Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport

Local Youth Transformation

Guidance for Local Authorities

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Table of Contents

Who is this document for? **2**

1. Introduction **2**

2. What Transformation Looks Like **3**

2.1. In practice, effective local authority stewardship involves: 3

3. Essential Requirements for LYT: **4**

4. Local Landscape Review **5**

5. Local Youth Strategy **5**

6. Implementation Plan **7**

6.1. Pathfinder Examples of Implementation Plan and Delivery: 8

7. Evaluation **10**

8. Practical Implementation & Governance Guidance **10**

Annex A: Helpful Resources **12**

Who is this document for?

This document has been produced for local authorities and partners participating in the Local Youth Transformation programme. It sets out the vision and expected practices to develop a successful local youth offer.

1. Introduction

This Government recognises the transformative role that youth services play in young people's lives. On the 10th of December, the Government published 'Youth Matters: Your National Youth Strategy' alongside a State of the Nation report, with commitments to ensuring that every young person across the country has somewhere to go, something to do, and someone who cares.

Grounded in three core operational shifts, Youth Matters aims to reshape youth provision nationwide:

- **From national to local**: We are empowering local communities to design and deliver programmes in line with their own unique priorities and needs.
- **From fragmented to collaborative**: We are transforming a disjointed landscape into a collaborative ecosystem, where services for young people—from mental health and careers support to youth clubs—work together to ensure young people thrive.
- **From excluded to empowered**: By co-creating every Young Futures Hub and Local Youth Transformation plan with young people, we are ensuring they are the architects of their own future.

Local authorities play a unique, foundational role in bringing this vision to life. Under Section 507B of the Education Act 1996 (supported by the latest statutory guidance published in 2023), local authorities hold a statutory duty to "secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient provision of educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people" and to make sure young people have a say in the local offer. We know that some local authorities have faced challenges in meeting this duty – and yet it is key to enabling all young people to unlock their potential.

Our vision is to develop high-quality, sustainable, and inclusive local youth offer across all local authority areas. The Local Youth Transformation (LYT) programme aims to facilitate this, rebuilding local authority capability and leadership to ensure a local youth offer which addresses the needs of young people. By empowering young people, restoring local capability, and embedding continuous improvement, LYT ensures every young person - regardless of their background or location - has access to safe places, engaging activities, and trusted adult support.

Local Youth Transformation funding spans the entire local authority area. Therefore, all associated transformation activities and resources should focus on enhancing all youth provision rather than solely establishing a Young Futures Hub.

Local Youth Transformation is made up of the following key stages: Local Landscape Review, Local Youth Strategy development, collaborative co-creation of an Implementation Plan, and ongoing evaluation.

2. What Transformation Looks Like

Local authorities act as strategic system leaders and stewards of the local youth service ecosystem - shaping vision, driving quality, and maximising impact. Crucially, having strategic oversight of the youth offer does not necessarily mean bringing direct service delivery of youth services in-house.

2.1. In practice, effective local authority stewardship involves:

Understanding sufficiency	Convening partners	Enabling youth voice	Building Workforce and Infrastructure	Aligning Resources	Assuring Quality
Continuously mapping and understanding the local youth population in terms of socio-demographic characteristics, analysing provision to identify gaps, and ensuring a comprehensive, accessible offer meets the varied needs of all young people.	Bringing together voluntary, community, commercial, and public sector organisations to build collaborative networks, eliminate duplication, and deliver a shared local vision.	Embedding opportunities for young people to co-design services, influence strategic priorities, and evaluate provision across the area.	Supporting professional development for local youth workers, facilitating sharing of training and resources, and strengthening long-term sector capacity.	Strategically connecting funding streams, joint commissioning, and working with partners to use combined resources (e.g. training, websites, staff, volunteers) for community benefit.	Setting robust outcome frameworks, monitoring standards, and supporting continuous improvement across all partner provision.

3. Essential Requirements for LYT:

3.1. **Local Landscape Review:** Local authorities must complete a comprehensive landscape review to gain an understanding of both the current needs of young people and the existing local provision.

3.2. **Local Youth Service Strategy:** Local authorities must establish a clear and comprehensive Local Youth Strategy. While it may be structured in alignment with Youth Matters, the strategy must directly incorporate insights from the local landscape review and provide a detailed plan for enhancing and expanding local youth provision.

3.3. **Implementation Plan:** Local authorities must develop a plan of transformation projects and activities in response to the local landscape review findings. The plan should be co-created with young people and local partners.

3.4. **Evaluation:** Throughout the programme, local authorities must participate in evaluation activities conducted by our evaluation partner.

Throughout all activities, local authorities should comply with the following branding requirements (DCMS will provide a branding and logo toolkit to support with this):

- The materials or products produced contain the Local Youth Transformation title.
- The 'Funded by UK Government' logo is visible on all materials or products.
- The 'Youth Matters' logo associated with the National Youth Strategy is visible on materials or products where appropriate.

Pathfinder Example: Liverpool

The Liverpool Local Youth Transformation Pilot is an example of building the foundations of a stronger youth system co-designed with young people. This transformation addresses systemic challenges through sustained investment, professional development, and putting structures in place to connect all relevant services and organisations. The programme's key initiatives so far include:

- Reconnecting the youth sector through coordinated partnership events called 'Young Liverpool', to give young people meaningful opportunities to directly shape local policy and decisions;
- Commissioning Liverpool's first comprehensive Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for youth work;
- Developing a 'digital front door' (an AI-enabled digital platform to serve as a unified entry point for young people and families); and
- Securing a £1 million annual commitment to youth work through Public Health and the council's core budget, with over £100k invested in workforce development, and 300 funded learning opportunities.

4. Local Landscape Review

First, local authorities must complete a comprehensive review to gain an understanding of both the current needs of young people and the existing local provision. This can be done by conducting a fresh assessment or building upon other recent service reviews.

Essential:

With support from the delivery partner, we expect local authorities and partners to:

- Map the existing youth offer, including local and national initiatives (relevant statutory and non-statutory services, and voluntary sector provision). This should build on existing mapping work, including the National Youth Agency's National Youth Sector Census.
- Assess delivery of youth services to meet the statutory duty, identifying areas to develop through the programme, taking into consideration previous recent service/peer reviews. The sufficiency of provision should be assessed against young people's needs and expectations of service delivery in the area.
- Review the wider characteristics of the existing local youth offer. This should include current levels of provision and need, youth voice and participation, workforce, quality and safeguarding measures, infrastructure, governance, local partnership capacity, funding/resource flows and the authority's own capability to steward the system.
- Understand the needs of young people living and studying in the area, including by engaging with and considering non-formally connected young people such as those with SEND.
- Identify gaps and challenges across the whole local authority youth offer.

Go further:

- Consider the nine essentials of the statutory duty toolkit when planning and structuring the local landscape review.
- Work with local schools, Voluntary and Community Sector (VCSE) services, and outreach services to get the widest possible range of views from young people, especially those facing barriers to engaging.

5. Local Youth Strategy

Local authorities are expected to publish a Local Youth Strategy, co-created with young people and partners. If local authorities already have a local youth strategy this can be updated, amended, or used in its current form if it already aligns with the needs outlined in the local landscape review. Local authorities can decide how to structure the strategy, ensuring it reflects local priorities and the local context.

Essential:

We expect the strategy to:

- Set a clear, ambitious long-term vision and include short- and medium-term actions.
- Align with local services (including health, education, safety, and social care) for a cohesive approach, addressing any gaps in provision identified through the local landscape review.
- Align with the core objectives of Youth Matters: empowering young people, reducing isolation, and improving local support systems.
- Be co-created with young people, ensuring their priorities shape commissioning and delivery, and local partners including statutory and non-statutory services and organisations (e.g. health, policing, and education providers), and the VCSE.
- Be approved by elected members and the Director of Children's Services (DCS).
- Be published publicly as a "live" dynamic document, with annual progress reports (including a review of progress by young people).

We also expect local authorities to engage with local young people at least every 6 months to review progress against the strategy. The approach used to engage young people should be shaped around their needs and should ensure feedback is collected from a diverse, representative group.

Go Further:

- Structure the strategy around Youth Matters pillars/chapters (Places to go, Things to do, and People who care).
- Expand the strategy to cover evidence of need and sufficiency; young people's priorities; organisations active in the local youth system and respective roles; youth voice and accountability; workforce; quality; partnerships and infrastructure; governance; resources and sustainability.

6. Implementation Plan

Drawing on the local landscape review, each local authority must co-create an implementation plan for delivery during the programme – by March 2029. The plan should reflect local strategic priorities, directly align with findings from the landscape review, and set out the intended improvements to local youth offers. Authorities may decide which priorities to address, how many to include, and the approach to delivery.

Essentials:

We expect the plan to:

- Be co-created with young people and other local partners.
- Be based on the local landscape review findings.
- Set out the early steps to deliver the Local Youth Strategy including how, when and by whom the initial actions will be delivered.
- Include clear key performance indicators (KPIs) and delivery milestones to track and measure progress, and detail on how these will be reported on and scrutinised to keep delivery on track.
- Where a local need is identified, implementation plans should cover the following topics (alongside others decided locally):
    - **Establishing/improving structures and systems for the long-term**, such as governance bodies, youth boards, data management platforms, and quality frameworks, that remain embedded beyond initial funding (e.g., Hartlepool's data management systems or Southwark's cross-council commissioning).
    - **Strengthening workforce capability,** for example through structured development pathways (Levels 1–3), annual Continuous Professional Development calendars, and VCSE upskilling programmes so staff can sustain service improvements independently (e.g. models used in Cornwall, Islington, Peterborough, and Derbyshire).
    - **Setting up formal partnership forums, steering groups, and VCSE-led networks** to reduce fragmentation and maintain collaboration long-term (e.g., Peterborough's working groups, Stoke's Youth Collective, or Doncaster's membership-based model).
    - **Adopting shared standards** (such as the National Youth Agency's quality assurance frameworks, updated youth work curricula, and common safeguarding expectations) across all local providers to ensure consistent quality.
    - **Securing senior leadership buy-in** to continuing to take a strategic approach to youth services long-term, co-created with young people and partners, beyond the DCMS funding.

6.1. Pathfinder Examples of Implementation Plan and Delivery:

Cornwall Council *(Implementation Plan Focus: Place-Based Infrastructure & Co-Production)*

Cornwall Council recruited dedicated Area Leads to deliver direct outreach to young people and establish Area Youth Summits with VCSE organisations for joint co-production. This drove collaborative place-based Youth Offers that fed into the broader county-wide strategy while connecting youth feedback directly to local elected officials through Community Area Partnerships. Through this coordination model, the council mapped previously unreached providers and rebuilt trust across the voluntary sector. *Key Implementation Insight:* Dedicated local leads help bridge trust and coordination gaps, though delivery plans in geographically diverse or rural areas must adapt to differing regional sector profiles and physical distance barriers.

Derbyshire County Council *(Implementation Plan Focus: Workforce Development & Governance)*

Informed by findings from its local landscape review, Derbyshire County Council commissioned accredited Level 2 and Level 3 Youth Work qualifications to upskill staff across council departments, district councils, and local VCSE partners. By partnering with StreetGames to integrate youth voice and CPD pathways into workforce development, the council built sustainable sector capability and established a countywide Youth Board for ongoing strategic governance.

Islington Council example *(Implementation Plan Focus: Test-and-Learn Pilots & VCSE Co-Production)*

Islington allocated funding toward agile "test-and-learn" pilots with Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations to deliver targeted support for key groups, including youth at risk of Serious Youth Violence or becoming NEET, and LGBTQI+ groups. By embedding the Lundy Model framework for youth participation, establishing play-to-youth transition pathways, and offering hands-on coaching, the council co-created flexible cross-provider initiatives that directly strengthen local sector capability. *Key Implementation Insight:* Structuring onward grants with built-in reflection loops enables local authorities to harness external expertise, adapt delivery in real time, and produce shared best-practice toolkits for long-term sustainability.

Oxfordshire County Council Example *(Implementation Plan Focus: Hyper-Local Partnerships & Youth Empowerment)*

Oxfordshire local authority established Local Youth Partnerships (LYPs) across six district councils and creating trained youth panels - adapted from existing SEND youth forum models - to evaluate local services and manage micro-grants for youth-led social action. To strengthen local delivery, funding was paired with targeted VCSE capacity building in bid writing, governance, and business planning. *Key Implementation Insight:* When designing multi-district governance structures, local authorities must account for local delivery capacity early and resolve legal barriers (such as data-sharing agreements and onward grant distribution mechanisms) from the outset.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council *(Implementation Plan Focus: Youth-Led Governance & Systemic Co-Production)*

Stoke-on-Trent embedded youth voice directly into governance through a dedicated Youth Participation Officer, cross-sector roundtables, and system-wide adoption of Lundy's Model of Participation. The city created paid Youth Ambassador roles for around 30 young people to facilitate co-production and research, alongside establishing 'Young Health Champions' and 'Young Safeguarding Champions' to co-design interventions with public health and safeguarding teams. *Key Implementation Insight:* Formalising and paying young people as participation leads shifts organisational culture toward sustainable co-production, generating localised evidence while creating a scalable engagement model for other council directorates.

7. Evaluation

Evaluation is crucial to informing our understanding of how the programme is being delivered in different contexts, to help us assess the impact of the programme, and further inform national policy on the Young Futures Hubs and Transformation Programme.

Local authorities will be asked to take part in evaluation activities. This will involve working with the commissioned independent evaluator(s).

Evaluation activities that you may be asked to participate in include, but are not limited to:

- Interviews
- Surveys
- Case studies
- Collection of additional management information

Local authorities will be expected to facilitate engagement in the evaluation, as required. This may include engagement from local authority staff, Young Futures Hubs teams and partners, trusted adults that support young people to engage with Young Futures Hubs, local partners and providers of the wider youth offer, and any other relevant stakeholders. Local authorities will also be required to work with the independent evaluator(s) to consider and develop the approach to monitoring information, data collection and data sharing, and the implementation of a core set of metrics to support evaluation activity.

Participating in the evaluation will also be beneficial to local authorities. It will help understand whether the funding is achieving its intended goals and objectives: identifying areas for improvement, informing decision-making and driving effective service delivery to meet young people's needs. The commissioned independent evaluator(s) will support local authorities in meeting the needs of the evaluation.

We expect local authorities to respond to any reasonable additional requests from the Young Futures Hubs and Transformation Team to support with any retrospective assessment or evaluation as to the impact or value for money of the programme fund. We may also ask for details related to areas of improvement identified during the programme (e.g. information relating to new partnerships or workforce development activity), to examine legacy impacts.

Further information on the evaluation will be shared in due course.

8. Practical Implementation & Governance Guidance

Practical steps to consider:

- **Engage seniors early:** Involve Chief Executives, DCSs, and Lead Members for Youth Services during the initial onboarding and mobilisation stage, and in approving the Implementation Plan. Ensuring senior leadership buy-in early should help with navigating and unblocking internal processes.

- **Establish a Delivery Board (or utilise an existing board):** Set up a monthly Steering Group chaired by the DCS or Senior Sponsor with authority to resolve inter-departmental issues and integrate planning into wider youth related initiatives (e.g. Family Hub networks, Children and Young People's Strategic Partnerships, or *Families First* boards).

- **Procurement preparation:** Understanding internal processes and sign offs and timelines for procurement can help prepare for any blockers. Build a relationship with the commercial lead.

- **Implement escalation processes:** Agree with the Senior Sponsor how to escalate key issues that could delay important progress (e.g., procurement stalls, or resourcing challenges).

- **Prioritise Partner Engagement:** Be open and honest from the start about likely issues, operational hurdles, and the time and input required from them. This is particularly critical when engaging VCSE partners who may operate with constrained budgets and limited capacity. Establish a Terms of Reference or other guidelines for agreed commitments and ways of working.

- **Establish Early Project Management Capacity:** Identify existing staff, in particular project managers, who can be deployed to support delivery and/or use initial planning funding to recruit staff into key roles at pace.

- **Sustainability**: Use evidence of the impact of youth services, including benefits to wider services, to support long-term sustainability. Consider how LYT funding can support longer-term change (e.g. improved delivery models, strengthened VCSE capacity, and multi-year commissioning strategies).

- **Aligning Local Budgets:** Align LYT funding with wider council priorities to embed core youth funding within mainstream local authority budget cycles over the longer term.

Annex A: Helpful Resources

This document should be read alongside:

- Young Futures Hubs and Transformation Prospectus
- Young Futures Hubs Guidance, for Local Authorities also participating in the Young Futures Hubs programme
- DCMS Statutory Duty Guidance
- NYA Statutory Duty Toolkit