth offer for the future; policy, local youth partnerships and workforce development.

### **2.4.1 Government Policy & Investment**

One of the key missing links in framing a youth offer which is fit for the future is vision and leadership at national Government policy level. This needs to include clear messages on the inherent value of young people and the important role they play in their communities in particular, as well as across society in general. SCVYS research over the last 12 months has consistently revealed that young people often do not feel part of their local community, and indeed many communities feel disconnected from decision makers (SCVYS, 2019 and 2020).

Without this overarching policy, the youth sector is left coping with a range of short-term, reactive responses to single youth-related issues such as serious violence, unemployment, mental health, social action and voice.

Continual one-year funding settlements with local councils also undermines local partners attempts to take a longer-term approach to supporting young people. A redesign of the National Citizen Service Scheme is also being piloted to focus on those young people who need it most and to provide a gateway into ongoing local support services. Step Up To Serve, the organisation created to host the #iwill campaign, will as planned close at the end of 2020. #iwill

however plans to continue to 2025 with broadened impact goals, increased youth leadership and a new delivery model involving host organisations responsible for different functions.

### **2.4.2 Local Youth Partnerships (LYPs)**

The details behind investment into LYPs, promised over 12 months ago, have failed to materialise into anything concrete, with tantalising snippets around workforce development, quality assurance and impact, youth voice, funding for open access youth work as well as capital spend, and crucially building on local assets and strengths where they remain.

With 32 member organisations having initially expressing their interest, SCVYS have been supportive of those who have wanted to lead on the creation of local youth alliances in anticipation of this programme of work beginning. However, following a recent regional update further details on the development of LYPs have been delayed due to the funding forming part of the national Comprehensive Spending Review, spanning the coming 12 months from April 2021. Unfortunately this means that funds are unlikely to be available before April 2021 (at the earliest) and are likely to form part of the Build Back Better programme to "level up" communities from the Midlands and the North with those in the South. The 65 areas will be preselected by the Government to be able to apply for this funding, and we don't yet know whether Staffordshire will be one of those areas chosen. In terms of East Staffordshire, a focused youth alliance could emerge from the East Staffs Connected group developed by BACT, but only when the government's spending plans around youth becomes clear.

### **2.4.3 Workforce Development**

Some funding has been allocated to improve and strengthen accredited pathways for youth workers including apprenticeships, however due to the disinvestment in youth services over the last 10 years, there is a huge training and development deficit to address if we want a consistent quality offer across the country.

A new Youth Work Curriculum (NYA, 2020) has been published and broadly welcomed as helpful, particularly to those outside the profession who cannot always recognise the benefits it brings. This is underpinned by a revised and updated version of the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work.

Finally, it has been encouraging to see that a group of ten national funding bodies have come together with national, regional and local providers to better understand the value of good local

youth infrastructure support. The outcomes of the insight and learning community will be published in 2021, which needs to address the funding of critical support functions which make the youth sector safer, stronger and more sustainable in the long term.

## **2.5 The Impact of Covid-19**

This section will look at what has been reported nationally on the impact of Covid to date, on both young people and the organisations that support them.

### **2.5.1 Impact on Young People**

In general terms the impact of Covid-19 on young people has been disproportionate to older members of society. They are more than twice as likely to have lost their job and disruption to their educational journey has been significant. Those getting results in 2020 based on centre-assessments are always likely to have an asterisk against their achievements. Other vocational pathways have also been impacted as funding for opportunities has become a greater challenge. Young people at university are facing incredible challenges around isolation in halls and other shared accommodation and online learning, often in a place that is new to them many miles from family and friends. Resilience is undoubtedly being tested.

Some schools have reported increases in depressive symptoms and suicidal thoughts, higher levels of anxiety and also eating disorders (BBC News, 2020).

### **2.5.2 Impact on Youth Organisations**

Youth support services have responded in various ways including embracing digital technology to sustain engagement and provision, stopping their usual services and focusing on Covid-19 responses or closing up whilst maintaining contact with existing beneficiaries via more traditional communication routes.

In terms of digital engagement there have been mixed results. Anecdotal evidence from national networking forums estimates that only 1 in 3 young people continue to engage regularly. The recognition of youth services as critical, enabling them to deliver face-to-face activities even when local areas are in the Very High (Tier 3) local lockdown arrangements are in place subject to being delivered in a Covid-safe manner, has been welcomed by the sector.

There do not appear to be any significantly new issues created for young people. For some the pressure point has been released for a period of time during Covid-19, for example when school has been the main location of challenge for a young person, whereas for others, for example those who find their home environment difficult, their issues have been significantly enhanced.



In the longer term all of this is likely to reaffirm root causes such as poverty, inequality and exclusion resulting in a widening of the gap between those at the top and bottom of the scale. Digital is a classic example of this, where those with the accessibility and equipment have been largely able to sustain their learning via virtual means, whereas those in households without internet or the required number of devices end up missing out and falling further behind.

The last 9 months have been challenging for everyone, and the youth sector is no exception. Although the SCVYS Census doesn't reveal a significant drop in participation numbers, it should be remembered that the period it covers is the twelve months to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, and therefore next year's census will be more revealing. Some local youth organisations have already closed, and more are facing that reality as the impact of the pandemic is sustained over coming months. The main causes include a lack of funding, venues which are no longer available such as schools or church halls, the vulnerability of volunteers and just the sheer practical workload involved in ensuring that provision is run safely and compliantly.

The few positives to come from this period include the embracing of digital and technology, saving the time and cost of travel to centrally held meetings, events and conferences. This has also had wider environmental benefit, and therefore needs to be sustained wherever and whenever it is relevant and achievable to do so. Digital support of young people can never completely replace face-to-face engagement, but it is a useful additional tool that has developed rapidly in light of the period of lockdown.

Another positive has been the growing recognition that it is the local voluntary sector who have really stepped up to the plate at this time of great challenge, rather than the national and regional providers who have either reduced support services or stopped altogether. Local councils recognise that without this hyper local contribution the pressures on them would be even greater than they currently are, and collaboration has been more effective and efficient during a time where normal protocols have been speeded up. Although, the crux will come when difficult future funding decisions are being made, and whether this is remembered and taken into account in where investment goes and how much is invested.

As with any period of disruption to the norm, now is a good time to evaluate and act upon any identified opportunities to positively improve and transform the way we work together. This covers both cross-sector working and also involving and including communities, ensuring they are meaningfully engaged in creating and embedding solutions to the problems they identify as priorities.

## 3. Evaluation Methods

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### 3.1 Research Aims

The scope for this research is framed around three key aims:

- ◆ To understand how youth provision has evolved across a variety of settings
- ◆ To determine whether the current offer of youth provision is fit for purpose
- ◆ To identify what a future youth offer might look like for young people aged 8-18 (extending to 25 for those with learning disabilities) in East Staffordshire

### 3.2 Research Approach & Collection

In an attempt to meet the above research aims and objectives, SCVYS proceeded in adopting multiple qualitative elements, as highlighted below between July and October 2020.

#### 3.2.1 Desktop Review

A brief analysis of secondary research was undertaken in the form of local and national reports, articles and data which would provide a broader context to the research aims and objectives. This would also assist in highlighting any similarities or differences within the subsequent findings and analysis section.

#### 3.2.2 Online Youth Survey

An online survey was produced via the SCVYS website and the link promoted to schools, colleges and youth organisations in East Staffordshire. The survey was intended to reach any young person across the borough, whether they attended a youth group or not. This was supplemented by the use of targeted paid for adverts on social media to try and capture the views of young people of a specific age range but who may not attend SCVYS member groups. A copy of the survey questions can be seen in **Appendix 1**.

#### 3.2.3 Qualitative Semi-structured Interviews

SCVYS contacted a number of strategic youth practitioners and leaders to arrange virtual interviews using Zoom. Interviewees comprised representatives from:

- Burton Youth for Christ
- Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust

- Space\* Youth Services (Devon)
- Staffordshire Scouts
- Staffordshire Youth Union
- UK Youth
- Urban Saints
- Youth Focus West Midlands

The questions posed during the interviews can be found in **Appendix 2**. Participants were emailed the questions in advance to allow for a degree of preparation and familiarisation with the research scope.

The three semi-structured interviews conducted with young people from Staffordshire Youth Union were aimed at gaining specific insight into the membership of uniformed organisations and participation in the National Citizens Service (NCS) programme. The young people interviewed were targeted to participate due to their engagement in both NCS and uniformed organisations. The questions asked at these interviews can be seen in **Appendix 3**.

### 3.2.4 Information requests

As the research progressed SCVYS sought to gain further insight from specific organisations who have explored digital platforms to facilitate young people's collective engagement in online gaming, supported by a youth leader. This led to information requests being made to Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Youth Service and Gaming Potion Re-mastered, a local gaming group based in the Moorlands.

SCVYS were also made aware of research conducted by Mel Blanch, a participation youth worker from MAP in Norfolk. The dissertation researched online platforms for delivering youth work and learning from this has been included in our research.

## 3.3 Data Analysis

**Quantitative Analysis** - Data from the survey was downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet to enable the respondent's answers to closed ended questions, to be quantified and presented.

**Qualitative Analysis** - Responses to open ended questions would be analysed from the survey via spreadsheet, with responses to the semi-structured interview questions being analysed via facilitator's notes and transcription of the meeting recordings taken on the day. This would enable common themes to be drawn and categorised, supplemented by any pertinent quotes to elaborate on any particular themes.

## 4. The Current Landscape

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In this part, the particular views on current youth provision are explored drawing on the experiences and input of youth work practitioners, youth leaders and young people themselves. Geographically, we have sought to gain a breadth in perspective from individuals operating at a local, regional and national level. Findings and themes will be presented in alignment with the research objectives previously highlighted.

### 4.1 National landscape observations (Aim 2: Obj.1)

As stated earlier, YMCA (2020) reported that by 2018/19, real terms spending by local authorities on youth services had fallen to £398m, a 71% reduction (80% in the West Midlands) since 2010/11.

However, the resurgence of the profile of youth work at a national level has emerged due to the work around serious youth violence. A lack of good youth services has been highlighted as one of the factors contributing to an increase in serious youth violence and knife crime and Government and local bodies are seeking ways to reduce these offending rates.

Nationally, UK Youth supports 7,000 organisations who work with approximately 4 million young people. It should be noted that whilst this seems a high proportion of young people nationally, the nature of the UK Youth membership network will mean that some young people are double counted.

In the West Midlands region, five local authorities maintain an in-house youth service; seven have commissioned this to an external organisation and two have a hybrid approach of in-house and externally commissioned.

The Positive for Youth policy announcement in 2010 promised a cross-government approach to youth policy. It set out a vision where everyone had a part to play in improving outcomes for young people and their families, especially the most vulnerable, and in doing so strengthening communities. Some targeted investment followed around youth voice, National Citizen Service, capital investment and national help lines/website support, however this was a time when resources were reducing across all public services.

The last update on progress from Positive for Youth was in 2013, and so the need for a new shared vision with sustained investment into all-year-round support for local young people through those best placed and best equipped to provide that is overdue.

The Youth Investment Fund is a Conservative Party manifesto policy from the December 2019 General Election, promising £500 million to support youth provision across the UK. Its aim is to support the building of 60 new youth centres, the refurbishment of 360 more and provide 100 mobile youth centres for harder to reach areas. The fund will also support the provision and coordination of high-quality services for young people, and an investment in the youth workforce.

The fund has yet to materialise and in November 2020, a coalition of youth organisations (including SCVYS) penned an open letter to the Government requesting the fund is made available as the coalition claim as many as two thirds of youth organisations will not be able to continue supporting young people in the next quarter, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The full letter and signatories can be read [here](#).

## 4.2 Local landscape observations (Aim 2: Obj.2)

SCVYS collates an annual census of its membership network. The table below displays profiling data from VCSE organisations that work with children and young people aged 0-25 across Staffordshire. The Census began including data for the 0-5 age range from 2016/17\* due to the widening of its remit to include young children as commissioned by Staffordshire County Council.

As detailed below, the number of member organisations and regular attendance of young people in positive activities and support, has increased year on year since the in-house Staffordshire County Council youth service closed.

<b>Staffordshire wide</b>	<b>15/16</b>	<b>16/17*</b>	<b>17/18</b>	<b>18/19</b>	<b>19/20</b>
<b>Member Organisations</b>	141	143	169	199	212
<b>Member Units</b>	836	859	920	954	986
<b>CYP Regular Attendance</b>	21,769	27,658	28,836	31,494	32,236
<b>Active Volunteer Roles</b>	7,970	9,242	9,874	10,215	9,230
<b>Paid Roles</b>	370	613	922	840	606

The most recent census was collated during the summer of 2020. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there have been changes to delivery and in some cases, due to staff being unavailable due to furlough or closure of provision; the data set is not as comprehensive as it has been in previous years.

#### 4.2.1 East Staffordshire

In East Staffordshire, there are currently 37 organisations (offering a total of 136 units of provision) in the SCVYS membership network delivering regular activities or specialist support to 3,695 young people (aged 8-19) each week. This equates to 22% of the total population of young people in East Staffordshire (16,623). In addition, 1,530 active volunteer roles and 174 paid staff support the delivery of this provision for young people, with the majority of paid staff being part time or sessional workers.

#### No's of CYP in East Staffordshire accessing VCSE provision and support by Age & Type of Provision for the period 2019/20

Type of Provision	Age Range 8-10	Age Range 11-12	Age Range 13-19	Age Range 20-25	Total by Type
Alternative Education (Eagle's Nest)	0	4	38		42
CAMHS (non statutory commissioned)	87	96	149		332
Faith based clubs	120	98	170	8	396
Family Support	6	3	1	13	23
Homelessness / Crisis Support	3	5	25	56	89
Junior Independent Youth Club	71	62			133
Senior Independent Youth Club			83	40	123
School Holiday provision	75	5	4		84
Special Needs and Disabilities	24	14	30	2	70
Sport / Exercise	559	380	66	37	1,042
Uniformed	797	290	366	6	1,459
Other	24	6	34	11	75
<b>Total by age range</b>	<b>1,766</b>	<b>963</b>	<b>966</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>3,868</b>

Organisations identified that 4.6% of the above attendance were young people with a disability.

The data above comes with the caveat that these are the organisations that are known to SCVYS in their membership network. This may not be the full picture of youth provision in East Staffordshire, but gives a relatively broad understanding of what is available to and accessed by young people.

## 4.2.2 Current challenges faced by Young People

In terms of the current landscape it is important to re-emphasise the challenges being experienced by young people, as cited by interview participants.

### ◆ **Mental Health & Anxiety linked to isolation**

All interview respondents made some reference to young people experiencing higher degrees of anxiety linked to isolation, either through not being able to access safe spaces or feeling they can't express themselves alongside a stigma of 'what's wrong with me' and 'why am I feeling like this'. This can also impact on wider family cohesion through a fear of further lockdowns and increased parental stress within the home environment. Furthermore, friendships and relationships may have changed thereby inhibiting social development and sexual exploration.

### ◆ **Education, Learning & Employment progression**

The second most featured comment related to uncertainty on education, learning and employment. How can young people make decisions for their future with the level of ambiguity around exams and having to learn virtually for the medium to long term which will impact upon attainment and achievement as a result of digital exclusion for some (exacerbated further by parental expectations around academic achievement). Accessing university placements and financially supporting themselves will be a daunting prospect. From the employment perspective competition for apprenticeships and jobs will be high, whilst young people who are already employed are more likely to be disproportionately affected by being furloughed.

### ◆ **Self Image, Identity and Community**

A recurring theme from previous research, participants highlighted that young people continue to question their own image and identity whilst struggling to see how they belong to part of a community. This can be affected further by social media as many young people live their lives in full view of an online audience to seek that acceptance and validation amongst their peers, which can have a negative impact. Claire Mysko, an award winning author on body image highlighted: "While social media is not the cause of low self-esteem, it has all the right elements to contribute to it as it creates an environment where disordered thoughts and behaviours really thrive."(Mysko, 2020)

### 4.3 Current youth provision (Aim 2: Obj.3)

The following findings outline the views of young people and practitioners around the current youth offer available. The survey findings offer insight from young people who are currently engaged; are not currently engaged but have been in the past and; have never been engaged in youth provision. The interview findings offer the views of practitioners from a range of backgrounds such as grassroots delivery, governance or infrastructure support.

#### 4.3.1 Youth Survey - Respondents Demographic

The online survey elicited responses from 155 young people. The demographic composition of these were as follows:

Demographic	Responses
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>54% of respondents were 13-19 years old</li> <li>30% of respondents were under 10</li> <li>6% of respondents were aged 11-12</li> </ul>
School / College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>57% attended a secondary school</li> <li>31% attended a primary school</li> <li>9% attended a college</li> <li>1% attended a middle school</li> <li>1% were homeschooled</li> <li>1% did not attend school/college or had passed school leaving age</li> </ul>
Where respondents live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>68% of respondents lived in urban wards</li> <li>21% lived in rural wards</li> <li>11% did not respond, or lived outside of the district (but attended a school or college within East Staffordshire)</li> </ul>
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>89% did not consider themselves to have a disability</li> <li>6% considered themselves to have a disability</li> <li>5% preferred not to say</li> </ul>
Ethnic Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>75% were White (with 97% of these being of English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish background).</li> <li>19% Asian/Asian British (with 87% being of Pakistani background, 3% Indian and 10% from Afghani and Pashtun backgrounds)</li> <li>3% of respondents were Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, 100% of these identifying as African.</li> </ul>

#### 4.3.2 Youth Survey Findings - Young People who currently attend a youth group

The findings below represent the views of young people who stated that they attended a youth group in the borough:



## Question

## Responses

Do you currently attend a youth group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>31% of respondents currently attend a youth group</li></ul>
Which youth group(s) do you attend?	<p>Of those who currently attended a youth group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>54% attended a sports based group</li><li>23% attended a uniformed youth organisation</li><li>19% attended a faith based youth group</li><li>17% attended a music, dance or arts based group</li><li>10% attended a youth club</li></ul>
Why did you choose to attend that group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>46% of young people attended their youth group because they enjoyed it or were interested in it.</li><li>19% joined a group to improve their fitness</li><li>13% attended due to their faith</li><li>10% attended to improve their fitness</li><li>8% attended because their friends attended</li><li>6% said they attended due to their parents</li><li>6% said they attended as it was something to do</li></ul>
Does your group meet your view of what a youth group should offer?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>85% of those who attend a youth group said it met their view of what a youth group should offer</li><li>15% said it did not meet their view of what a youth group should offer.</li></ul>
What do you think youth groups should offer?	<p>Of those who currently attend a youth group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>35% said youth groups should offer something fun</li><li>21% said they should offer support and development</li><li>13% said they should offer a variety of activities</li><li>8% said they should encourage making friends</li><li>6% said they should be safe spaces</li><li>4% said they should offer good workers</li><li>4% said they should offer food and drink</li><li>33% either didn't provide an answer or offered other suggestions such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Days out</li><li>Good quality facilities</li><li>Activities at a reasonable price</li><li>Offer awards</li><li>Offer learning/education activities</li></ul></li></ul>
Do you have an input into what activities are offered at your group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>67% of those engaged said they have an input into the activities offered at their youth group.</li><li>33% said they didn't input into the activities offered.</li></ul>
Can you give any examples where you have influenced the activities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Games to play</li><li>Painting and sketching</li><li>Deciding which films to create</li><li>Always input - someone has asked for more sports and games</li></ul>

### 4.3.3 Practitioner Views on Current Provision

This section highlights the particular views on current youth provision articulated as part of practitioner interviews. These have been categorised into themes and in order of prominence.

#### ◆ **Disinvestment in provision**

All practitioners interviewed overwhelmingly highlighted that gaps in provision exist as a result of significant disinvestment in open access youth provision over recent years. Many local authorities have shifted their focus to funding higher tier services but to the detriment of a more preventative universal offer.

However, it was felt the impact of these cuts have been mitigated against in some areas, particularly where there is a strong and vibrant voluntary sector supported by good local partnerships with statutory and other sectors who have a role in creating environments where young people can thrive. Areas where innovation and strong collaborative approaches were working well included Coventry and Devon – as detailed later in the report.

Mental health support for young people was also cited as being a particular area where investment has been severely lacking when compared to the rising need. Despite this VCSE providers YESS and Burton Mind have recently secured external funding to offer some additional remote support and counselling to young people during the pandemic.

#### ◆ **No holistic strategy for young people**

There is no holistic strategy for our young people (at either a local or national level) and a minimal sense of value placed in them. Better collaboration is needed between different Government departments when developing policy and investing resources e.g. DfE Youth Endowment Fund, Home Office Serious youth violence funding, DWP funding for Youth Hubs. These nationally created silos then manifest locally with funds being made to fit rather than providing challenge for a more holistic approach that invests in supporting young people needs whatever they are.

#### ◆ **Lack of dedicated spaces**

Some felt there was a distinct lack of dedicated open access facilities for young people, which are within walking distance of where young people live, thereby restricting access to attend a youth group for those who were unable to travel lengthy distances.

#### ◆ Risk of authoritative delivery

Some participants highlighted that there were risks that provision for young people can be authoritative in its delivery and ethos rather than having a more empowering and participative approach as part of an equitable relationship. This could be linked to leaders having minimal knowledge of youth work principles or having no training which can mean some are ill equipped to deliver good youth work or are unable to deal with the more complex issues young people might seek support with.

#### 4.3.4 Uniformed provision

As per the recent SCVYS Census, the largest attendance recorded was against uniformed provision in the borough, standing at 38%. The appeal of uniformed provision such as scouting and guiding was explored further when interviewing representatives of SYU, who highlighted what appealed to them:

- ◆ A greater sense of community and belonging than other types of provision
- ◆ Young people with a range of skills through earning badges and flexibly caters for the different abilities of young people
- ◆ A positive recognition of achievement for CVs and job or university applications i.e. the demonstration of commitment
- ◆ Internal progression opportunities for young people e.g. they can go on to become unit leaders
- ◆ A degree of standardisation in terms of a programme of development activity so young people know what to expect
- ◆ A variety of different and challenging activities e.g. camps
- ◆ Units are often very local to where you live

#### 4.3.5 National Citizens Service (NCS) Programme

Similarly, those interviewed highlighted that there is a place for shorter term programmes such as NCS which have proven successful in engaging young people aged 15-17 in meaningful and positive activity during the summer. Specific benefits stated were:

- ◆ NCS provides activities and new experiences during the summer holidays
- ◆ Young people can give something back to a local project or community
- ◆ It is inexpensive to take part

- ◆ Something you can do with your friends, whilst enabling you to form new friendships
- ◆ Certificates are provided at the end to demonstrate a young person has completed two weeks of volunteering.

Locally for example, in 2018/19 BACT supported 281 young people to access and complete the NCS programme. This equated to young people contributing 17,630 hours of volunteering in their local community, whilst raising £5,562 for social action projects and charities.

#### 4.4 The Role of Youth Work and those who do it (Aim 2: Obj.4)

All interview respondents felt that Youth Work should be built on the basic foundations of:

**Somewhere Safe to Go**

**Something Positive to Do**

**Someone to Talk to**

Youth leaders should be flexible in where they interact and interface with young people i.e. go to where the young people are. In modern society, with technology and social media, young people are becoming more attracted to a 'Wi-Fi and Dry' approach. Chains such as McDonalds or outside supermarkets for example are locations that are consistent with the appeal for young people to socialise, but still stay connected virtually.

Youth work has the freedom and adaptability to change as young people's needs change and their lives evolve. As one participant highlights:

**"Young people are not a homogenous whole - there are clear distinctions of where young people are in their development pathways i.e. across age or transition points of adolescence"**

Youth work has no fixed curriculum and is not constrained by legislative thresholds or outcomes unlike other services or professions and it should therefore be constantly adapting. To clarify, the new NYA Youth Work Curriculum is not mandatory but provides a framework and reference tool for those involved in youth work practice. The key factors on the role of youth work as highlighted via the practitioner interviews was to:

- ◆ Create safe spaces for young people to explore their views and test out their thinking
- ◆ Offer a range and diversity of provision that follows the needs of young people and puts them at the heart.
- ◆ Create a sense of belonging in young people i.e. this might be linked to a particular interest they have or by their wider community.

- ◆ Celebrate the achievements of young people and show them they have value, worth and can affect change in a positive way.
- ◆ Provide a trusted non-judgemental relationship with a young person and ensure they are treated as an equal.
- ◆ Advocate for a young people's rights, needs and wants and provide opportunities for them to have a meaningful voice.
- ◆ Support a young person's developmental journey and instil hope and belief in themselves to build self esteem/confidence.
- ◆ Nurture the softer more creative skills of young people which helps to differentiate with school and academic achievement.

#### 4.4.1 Youth Survey Findings - The Youth Leader & Young Person relationship

Young people currently engaged in youth provision were asked the following questions about youth workers and the relationships with their leaders.

Question	Responses
How would you describe your relationship with the leaders at your group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 79% of young people said they had a good or very good relationship with their leaders.</li> <li>▪ 15% said they were polite/kind</li> <li>▪ 4% said easy to talk to</li> <li>▪ 2% said they were supportive</li> <li>▪ 2% did not provide an answer</li> </ul>
What do you think a youth worker is?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 44% of young people identified a youth worker as someone who works with CYP</li> <li>▪ 21% believed that a youth worker is a young person.</li> <li>▪ 10% thought a youth worker is someone who offers support, advice or teaching</li> <li>▪ 8% believed a youth worker was faith based</li> <li>▪ 2% thought a youth worker was a volunteer</li> <li>▪ 2% thought a youth worker was someone who supported hobbies</li> </ul>
Do you think all leaders in a youth group should have a youth work qualification?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 54% of respondents think youth workers should have a qualification</li> <li>▪ 46% think they don't need one</li> </ul>
Why do you think this? (54% Yes)	<p>Of those that stated YES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 15% believe it is safer</li> <li>▪ 10% think it helps builds relationships</li> <li>▪ 10% think it improves the quality of work</li> <li>▪ 8% think it reflects the effort in creating and delivering a programme</li> </ul>

- 2% think it gives them experience
- 15% stated other examples or did not answer:
  - They want to complete a qualification
  - A qualification is seen as 'real'

Why do you think this? (46% No)

Of those that stated NO:

- 17% don't think a qualification is necessary
- 10% think that youth work comes with skills that cannot be taught
- 4% think it is for volunteers/not a job
- 4% think it is better to learn on the job
- 4% think it adds a level of authority
- 15% stated other examples or did not answer:
  - Everyone should be able to have a go at being a youth worker
  - They are not as educated

#### 4.4.2 Practitioner Views - The Youth Leader & Young Person relationship

The four common themes highlighted by interview participants relating to the characterisation of the Youth leader / Young person relationship revealed that it should be:

- ◆ Guided by the young person's choice to engage and is non adversarial - which can often feature in some interactions between adults and young people.
- ◆ Characterised by mutual respect that holds the young person as an equal and an openness that encourages them to vent when needed and without judgement.
- ◆ Non statutory in nature unlike the teacher/pupil relationship which is framed by a curriculum and mandatory engagement.
- ◆ Supporting young people to make their own decisions whilst encouraging them to experience the views and behaviours of others.

#### 4.4.3 Conclusion

The relationship with youth leaders is different to other dynamics young people may come across. Teachers and parents tend to have a relationship built on an authority over young people, whereas youth work encourages the power balance to be equal. Young people have the voluntary choice to participate in youth provision, meaning relationships are required and led by how the young person wants to interact.

## 4.5 Barriers to young people attending provision (Aim 2: Obj.5)

### 4.5.1 Youth Survey Findings - Young People who DIDN'T attend a youth group

The findings below represent the views of young people who stated they did not or no longer attend a youth group in the borough:

Question	Responses
Do you currently attend a youth group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 69% (107) stated they did not attend a youth group</li> </ul>
Why do you not currently attend a youth group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 35% were not interested in attending a youth group, or said they had no interests</li> <li>▪ 23% didn't know of any local to them</li> <li>▪ 10% said it was due to other time commitments</li> <li>▪ 9% said they can't find one they want</li> <li>▪ 4% said it was due to COVID-19 (both closing the group and through worries of catching the disease)</li> <li>▪ 3% said they meet their friends elsewhere</li> <li>▪ 2% can't attend because they are on a waiting list</li> <li>▪ 20% of respondents either did not provide an answer or stated other examples such as:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Attending sports clubs</li> <li>○ Feel that a youth club is 'babyish'</li> <li>○ The cost of attending</li> <li>○ Lack of facilities</li> <li>○ Being church based</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Have you attended a youth group in the past?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 75% had not attended a youth group in the past</li> <li>▪ 25% of respondents who weren't currently attending a youth group had attended one in the past.</li> </ul>
Which youth group did you attend?	<p>Of those who had attended a youth group in the past:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 48% attended a sports based group</li> <li>▪ 15% attended a uniformed youth organisation</li> <li>▪ 11% attended a faith based youth group</li> <li>▪ 11% attended a youth club</li> <li>▪ 19% either did not answer or stated other, incl:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A variety of clubs</li> <li>○ Tidying a garden (social action projects)</li> <li>○ Young carers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Why do you no longer attend this group?	<p>Of those who had attended a youth group in the past:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 19% no longer attend because the group stopped</li> <li>▪ 19% no longer attend because they lost interest</li> <li>▪ 11% said it was age related (either too old to attend, or was not targeted at their age)</li> <li>▪ 7% had moved out of the area</li> <li>▪ 7% did not have the time to continue</li> <li>▪ 4% did not get on with people at the group</li> <li>▪ 41% either did not answer or gave answers incl:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Leaders no longer able to attend</li> <li>○ Parents couldn't take them</li> <li>○ No longer a young carer</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

#### 4.5.2 Practitioner Interviews - Barriers to Young people not attending provision

The common barriers highlighted by interview participants included:

- ◆ **Accessibility and transport** - This was highlighted as a barrier to accessing provision, especially for those young people who can't afford transport costs or have no parental support to engage i.e. they may not have a vehicle.
- ◆ **Provision is not local enough** - Linked to the previous factor if provision isn't hyper local to where kids live and hangout, engagement becomes more difficult and hindered further by concerns about turf wars, gang rivalry and peer group cliques.
- ◆ **Friendship groups breaking down** - This can be a deterrent to young people returning to provision they may have previously attended. Also for those young people who might be autistic, it is common that they find it difficult to engage and maintain interactions with others.
- ◆ **General disinterest in activities outside of school** - This can be as a result of little or no encouragement to engage in positive activities by their parents or they just prefer to stay at home playing Xbox, albeit they could still be interacting with friends via this online gaming community.
- ◆ **Fear & Lack of Confidence** - Taking that first step into something new or different that can provide help and support is daunting for some. That might be walking into a centre, phoning up a helpline (and the stigma attached to that). Perceptions of "I'm not good enough" or embarrassment because the young person doesn't have the money to pay for the activity or they have a skewed perception of what it's about. Better information and relationships with schools and parents would help to reassure against many of these factors.
- ◆ **The 'Unclubables' & associated mistrust** - Some young people don't want to go to clubs or projects controlled by adults. There is a deep lying mistrust in systems, services or programmes that are perceived as being adult led. e.g. they might be suspicious of giving data such as their address on the first interaction.
- ◆ **Quality and continuity of provision** - Under resourced programmes often held in small spaces in run down venues is unappealing to young people. Provision should be consistent and of a minimum standard of certain quality. This has some reliance on having a skilled and adequate volunteer base alongside the resources for venue hire, insurance, activity equipment and volunteer expenses.



- ◆ **Lack of awareness of provision and the positive impacts** youth work can have amongst young people, parents and staff within schools. With this lack of awareness can come a skewed view of what is available, whether it complies with safeguarding legislation and who supports it to run. Young people are then not actively encouraged to give it a go.
- ◆ **Lack of choice or variety in provision** - If there's only Scouts/Guides or faith based groups available and that's not their 'bag' where do young people go? This can also be influenced by parental choice and where they feel is best for their child to attend.

### 4.5.3 Targeted programmes

The nature of outreach and detached youth work and 'going to where young people are' will naturally be more resource intensive. However, the use targeted programmes commissioned to specifically engage hard to reach young people or the 'unclubables' in certain localities, has seen some success in then integrating those young people into a wider universal offer.

For example, of the 984 unique young people that have been engaged with as part of the East Staffs Diversionary Activities programme to date, 38% have been classed as retained participants i.e. those who have attended 10 or more local activity sessions over a 4 month period throughout the project. Challenges that have been faced during the delivery of the programme included:

- Developing appropriate activities to suit the age range of participants
- Circulation of promotional material throughout the borough
- Suitable facilities to deliver the programmes
- Covid-19s impact on session cancellation – loss of engagement and re-engagement.

Some of these also resonate with the survey/interview findings in terms of a lack of dedicated spaces close to where young people live and awareness raising of provision.

### 4.5.4 Conclusion

The main barrier young people see to not attending youth provision is they have no interests, or there is nothing out there that interests them. There is also an argument that the 'hard-to-reach' young people that most services and authorities are keen to signpost to positive activity have an innate mistrust of adult-led provision (rightly or wrongly) and so are not being offered any provision that suits their needs and beliefs. Other important barriers to consider are the accessibility and a better understanding of what is openly available. Fewer clubs and groups in

a local area mean knowing about, or finding provision that appeals to young people has become harder. Organisations promoting their offer in a youth friendly way could relieve some of the anxieties young people face when deciding to start something new.

An understanding of the benefits of youth work, both for young people and adults could also support better engagement. Some young people say they did not have the time to attend, which may be through additional pressures from home and school, but being able to have time away from these pressures to attend some sort of provision may reduce the needs for additional support later in the young person's life.

## 5. A Youth Offer for the Future

This section focuses on the particular factors that should be considered when developing a youth offer for the future. Again, these will be aligned to the research objectives whilst drawing on pertinent findings from the previous section and utilising experiences of new approaches and practice from across the UK.

### 5.1 Style, Shape and skills for a future youth offer (Aim 3: Obj.1)

#### 5.1.1 Youth Survey Findings - Attraction & Enablers for engagement in Youth Provision

Question	Responses
What would make you want to attend a youth group? <b>Tick up to three (3) options most important to you</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 38% To make new friends</li> <li>▪ 36% Sports based activity</li> <li>▪ 21% Arts and crafts based activity</li> <li>▪ 20% Music, dance and drama</li> <li>▪ 18% Day trips</li> <li>▪ 18% Good Leaders</li> <li>▪ 16% Video/online gaming</li> <li>▪ 14% Adventurous activities</li> <li>▪ 14% Learning life skills</li> <li>▪ 13% Health &amp; Wellbeing Support</li> <li>▪ 11% School/Homework support</li> <li>▪ 10% Overnight residential trips</li> <li>▪ 8% Emotional Support</li> <li>▪ 6% Board gaming</li> <li>▪ 2% Faith based activities</li> <li>▪ 1% Other – (did not provide further answer)</li> <li>▪ 7% None of the above</li> </ul>
What would enable you to attend a youth group? <b>Tick up to three (3) options most important to you</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 66% Close to home</li> <li>▪ 65% My friends attend</li> <li>▪ 36% A day/time that suits me</li> <li>▪ 28% Doesn't cost a lot</li> <li>▪ 7% Meeting the leaders before I start</li> <li>▪ 6% Accessible by public transport</li> <li>▪ 4% Buddy system at the group</li> <li>▪ 3% Disability support</li> <li>▪ 2% Accessible venue</li> <li>▪ 2% Language/cultural support</li> <li>▪ 6% None of the above</li> </ul>

**Do you have any ideas how youth groups could appeal to more young people?** The following is a themed summary covering all suggestions provided (54 responses in total) and in order of prominence.

#### 1. Raise awareness of provision and promote its benefits

- Greater and more frequent local advertising using posters, leaflets and social media

targeting young people and parents

- Leaders to attend school assemblies to raise awareness of local activities and support amongst students and teachers
- Messaging about the benefits needs to be more obvious i.e. Meet new friends, Fun experiences, Build your confidence
- Incentivise and reward

## 2. Variety of activities informed by young people's interests and needs

- Cater for younger and older age groups separately
- Ensure young people have the opportunity to regularly input when developing sessions and activities
- Flexibility in developing interest specific sessions - Sport, Arts, Gaming etc
- Embrace young people's religious backgrounds, subcultures

## 3. Create a Safe, Supportive & Comfortable Environment

- Offer activity taster sessions and 'Meet the leader' days to help reassure young people and their parents
- Buddying - Getting young people to try it for the first time with a friend might help, as many young people are worried of being on their own.

## 4. Local to where young people live

## 5. Affordable to access and attend

### 5.1.2 Style & Shape of youth provision for 8-18 year olds

The style and shape of youth work should be underpinned by the three principle foundations of:

#### Somewhere Safe to Go

Young people want to feel safe; however this does not necessarily have to be an unnatural physical space created just for youth provision. Online platforms and spaces moderated by trusted adults, or even spaces where young people gather such as fast-food restaurants could be adapted to deliver youth work.

#### Something Positive to Do

This should reflect the needs and wants of the young person. It could be a positive diversion to anti-social behaviour, supporting their personal development or be a positive distraction from other pressures in their lives i.e. home or school.

#### Someone to Talk to

While young people are increasingly connected to their networks via social media, as noted earlier, the relationships with youth leaders differs from other interactions young people come across. Young people want to talk to a trusted adult on the same level, or even peer mentors/buddies.

When considering a future youth offer, we need to ask 'why?' From here, we can start asking what the offer will look like, who will be involved in developing and delivering this offer, where and when will youth provision be accessed and how will we ensure we have a good quality offer for young people. The sections below try to begin answering some of these questions with considerations on how developing a new youth offer can start to be designed or adapted.

### WHY ARE WE DEVELOPING A NEW OR ADAPTING THE EXISTING YOUTH OFFER?

Youth provision should reflect the needs of young people (both existing users and others who are not yet currently engaged) ensuring consideration is given to religious backgrounds, subcultures and disabilities when designing provision. This should also involve seeking parental views and beliefs.

### WHAT IS OUR OFFER?

- Variety and choice in provision and support linked to the needs of young people, either identified externally, or through consultation with young people.
- Age groups should be considered separately and provision should be age appropriate, reflecting on the development stages of young people (i.e. puberty, school transitions etc.)
- The delivery formats for provision should be led by the beneficiaries of the provision e.g. Generic Youth Club, Interest specific groups (sport/art/gaming), 1-2-1 Support, one-off activities, residential, social action projects etc.
- Provide clear messaging about the benefits of accessing provision to young people, schools, parents e.g. Meet new friends, Fun experiences, Build your confidence

### WHO IS GOING TO BE INVOLVED IN A FUTURE YOUTH OFFER?

- An adequate paid / volunteer workforce with the time available to deliver the provision, and who have access to robust training to enable them to undertake their role effectively;
- Young Leaders who have development and progression opportunities, especially where there is an ageing workforce;
- Infrastructure support to facilitate Youth Leader peer networks as a forum of support and sharing of good practice;
- On-going insight facilitators who capture the views of young people and ensure provision is able to reflect their needs and researchers who follow trends of young people from statutory services.

## WHERE AND WHEN ARE WE DELIVERING OUR YOUTH OFFER?

- Provision needs to be where young people are, either physically or virtually.
- **Centrally building based** - Needs to be fit for purpose and local to the target audience with adequate space, light, heat, ventilation, accessibility, storage for equipment etc.
- **Digitally based** - Explore the use of, accessibility to and skills to use different virtual platforms i.e. Zoom, Discord or something bespoke. This should be supplemented by an audit of young people's access to ICT hardware and internet to avoid exclusion.
- **Non-centrally based** - Detached and street based work, outreach where young people hang around (e.g. McDonalds, skate parks etc.)
- A mixture of the above provision could be viable depending on the level of demand from young people and the organisational capacity / resource to implement.
- Delivery frequency should be led by the needs of the young people and the type of provision e.g. Regular weekly session, evenings/weekends

## WHAT DOES A GOOD YOUTH OFFER LOOK LIKE?

- Any young person will be able to access youth provision. It should either be local to them, available digitally or they have the support to access this if necessary (e.g. transport provided, travel fares reimbursed, or support in buying technology/Wi-Fi plans to access digital offers).
- Young people are aware of what is available to them locally (either physically or digitally) and parents, schools and other services know where to signpost young people if they want to start attending youth provision or specific issue based support.
- Maintain a minimum standard for safety across organisations e.g. relevant and updated policies & procedures, DBS, trusted adults, risk assessments, first aid, parental consent, which can be facilitated through recognised infrastructure organisations.
- Robust governance structures through a committee/board in each organisation that represents a wide range of skills and includes young people to ensure organisations are delivering in a safe and meaningful manner.
- Ensure that organisations have the ability or support to maintain funding resources for their delivery e.g. activities, venue hire, volunteer expenses, insurance, equipment
- Facilitate the on-going assessment of quality in delivery using tools such as YPQI. This should also include the reflective practice innate in youth work and allow youth leaders the ability to share good practice across types of delivery and organisation.

- Utilise the benefits of local and national infrastructure support (i.e. SCVYS, NYA, UK Youth) to maximise the offer for youth leaders in supporting delivery with young people.
- Youth Voice is integrated into the design/adaptation of any provision or support to ensure it is truly co-produced with young people. With this comes ownership and a realisation that young people can develop solutions and affect change.
- Youth sector wide training development plan (e.g. Safeguarding, Youth Work (Levels 1 & 2), Mental health first aid, Digital delivery skills) that is available to the whole workforce, not just within individual organisations and also with the flexibility to adapt to the needs of youth leaders.
- Organisations are supported to recruit and retain volunteers/staff, where internal resource is not conducive to intense recruitment and training programmes.

### 5.1.3 Youth Workforce & Skills Development

Whilst youth work revolves around the young person and their needs and priorities, good youth work needs to be delivered by leaders who are confident in their ability. Outlined below are some considerations of the needs and expectations to support the workforce (voluntary or paid, qualified or not) in delivering good youth work.

◆ **Core principles & Quality** - The role of the youth worker or leader is distinct and should be guided by the key principles of youth work alongside the flexibility to adapt as young people's needs and priorities change. Youth workers should regularly reflect on their practice to ensure their delivery is supporting young people's social and emotional development and learning. This can be underpinned by the application of tools such as the YPQI framework (The Centre for Youth Impact, 2019) which is a continuous quality improvement process designed to support organisations working with young people to improve the quality of what they do.

◆ **Learning & Development Pathways** - Youth work needs to be fit for purpose with clear learning and development pathways from volunteer leader through to the fully qualified youth worker. These pathways need to be affordable and accessible for anyone in a locality. Some interview participants felt that youth work should be more vocational and informal in its approach focussing on 'building the relationship with young people' rather than a professional career path. Academic qualifications can be added to practical experience at a later date supplemented by an infrastructure to support this i.e. peer mentors.

- ◆ **No Workforce Development Strategy** - There is currently no overarching coherent workforce development strategy for the youth sector, despite the new NYA Youth Work Curriculum being a step in the right direction. The long term approach to something being developed is tied in with the release of resources via the aforementioned Youth Investment Fund.
  
- ◆ **Limited access to Training** - It was felt that some volunteers running VCSE youth provision are ill equipped to deliver good youth work or deal with the sometimes complex issues young people seek support with. Some groups don't have the capacity or the skills to develop a programme of activity built on engagement with young people i.e. they may not be connected to an infrastructure organisation to support them so they "do what they have always done." Other specific issue based training may also be required by practitioners e.g. Mental Health First Aid has gained recent prominence etc.
  
- ◆ **Variance in Learning & Practice** - There should be a fundamental shift to understand what youth workers do and how they deliver across different types of group irrespective of qualification level (which can create elitism). This can cross fertilise and broaden learning / experience across different types of provision e.g. uniformed group and a youth club.
  
- ◆ **Greater recognition of youth work principles** - This was particularly highlighted in relation to non traditional sectors such as Health. For example, MPFT have 5 youth work staff who are taking a different route in engaging with young people based on a more social than clinical model. However, it is not widely recognised as a valid profession within health services. Clinicians would benefit from having youth work skills as a component to their role, so they can engage with young people in a more holistic way.

## 5.2 Understanding the approach for different youth sub cultures (Aim 3: Obj.2)

The rise of the internet, social media and interconnectivity between young people from not only their school, community or town, but also internationally, allows new subcultures to emerge far more quickly than they once did. It also allows the variety of subcultures to expand.

In previous generations, subcultures would group together. A sense of identity pulled likeminded young people together physically. In a modern world, the technology available to young people now means that subcultures can be much more niche, much more flexible and young people can experience a higher turnover of identities than generations before them.



When interviewed for this research, even young people struggled to identify any specific subcultures they were aware of. One of the few that arose was 'e-boys/girls' - personalities that exist purely online (Vox,2019).

A bigger argument could be raised that young people (and adults) are more defined by their generation; that is a baby boomer, Gen X, millennial or Gen Z and distinctions are seen between age groups, rather than subcultures within a generation.

Young people now exist as Generation Z. They are the generation born into the age of the internet and the most likely to lose their interpersonal relationships around them for a more digital approach. Their outlook on life has been shaped by the internet and the screens in front of them giving them more of a voice around social causes (as seen in the likes of Greta Thunberg and Black Lives Matter groups). These young people will likely end up in professions that have yet to be created. (Iberdrola,2020)

Following youth work principles of working with a young person, finding out their wants, needs and interests and building a relationship to encourage them to develop their own individual identity are key factors for working with any young person, regardless of their 'subculture'. However, this brings the complication that youth provision then becomes individualised. Understanding how young people exist in the world today will help accommodate the range of identities they experience. Having an awareness of the biggest trends (e.g. TikTok, Fortnite) can engage wider cohorts young people, but these trends come and go and can be a challenge for digital immigrants to grasp. (Prensky, 2001)

The best approach to ensuring youth provision is suitable and appropriate for the young person is to work with them. Engaging them in the design of the provision will then encourage them to share their views and passions.

### **5.3 Supporting the participation of vulnerable Young People (Aim 3: Obj.3)**

A few interview participants highlighted the resonance youth work engagement can have with Maslow's hierarchy of needs and engaging vulnerable young people in provision or support. If a young person's basic 'physiological' needs aren't being met the likelihood of getting them to participate in clubs and activities is significantly reduced e.g. If a young person is hungry give them toast and tea and then progress from there.

Other suggestions for supporting the participation of vulnerable young people included:

- Discreet subsidising or payment options for those where access costs might be prohibitive

- Greater role for schools and their pastoral staff in identifying vulnerable young people and linking them in to activities or support outside of school
- The use of online platforms can help in engaging young people who might be shy, unconfident and hesitant in face to face environments. e.g. Discord, Zoom
- Including links to free online support tools on providers websites to complement information on standard provision - e.g. [Kooth.com](https://www.kooth.com) (Mental Health and wellbeing)
- Better cross sector collaboration looking at the holistic needs of a young person
- Use of detached schemes for targeting hard to reach young people or the 'unclubables' by going to where they are comfortable hanging out.

### **5.3.1 Young People aged 18-24**

Although not the focus of this research, many youth-related issues can involve the 18-24s who are expected to leave youth services at 18 and become adult members of society overnight, often with no transition and nothing to support their continued engagement. After all, if a young person goes to University, they have full access to every society under the sun to supplement their educational learning with personal and social development opportunities. However, one could argue that those young people who are not at University may need these kinds of opportunities more to support their transition into adulthood, but who in reality are afforded very little. Some larger organisations, such as Scouts and Guides have a standard offer for 18-24 year olds to participate in a programme of activities and awards which have upper age limits of 25, for example the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

## **5.4 Innovation in Youth Provision (Aim 3: Obj.4)**

This section of the research highlights a number of examples of innovation in delivery of youth provision including digital approaches and local projects responding to community demographics and issues e.g. faith, ethnicity, rurality and inadequate dedicated youth spaces. In addition to the UK examples, it will also include an overview on the approach adopted by youth services in Finland.

### **5.4.1 DIGITAL APPROACHES**

#### **a) Mel Blanch, Participation Youth Worker (MAP, Norfolk)**

As part of her studies, Mel Blanch, who also works for MAP in Norfolk, was investigating online youth work as a method of delivery. Organisations have mainly utilised this with their young people during the pandemic, however the research looks at whether online youth work has a

place in the future. The dissertation was kindly shared with SCVYS and her initial findings from the research has shown:

- Online youth work increases capacity as the number of sessions (and potentially young people reached) is increased on the same resource
- It can reduce costs of physical delivery (e.g. venues, equipment, travelling etc.)
- There is likely to be upfront costs for technology, plus on-going upgrades to tech
- Lower geographical isolation, reducing the need for public transport
- More useful for some projects than others (e.g. participation projects and young carers)

### Recommendations from the research concluded:

- A need for investment into high quality technology and internet access
- Investment and creation into online youth work training for youth workers
- The development of a custom made online platform for youth work to legally and safely allow under 13 year olds to access it.

### b) Space Youth Services (Devon)

[Space Youth Services](#) operating in Devon have developed a digital youth work offer comprising four elements:

#### ◆ Zoom Sessions

Group video sessions for youth club members were set up to replace the open access youth club sessions just prior to lockdown in March. These have seen varying success in terms of engagement across different areas with typical attendance of between 8 and 15 young people on a call.

#### ◆ Discord Online Youth Centres (aged 13-19)

Discord is a free video, voice and text chat app, popular with young people particularly in the gaming community. Space set up their own Discord platform in March, as a method of engaging young people when lockdown began.



- Space's Discord server is somewhere safe for young people to interact with other young people on the internet on a platform many of them are already familiar with.

- Through the platform you can offer a programme of activities, workshops and games to help young people build confidence and up skill.
- The service is open five days a week and is supported by youth workers.

At the time of writing they have 130 members on the server, with an average of 30 young people engaging each night (5 nights a week). This includes the representation of young people who didn't use their service before Discord was introduced. They are also currently working on explainer videos for parents, partners and uninitiated young people but these were not ready for sharing at the time of writing.

#### ◆ **Youth Worker Call Back**

Complete an online form to request a chat with a youth worker by phone or text. This offer hasn't worked as well as Space would have liked and they are currently looking at how this is promoted to make it easier for young people to find the support they need.

#### ◆ **No Blocks Sessions**

This online offer has only been set up very recently and comprises two sessions per week supported by youth workers for young people aged 11-19 with SEND. Further information on the take up and success of these can be sought once they have become more established.

### **c) Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Youth Service - Online Gaming**

Dudley MBC provided an online gaming arm to their virtual youth work delivery during the pandemic and this has increased their contact with some of the young people they work with.

Online gaming was added to their offer as some young people did not have access to other platforms, such as WhatsApp and Microsoft Teams, and if they did this was sometimes a shared device with a family member so were not guaranteed privacy when in a session. The service has also found that online gaming has allowed some young people to relax into the session so they are more able and ready to discuss issues or concerns with the youth worker. The offer can be used on a one-to-one basis with a young person, or in a small group setting, dependent on the game.

Some of the issues that Dudley MBC have encountered include:

- Youth workers are not always familiar with gaming systems so need to familiarise themselves in their use

- Equipment may need to be purchased for the team, or upgrades to games etc.
- There is usually a free trial when using the systems; however a licence may need to be purchased to use its full capabilities.
- Clear boundaries need to be set around games that are played, with staff only playing age appropriate games. Some content would not be condoned regardless.

There have been additional positives that the service found whilst delivering this offer:

- Youth workers tend to be less proficient than the young person so this helps to provide additional dynamics to the working relationship.
- Some young people had older games and systems due to family finances, however the service had some of these saved in youth centres so were able to mitigate costs of the activity whilst still engaging with young people.
- Discussions around online safety can happen whilst playing online and the opportunity to report any concerns or incidents. Gaming platforms are also becoming more popular to recruit young people into gangs etc.
- For some young people (mainly males) it can be a comfortable and familiar tool for them to engage with.

#### 5.4.2 OTHER UK YOUTH INNOVATORS

The following organisations are all a part of the UK Youth Innovators network. Examples have been categorised according to the innovative responses and practice demonstrated.

##### a) Diversity & Inclusivity

[Youth Action](#) are a Blackburn based organisation supporting a very diverse local community. Usually providing a range of programmes around employability, social action, 1-2-1 mentoring and social enterprise support, they have taken on a practical role throughout Covid-19 with food parcels, reducing digital exclusion by giving away IT equipment, promoting key public health messages and supporting mental health.

The [Mosaic Trust](#) was originally part of the Brent Youth Service, before becoming an independent charity due to austerity cuts. Their focus is to support, educate and inspire LGBT+ persons and those around them, thereby providing a safe place to thrive. They provide activities and advocacy for young people, and were awarded the Pride Future Activists Award in London and recently recorded and posted a YouTube video showing interviews with various gay faith leaders and the additional challenges they have overcome.

UK Youth in collaboration with their partners have responded to the appeals of young Black people across Britain who feel they have little or no opportunity or right to share their thoughts and experiences on racism in the UK and beyond. It seeks to recognise that being seen and heard is a requirement to achieve justice.

The [#YoungandBlack](#) campaign uses the power of storytelling to inform and educate by creating empathy and change. Through an online campaign as well as a series of events young Black people were able to share stories and personal experiences, connect with each other and reach out to others who were actively listening in to develop their own understanding of the reality of the issue. A call to action has been made to encourage ongoing involvement across schools, youth organisations, media and beyond to provoke wider system change, which will only come when we are all able to openly and honestly discuss the role race plays in every area of society.

### **b) Dedicated Spaces**

These are nothing new and have previously attracted significant investment both from Government and private sector sources through MyPlace centres and Youth Zones. Multi-functional youth centres appear to work better in cities where there is a concentration of young people possibly due to a nearby high school or further education college and good transport links. They are simply not viable in counties such as Staffordshire due to the size of our towns. There is also some evidence that after an initial high-profile launch, they find it hard to attract longer term private investment and require significant ongoing support from the local authority. Staffordshire's MyPlace centre in Chesterton is now being managed by a local Academy Trust.

[Berkshire Youth](#) have just taken on a disused building in the heart of Newbury in a £1.3 million refurbishment project aiming to turn it into a state of the art, cutting edge youth facility with climbing wall, dance studios and various spaces for young people to engage with a diverse range of programmes. They want to do the same in other significant population areas including Reading, Wokingham and Slough, securing accessible places to go, positive things to do and trusted people to talk to for all present and future young people. Some challenging fundraising targets will need to be achieved to secure and operationalise these dreams around dedicated spaces for young people.

### **c) Rural & Detached**

[Young Gloucestershire](#) have been running street-based youth work throughout the pandemic and plan to continue until at least summer 2021. The expressed aim is:

*“Working with young people where they are to build confidence, resilience and to provide opportunities in their local area.”*

Sometimes described as Detached Youth Work, this way of working has seen a resurgence during the lockdown where buildings were closed to youth work providers.

It is important to recognise that detached or outreach work still operates under youth work principles of voluntary participation and empowerment through building relationships with young people to support their personal and social development. It is not just about preventing or resolving youth-related issues by moving them on. Having said that, when done well, detached or street based youth work can be extremely effective in connecting with disengaged young people. Staff often need additional training and a desire to deliver in this way as it can also be unrewarding when the weather is wet and cold, or the impact on the young people is both slower and harder to evidence.

#### **d) Youth Partnerships**

The Coventry Youth Partnership (CYP) acts as a central hub, bringing together experienced youth organisations and professionals from across the city. The partnership aims to build on the strengths of each individual organisation, developing shared goals and agreeing a common approach to youth work, not only amongst operational partners but also the local authority and other statutory bodies.

A CYP audit identified a number of issues within the city’s youth sector:

- A lack of regular networking opportunities for organisations to share knowledge, skills and good practice
- A need to develop the sector to support young people from ‘at risk’ groups
- Organisations with similar goals often saw each other as competitors rather than collaborators
- A lack of shared information, evaluation and celebration about the impact of youth work
- Young people not always aware of the range of youth work services available to them.

Since the CYP was formed in 2017, it has achieved a number of outcomes supporting the local youth sector including:

- Over 20 organisations meet regularly to share information about their work
- Identified gaps in provision and areas where organisations can extend their offer to complement each other rather than duplicating

- Raised awareness of the city council's priorities
- Generated financial investment for programme delivery and training provision
- The CYP has facilitated training sessions including Safeguarding, First Aid, Equality and Diversity for partners. Where possible, partner organisations were funded to deliver these sessions.

### 5.4.3 EAST STAFFORDSHIRE

Within East Staffordshire, there are organisations who play their own role as innovators, many of whom are already working together in partnership to support young people;

**Burton Albion Community Trust** have stepped up as a local community hub, playing a crucial role in mobilising volunteers and responding to local need around food, medical supplies as well as addressing isolation, loneliness and mental health. This is in addition to their diversionary activities Kicks programme, employability support and various education and health related projects.

**Burton Youth For Christ** have delivered a range of youth support via online and digital delivery using Facebook, Instagram, Zoom and TikTok. As well as activities, this has included a "listening service" enabling young people to be heard and valued whatever they are going through. They have also undertaken detached work in parts of the town, and when able to reopen will have youth clubs in Eton, Stapenhill and Burton as well as supporting a number of local high schools and Burton College with earliest help.

**Riverside Church** has developed an amazingly versatile space called The Warehouse, which has been used regularly as an indoor skate park, children's play zone, a conference room and hospitality venue. It is right in the heart of Burton and has the potential to be utilised even more to support and engage young people. Riverside have also undertaken detached youth work in different areas of the town.

**Burton Street Angels** have been a presence in the night time economy for a number of years now, working alongside the Police and Borough Council. Their presence and low-level support offer has helped to reduce the number of incidents significantly in recent years.

**Youth Emotional Support Services** are a Uttoxeter based mental health and counselling charity and **Eagles Nest Project** run high quality alternative education support with small groups of young people.



There are also a range of venues which could be better utilised for young people, such as **Burton Caribbean Association** and **Queen Street Community Centre** etc.

Equally, when thinking about youth work, the agency of change is rarely innovation, but remains the centrality of the young person and the relationship that is built which enables change.

#### 5.4.4 HARRASTUSPASSI (HOBBY PASSPORT) - Helsinki, Finland



The hobby passport: <https://www.harrastuspassi.fi/> is an app designed to provide a counterbalance response to the exclusion of young people. Recent Finnish figures suggest there about 65,000 young people across the country and one marginalised young person can cost the state around €370,000 (equivalent to £338k). The aim of the youth passport is to inspire children and young people to find meaningful things to do in their free time, to promote equality between children and young people and at the same time to present local hobbies.

Harrastuspassi increases young people's opportunity to try different activities and find a hobby that suits them. The hobby passport brings together all types activities, such as exercise, club activities, culture, handicrafts etc. Both free and paid hobbies can be added by providers to the app for young people to join. The app is currently aimed at high-school aged young people, however parents are also able to access this to see what is available.

Users can save their favourite activities and share tips about interesting opportunities with their friends and on social media. Those running out of ideas on what to try can also turn to lists of the most popular activities and benefits, and recommendations based on their own usage history.

Providers (either the municipality (local council), third-sector or private companies) are able to offer taster sessions and open days where young people can try a new activity. The benefit to organisations offering a free activity is the chance of young people registering on a more long term basis. There is the option for providers to offer perks, for example, a free hobby trial, admission to a museum, free admission to a swimming pool or an entrance ticket to a sporting event. There is no cost for third-sector or private companies to add their opportunities, but municipalities are charged to add their in-house activities.

The app is only available in Finland so we have not been able to access it directly to experience how it works and gain a more comprehensive idea of the activities available.

## **5.5 How can youth provision be delivered locally, considering cultural diversity, urban and rural environments, replicating and developing approaches from other countries (Aim 3: Obj.5)**

Youth work provision should comprise a cooperative network of people who understand the needs of that community, so subtle nuances can be managed locally and taken into consideration when consulting on and designing a youth offer. This should be underpinned by support from local infrastructure bodies and networks.

When considering diversity, inclusivity and geographical factors, respondents to the survey comprised the following demographics:

- 89% do not consider themselves to have a disability.
- 75% were White, 19% Asian/Asian British.
- 68% lived in urban wards.
- 21% in rural wards

The respondents to our survey reflect the demographic makeup of East Staffordshire. 13.8% of residents are from a minority ethnic background and 21.9% of residents live in rural areas. 12.3% of children in the borough have special educational needs. (Staffordshire County Council Strategy Team, 2018)

### **5.5.1 Cultural Diversity**

It is important to reflect the local picture, but important to enable new view points and experiences to be heard e.g. do young people from BAME backgrounds currently feel excluded from a predominantly white offer? Provision needs to be designed with consideration of other backgrounds and variations in religious beliefs with segregated groups forming part of a bigger plan. Some groups work with a diverse cohort of young people from a variety of backgrounds, however struggle with some of the cultural differences, e.g. getting consent for trips, or more orthodox families not wanting genders/ethnicities mixing. A wider strategy for up skilling youth leaders and increasing social cohesion amongst diverse populations in the borough would aid the understanding of the needs and cultural differences amongst young people with different backgrounds.

There are examples of provision targeted at specific ethnic groups in the borough, such as 9<sup>th</sup> Burton Scouts who are a predominantly Muslim group who integrate their participants with other young people across the Burton Scout District at events and camps. The Scout group were approached for an interview, however, this did not come to fruition.

Cultural diversity can also be included in the programme delivered to young people, reflecting the backgrounds in the local area. Welcoming guests from diverse backgrounds and educating young people who may not be from the minority ethnic background of the group, area or district, can increase respect and cohesion between different groups, thus encouraging a greater diversity of people engaged in provision. The NYA Youth Work Curriculum (2020) gives examples of where diversity can be included within youth provision.

### 5.5.2 Rurality

Rural areas can pose accessibility issues for young people wanting to use provision. Some larger organisations, such as Scouts and Guides have a historical background and national identity which helps to start and sustain provision in rural areas, but this is not necessarily what young people want now or in the future.

In rural areas, populations tend to be smaller and older. Where young people do live in rural wards, the numbers do not always make a youth group sustainable (e.g. venue hire, activity costs etc.) or become more costly for young people. There is also the possibility that there are not enough adults locally who wish to support a youth group, thus increasing costs of recruiting outside of the area and travelling in.

Being able to offer a less regular meeting (e.g. once a month, every half term) can provide young people the opportunity to meet their peers, but this can be interspersed with a digital offer, continuing engagement between face-to-face meet ups.

Developing a hybrid approach of digital and physical youth work could support rural areas, dependent on access to broadband. East Staffordshire has a lower than national rate of homes with superfast broadband (over 24mbps), with 96.8% of residents being able to access this (Thinkbroadband, 2020). As for the final 4%, there is a Government target to ensure all homes have Gigabit Capable broadband by 2025-30, but in the meantime there is a top up scheme for residents in rural areas to consider here: <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/staffordshire/>

Whilst this is promising that almost the whole borough is covered by superfast broadband, it is unknown whether this is the problem with accessing a virtual offer, or if it is due to limitations around hardware and technology - as 12% of adults in the borough live in households most likely to have barriers to connectivity and digital use. (Staffordshire County Council Strategy Team, 2018).

Digital youth work also hits a barrier that there is no specific platform for youth work. During the Covid-19 pandemic, youth work has been stretched and made to fit the platforms that are available, rather than the platforms being adapted to what youth work needs. For a digital offer to be engaging, the platforms need to be both interesting and accessible for young people, but simple and easy to manage for youth leaders.

## **5.6 Impact of Covid-19 on youth provision and lessons learnt (Aim 3: Obj.6)**

The following section provides further insight into some of the short, medium and longer term impacts of Covid-19 as highlighted by interview participants.

### **SHORT TERM**

#### **◆ Fears and anxieties**

Both staff and young people have experienced anxiety in terms of their re-engagement with educational / childcare settings coupled with concern if they have family members in the household who have been shielding etc. There has also been some reluctance for young people who may not want to go back to youth provision following a Covid case in their football club for example.

#### **◆ Restricted access & Re-opening requirements**

Young people have not had access to the safe spaces that youth provision offers despite some provision going online. Also not everyone has had access to ICT hardware or Wi-Fi in the home which has presented a further barrier, with opportunities to provide early and timely support to young people being missed.

There has been disruption on the ability of leaders to plan, the booking of venues has been difficult coupled with groups having to complete new risk assessments, introduce cleaning protocols and social distancing measures etc.

#### **◆ Adaptability**

The importance of digital delivery, social media engagement and detached youth work is and will continue to be crucial in engaging and supporting young people. The pandemic has brought about a level of creativity in how youth work is delivered and being able to adapt to the rules that everyone is having to observe.

Relationships with some young people has improved through ongoing contact, listening services and online activities, however, this hasn't been the reality for some young people who have become more disengaged and may not return in the future.

## **MEDIUM TERM**

### ◆ **Financial impact and capacity**

Concerns are coming from group leaders in terms of funding - normally collected via subscriptions, which have not been paid since March. Other Covid related resources will dissipate; thereby presenting challenges in how to sustain a good youth offer to meet a rising tide of need.

### ◆ **External Funding Flex**

Funders need to be flexible on how commissioned provision is delivered and how outcomes are met in light of the changes to legislation and social distancing guidance. Funders need to appreciate that there is no cheap option or alternative for youth work even though it can be done virtually.

### ◆ **Learning**

How do we use what we have learned to enhance and improve the offer to young people moving forwards. This learning should be used to coherently report to Government including pertinent data and impact case studies that highlight the importance of youth work and also what investment is needed from them. Some participants felt strongly that the pandemic has provided a positive opportunity to put youth work back on the agenda.

### ◆ **Workforce**

Youth worker burnout was identified as a real concern as individuals are having to work harder and differently over a prolonged period of time. Retention of volunteers who are older or more vulnerable is proving understandably difficult, with recruitment of new volunteers equally challenging under the circumstances.

## **LONGER TERM**

### **◆ Meeting the needs of Young People**

The need for youth services will only increase moving forwards with an opportunity to reframe how young people's needs are supported holistically (rather than in issue based silos), strengthened by greater collaboration across provision and sectors.

### **◆ Legacy**

There will hopefully be a greater recognition at Government level that youth work is an essential service and that the VCSE sector has really stepped up to the plate. A change of power might bring a fresh approach and new investment which sets the scene and momentum for future governments to follow.

# 6. Findings & Recommendations

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## 6.1 Findings

**RA1 / O1: Define and provide an overview of youth provision spanning the last 100 years, across a variety of settings.**

- ◆ Youth work has evolved from its first iterations in the late 1800s as a faith based development programme for young people.
- ◆ Crises such as the World Wars saw youth become more integrated into national policy making, followed by greater financial investment in youth services and targeted schemes for young people.

**RA1 / O2: Understand the key principles to a successful youth-friendly approach.**

- ◆ Youth work is most successful when it provides informal education; empowers young people; is accessible to all and is based on a voluntary non adversarial relationship.
- ◆ Other principles in ensuring a youth-friendly approach include delivering meaningful community engagement (e.g. social action projects), have a variety of peer and adult role models and provide social and personal development opportunities.
- ◆ Universal open access youth work provides the building blocks for the broader personal and social development of young people that enables them to more fully discover their own identity and then their place in wider society. In doing so, youth work fully compliments more formal education and learning provision.

**RA2 / O1: Provide a brief overview of the national youth provision landscape.**

- ◆ YMCA (2020) reported that by 2018/19, real terms spending by local authorities on youth services had fallen to £398m, a 71% reduction (80% in the West Midlands) since 2010/11.
- ◆ In the West Midlands region, five local authorities maintain an in-house youth service; seven have commissioned this to an external organisation and two have a hybrid approach of in-house and externally commissioned.
- ◆ The resurgence of the profile of youth work at a national level has emerged due to the work around serious youth violence, with a lack of good youth services being cited as one of the contributing factors to this.

- ◆ The Youth Investment Fund promising £500 million to support youth provision across the UK has yet to materialise from Government. It is believed as many as two thirds of youth organisations will not be able to continue supporting young people in the next quarter, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

**RA2 / O2: Review what the local landscape looks like, including demographics of users of youth provision.**

- ◆ 3,695 young people aged 8-19 regularly engage in youth provision and support in East Staffordshire (SCVYS Census 2019/20)
- ◆ 37 SCVYS member organisations (equivalent to 136 units of provision) working in the borough of East Staffordshire to support young people. 1,530 active volunteer roles and 174 paid staff roles support the delivery of this provision for young people.
- ◆ 31% of survey respondents currently attended a youth group, with attendance at sports based groups (54%) and uniformed provision (23%) being the most popular.

**RA2 / O3: Research the views and opinions around current youth provision.**

- ◆ 46% of young people attended their youth group because they enjoyed it or were interested in what was on offer.
- ◆ 79% of respondents said they had a good or very good relationship with their leaders.
- ◆ Practitioners interviewed overwhelmingly responded that the current provision in their area was not adequately addressing the needs of all young people. Reasons included gaps in provision due to funding cuts, lack of dedicated spaces for young people and no holistic strategy or vision for young people to develop (nationally or locally).

**RA2 / O4: Explore the current role of the youth leader, young people's expectations of their leaders in supporting them and how these relationships differ from other settings**

- ◆ 44% of survey respondents identified a Youth Worker as someone who works with children and young people, with 21% believing that a youth worker is a young person.
- ◆ 54% of young people believe Youth Workers should have a Youth Work qualification, citing factors of safety and quality. 46% of young people stated they didn't believe a qualification was necessary, inferring skills can be better learned on the job.
- ◆ The relationship with youth leaders is different to other dynamics young people may have experienced. Youth work encourages the power balance to be equal and young people have



the voluntary choice to participate, meaning relationships are required and led by how the young person wants to interact.

**RA2 / O5: Research the range of reasons why young people may not attend positive developmental provision.**

- ◆ 35% of respondents who were not currently engaged in youth provision said they had no interest in joining a youth group. 25% of the young people not attending a youth group said it was because there was none in their local area or they couldn't travel to attend to a youth group.
- ◆ Interviews with practitioners suggested that there are much deeper reasons for non attendance such as a mistrust of adults and the fear or anxiety of trying something new.
- ◆ Fewer clubs and groups in a local area mean knowing about, or finding provision that appeals to young people has become harder.

**RA3 / O1: Explore the future style and shape of youth provision for young people aged 8-18 (extending to 25 for those with learning disabilities), including the skills and role of youth leaders.**

- ◆ 35% of survey respondents who are currently accessing youth provision highlighted that it is mostly about having fun. This was followed by 21% of respondents who wanted it to provide support and development opportunities.
- ◆ 38% of young people not engaged in youth provision said that knowing they would make new friends would encourage them to attend a youth group, followed by 36% who would attend a sports based youth group.
- ◆ Any youth offer should be underpinned by the foundations of 'Somewhere safe to go', 'Something positive to do' and 'Someone to talk to'.
- ◆ When considering a future youth offer, we need to ask 'why?' We can then design what the offer will look like, who will be involved in developing and delivering this offer, where and when will youth provision be accessed and how will we ensure that offer is good quality.
- ◆ The role of a youth leader (qualified or otherwise) is distinct and should be guided by the key principles of youth work and a flexibility to adapt as young people's needs and priorities change.
- ◆ Youth leaders should be supported to access clear learning and development pathways and encouraged to broaden their learning experience across different types of provision and sectors.

**RA3 / O2: Seek to understand how the approach to youth provision should be different for the various youth subcultures that exist**

- ◆ Young people now exist as Generation Z. They are the generation born into the age of the internet and the most likely to lose their interpersonal relationships around them for a more digital approach.
- ◆ Understanding how young people exist in the world today will help accommodate the range of identities they experience. By youth practitioners having an awareness of the current biggest trends (e.g. TikTok, Fortnite) they will be better equipped to engage a wider cohort of young people.

**RA3 / O3: Look at the needs of vulnerable young people; especially those experiencing social exclusion and how to support the participation of these young people.**

- ◆ Discreet subsidising or payment options could be explored for those where access or transport costs might be prohibitive.
- ◆ Schools, their pastoral staff and other partners have a greater role to play in identifying vulnerable young people and whilst being reassured about linking them in to activities or support outside of school.
- ◆ The use of online platforms can help in engaging young people who might be shy, unconfident and hesitant in face to face environments. Supplemented by a better awareness of free online support tools e.g. [Kooth.com](https://www.kooth.com) (Mental Health and wellbeing)
- ◆ There is a need for better cross sector collaboration to ensure the holistic needs of young people are being considered rather than taking a single issue based approach.
- ◆ The use of detached schemes can be beneficial for targeting hard to reach young people or the 'unclubables'. These schemes are likely to be more resource intensive due to the skills required and the nature of engaging young people outside of traditional settings.

**RA3 / O4: Demonstrate examples of innovative and contemporary youth provision from other regions and countries, and how this compares to the local approach.**

- ◆ Innovative digital approaches have been utilised in areas such as Devon (virtual youth clubs and themed sessions on Discord) and Dudley MBC (online gaming interaction with youth work). Research on the future of online youth work has been undertaken in Norfolk that could help to inform practice moving forwards.

- ◆ Coventry Youth Partnership has brought together a network of experienced youth organisations and professionals from across the city. This has enabled best practice to be shared, gaps in provision to be identified and a complementary youth offer to be delivered supported by greater financial investment and training provision.
- ◆ Finland have developed an app called Harrastuspassi (hobby passport) to inspire high-school aged young people to find meaningful things to do in their free time. It brings together all types activities (both free and paid) and providers within the VCSE, public and private sectors can post their activities to the platform in real time for people to join.

**RA3 / O5: How can youth provision be delivered locally, considering cultural diversity, urban and rural environments and, replicating and developing approaches from other countries.**

- ◆ The development of a wider strategy for up skilling youth leaders on cultural diversity could be beneficial, to aid understanding of the needs and cultural differences amongst diverse populations in the borough.
- ◆ It's important to include cultural diversity as part of any youth work programme to increase respect and cohesion between young people from different backgrounds.
- ◆ During the Covid-19 pandemic, youth work has been made to fit the virtual platforms that are available, rather than the platforms being adapted to what youth work needs. For a digital offer to be engaging, the methods used need to be both interesting and accessible for young people, but simple and easy to manage for youth leaders.

**RA3 / O6: What the impact of COVID-19 has been on the delivery of youth provision in the short term and what can be learnt to inform future provision for young people.**

- ◆ Most youth provision had to shut due to the spring lockdown, with some organisations providing a virtual or telephone support offer to young people.
- ◆ Group leaders are concerned about funding. Income normally comes via the collection of subscriptions linked to face to face delivery, which have not been paid since March.
- ◆ Other Covid related resources will dissipate; questioning how to sustain a good youth offer to meet a rising tide of need.
- ◆ Some smaller groups would continue via their improved social media engagement, but not necessarily with virtual youth clubs which have seen some drop-off throughout the year.
- ◆ Youth worker burnout is a concern as individuals are having to work harder and differently over a prolonged period of time.

- ◆ Retention of volunteers who are older or more vulnerable is proving understandably difficult, with recruitment of new volunteers equally challenging under the circumstances.
- ◆ The need for youth services will only increase moving forwards with an opportunity to reframe how young people's needs are supported holistically, strengthened by greater collaboration across provision and sectors.

## 6.2 Recommendations

Based on the results from this research the following recommendations are made:

### Strategy & Investment

- ◆ **Develop a strategy for Children & Young People in East Staffordshire / Staffordshire.** Having a joined up vision for children and young people, their place and value in society will enable stakeholders across sectors to contribute to and support a strategy that improves the lives of children and young people. For a best practice example, [Child Friendly Leeds](#) developed by Leeds City Council alongside a range of other partners aims to ensure that children and young people are integral across a range of shared priorities and stakeholders. Moreover, a good strategy will ensure youth work skills are valued (or better, utilised) in all settings where working with young people takes place.
- ◆ **Greater cross-sector working that considers existing provision and local intelligence.** Better alignment of voluntary sector, statutory services (e.g. education, children's services and community safety) and the private sector will maximise existing resources and funding streams at the earliest opportunity. This could be initiated by exploring collaborative opportunities between the local voluntary sector offer, the summer SPACE scheme (led by the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office) and the forthcoming Holiday Activities & Food Programme (led by Staffordshire County Council via the Department for Education).
- ◆ **Invest in young people holistically to support longer term outcomes.** Using relational youth work as a cross-cutting response to youth related issues will be more effective and provide better value for money than single issue responses. Investing in a universal and preventative offer will enhance the personal resilience of all participating young people without the need for higher tier statutory services.

- ◆ **Include young people in designing a future youth offer.** Young people know what they want and should be provided with ongoing opportunities to share their views and be listened to, valued and included in designing solutions, options or choices.
- ◆ **Meaningful recognition of the role the voluntary sector plays in supporting communities.** From mitigating the immediate impact of the youth service closure, to frontline support during the Covid-19 pandemic, the voluntary sector is ever present. Partners should explore options for sustaining and/or expanding the voluntary sector offer, building on existing local assets.

## Digital

- ◆ **Explore and evaluate models of digital youth work and how to support staff and volunteers in delivering an effective local digital offer.** This could help to remove the barriers to accessing physical youth work spaces e.g. for young people living in rural locations or those with anxieties. It could also involve the research of new and innovative delivery methods such as virtual reality or administrative systems to support leaders.
- ◆ **Offer a central support fund for organisations in overcoming digital poverty.** This could be used both within organisations to develop their delivery offer and/or for young people wanting to access the provision from home.
- ◆ **Create a safety / quality mark for online platforms in the delivery of youth provision.** Research and approve platforms that meet agreed requirements thereby encouraging organisations and reassuring youth leaders they are utilising the most appropriate tool(s) or platforms for delivering a digital offer.

## Workforce & Organisational Development

- ◆ **Offer bespoke learning and development pathways for youth leaders.** This should include youth work skills, mental health awareness, safeguarding and first aid. The offer should also be flexible around the needs of the workforce, for example providing training on digital delivery, cultural diversity, youth subcultures or responses to emerging trends and needs of young people locally.
- ◆ **Establish a local youth leader / youth work peer support network in East Staffordshire.** This will enable the sharing of good practice and encourage the experiencing of different approaches to youth provision and work. Additional benefits of a

functioning peer support network include the ongoing identification of workforce needs and potential collaboration in the pooling of resources.

- ◆ **Wider more standardised promotion of youth activities, support and the associated benefits of youth work.** An understanding of the benefits of youth work, both for young people, parents and staff within local schools and partner organisations could support better engagement in local provision. Existing tools such as the [SCVYS map](#) display current members who meet agreed standards assuring partners, parents and young people of the safety and quality of the provision.

In light of all of this, it is clear that the power to fully reinstate universal youth work, with all of its potential to positively impact on outcomes, sits firmly with the national Government. Nevertheless, local partners should not wait for national policy, but should come together to be at the forefront of ensuring that an effective support system is in place (despite a decade of disinvestment) and is working as collaboratively as possible. Now more than ever, local partners have the opportunity to ensure young people are able to access the right support, at the right time, in the right way to enable their sustained holistic development into a fulfilling and thriving adulthood.

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# Appendices

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## Appendix 1: Online Youth Survey Questions

- How old are you?
- Which school/college do you attend?
- What is your home postcode?
  
- Do you consider yourself to have a disability? Yes / No / Prefer not to say
  
- What is your ethnic group? (Source for ethnicity questions can be viewed [here](#))
  - Asian or Asian British
  - Black, African, Caribbean or Black British
  - Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups
  - White
  - Other
  - Prefer not to say
  
- Which one best describes your background?
  - Asian or Asian British background?
  - Black, African, Caribbean or Black British background?
  - Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups background?
  - White background
  - Other
  
- Do you currently attend a youth group?
- Which youth group(s) do you attend?
- Why did you choose to attend that group?
  
- How would you describe your relationship with the leaders at your group?
- What do you think a youth worker is?
- Do you think all leaders in a youth group should have a youth work qualification?
- Why do you think this?
- Does your group meet your view of what a youth group should offer?
- What do you think youth groups should offer?
- Do you have an input into what activities are offered at your group?
- Can you give any examples where you have influenced the activities?
  
- Why do you not currently attend a youth group?
- Have you attended a youth group in the past?
- Which youth group did you attend?
- Why do you no longer attend this group?
- What would make you want to attend a youth group?
  - Please pick up to three (3) options most important to you.
- Please state what else would make you want to attend a youth group.
- What would enable you to attend a youth group?
  - Please pick up to three (3) options most important to you.
- Please state what else would enable you to attend a youth group.
- Do you have any ideas how youth groups could appeal to more young people?

## Appendix 2: Strategic Practitioner Interview Questions

1. What do you think are the key issues and challenges being faced by young people at the moment?	A205 A301
2. What is the role of youth work in addressing the needs of and providing opportunities for young people?	A201
3. Do you think these needs are being adequately addressed by current youth provision in your geographical area of remit? What makes you say this?	A203
4. What do you think are the barriers to young people not attending positive developmental provision?	A205
5. What are the training and workforce development needs to secure and sustain youth work?	A301b
6. Do you know of any good examples of innovative youth work that could be replicated in East Staffordshire? These can be local, regional, national or international examples.	A304
7. What do you think the impact of COVID-19 will be on youth provision, in the short, medium and long term?	A306

### Appendix 3: Young People Interview Questions

1. Why did you join <uniformed group>?	A203
2. What do you think makes uniformed organisations popular?	A203
3. What made you want to take part in National Citizen Service (NCS)?	A203
4. Why do you think NCS is so popular?	A203
5. What do you think youth provision will look like in the future?	A301a
6. How could youth groups appeal to more young people?	A301
7. What subcultures exist among young people today?	A302

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