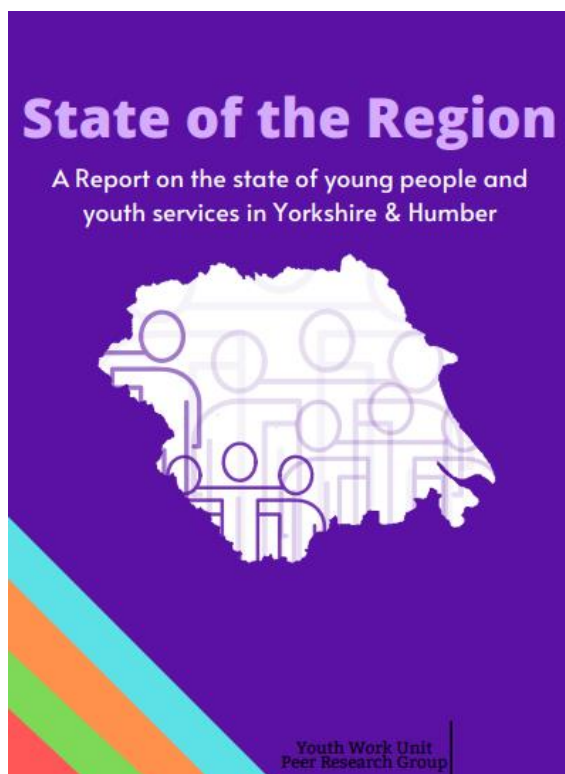


State of the Region's Youth Work Sector

And the work of the Youth Work Unit

Yorkshire and The Humber

2022



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<p>I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this report, the Peer Researchers, Youth Sector Strategic Leads, Youth Workers, University Colleagues, Members of the YWU Board and the regions young people. The report highlights the important contribution Youth Work makes not only to young people, but to their communities and our partner Sectors. The report examines the role of the YWU in supporting an ever-evolving dynamic Youth Work Sector that has remained rooted in and committed to, youth work. It has laid bare the challenges we face, and in turn challenges us to do better for the young people we serve.</p> <p><i>Charlee Bewsher - Strategy Manager YWU Y&H</i></p>	
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Foreword: Young Peer Researchers

Will – Peer Researcher

Youth work is incredibly important and consistently underappreciated. Whether that's facilitating youth voice or providing under 18's social care. The State of the Region report shines a light on the failings in the system, where we can do better and how society needs to change its attitude to youth work and young people.

Part of this research was including young people to conduct research about an area we are passionate about. For me that was the youth voice and attitudes towards young people; specifically, how the two relate and shape each other. It allowed me to learn how to conduct research but also broadened my knowledge of youth work and attitudes towards young people. I spoke to decision makers, youth workers, directors of children's services and young people to build a picture of the good and bad. By working with 3 other young people (Jude, Mitchel, and Reese; researching jobs, provision and SEND provision information online respectively) allowed us to learn from each other and develop our research together. We wanted our research to be solution based so any decision makers reading our report would have at least some ideas of how to fix the problems we researched.

The youth research project wanted to open up research to young people and prove that you don't need to work for a university to conduct high value and effective research. Especially, when what we are researching is so close to our hearts and our communities. We didn't conduct massive quantitative research (although we used it extensively), we knew that we had all the figures and statistics we needed. What we wanted to do was conduct thoughtful qualitative research, talking to people about their experiences and how they think we should move forward. Then putting the quantitative and qualitative together, giving evidence and context to what people have told us and putting humanity into numbers.

The State of the Region project I took part in was an incredible and eye-opening experience. We face a lot of different problems in 21st century life from climate change to cuts to youth work; access to health to education; Jobs and opportunities to SEND provision. We need bold and progressive policy to solve them, and we need young people to be co-designing the answers with other decision makers.

I want to give a massive thank you to Charlee, Gillian, and Christine for all the support they gave us. At the start of our research, we had no idea what we were doing but through their help, advice, and guidance we gained experience and managed to produce a piece of research we are all proud of.

Endorsements

Julie Jenkins – Chair of the ADCS Yorkshire & Humber region, Director of Children and Young People’s Services

This is important academic research that clearly sets out the position for youth work delivery in the Yorkshire and Humber region and what’s important to our young people – the top priority is their health and well-being. Directors of Children’s Services are constantly thinking about how we can respond effectively to the challenge of improving children’s outcomes in a context of diminishing resources and we face a real dilemma in the territory of early help and youth work. We know early help works, yet we alongside our partners, are increasingly unable to maintain an adequate system of preventative services. In times of rising inequality and falling investment in public services, it’s more important than ever that we spend our money wisely. Moreover, local authorities are not supported to consistently deliver open access or targeted youth services which can prevent the need for more costly, statutory intervention at a later stage. This research sets out the postcode lottery that exists in the Yorkshire & Humber region and how each area responds differently to need.

Youth work and the wider children’s workforce, which often goes unrecognised by many, came to the fore during the Covid-19 pandemic. Youth workers help and practical support has sustained many children, young people, and their families. New innovative ways of keeping in touch with young people were developed and in Calderdale we made great use of outdoor space and our allotment to safely see young people face to face. Youth workers were there, supporting young people who were struggling with concerns about their future. A huge thank you to all youth workers in the region for this invaluable help during unprecedented times: you were there for our young people.

The Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) members are clear that local government’s job is to lead and manage the risks inherent in local systems, but that central government has a responsibility to ensure statutory duties towards children, young people and families can be met. There needs to be a resetting and restoring of children’s services, this will be complex and there can be no quick fixes. We await to see the government’s response to the national review of children’s social care that covers a wide range of early help services. The Covid-19 health crisis has revealed and indeed exacerbated a series of existing issues and challenges children and families face requiring a holistic and co-ordinated policy response. These issues and challenges include, but are not limited to, a reduction in youth service delivery, a shortage of provision for children and young people with SEND; a shortage of placement options for children in our care; the impact of welfare reforms on childhoods and on life chances; sustained increases to school exclusions; and insufficient access to children’s mental health services. A long-term funding and investment strategy for local government, for children’s services and for schools is needed along with a commitment to resource preventative or ‘early help’ services sustainably.

Kevin Jones - Head of Workforce and Professional Development – NYA

This is an important, timely and welcome piece of work. Satisfyingly, it not only highlights through its findings, but also demonstrates through its methodology the benefits of a regional perspective on the development, delivery, and support of Youth Work. These benefits are evident not only to the young people who access services themselves, but also to the regional landscape of allied services working with young people and communities.

The NYA has set the ambitious target of achieving an extra 10,000 professionally qualified youth workers in England in the next 5 years, in addition to 20,000 qualified to Level 3 and 40,000 new volunteers – we think this is the baseline of what is needed to achieve a decent service to young people. Our National Workforce Strategy outlines the measures we and the sector think we need to take to achieve this, and to enable the ongoing support and development needed to ensure Youth Work is all it can be. The research undertaken here demonstrates and supports the initiatives outlined in the Strategy. Some highlights;

- The dialogue with peer researchers shows the value of engaging young people in work to develop local and regional strategy and policy, and that they value being involved. The trusting and holistic Youth Work relationship places Youth Work as the ideal service to support this work. The relationship engages with the issues which young people themselves identify as important and comes with the expectation from young people that their views will be taken seriously.
- The symbiotic partnership shown here between the University of Hull (an anchor institution and key Youth Work training provider in the area), the delivery organisations in the region through the YH Regional Youth Work Unit, and young people, is a model for how the sector should work together to improve practice, training, and outcomes for young people.
- Regions are real; the geographic and economic factors peculiar to each region are inextricably linked to the wider opportunities and challenges presented to the communities within them, and to their outcomes in income, health, employment and so on. Regional coordination of Youth Work, alongside its allied services is needed to respond to this.
- “Data Matters,” for research, strategic planning and for the development of common aims between services. The role of the Regional Youth Work units in the gathering, coordination and dissemination of this data is shown here to be key.
- The Youth Work workforce must be appropriately skilled to operate effectively in communities, and a regional focus on workforce development, linking services and training providers and informed by data is an essential function of the regional units.

These points, and the other insights from the research make a strong case for the need for regional infrastructure support in Youth Work, linking the local with the national, supporting and developing a workforce according to the needs of the region and informing the coordination of services strategically. A powerful case is also demonstrated for a role in convening regional projects, not least by the enthusiasm of the young people involved in this one for more of the same.

There is plenty more of value to be found here, both in the findings of the research, and through an appreciation of the collaborative and meticulous methodology used in the research itself. The project demonstrates, in some ways, Youth Work at its best, through the engagement of young people in learning about their lives and the influences upon them, and then working collaboratively with them to influence positive change. Thanks to all involved.

Tony Gallagher - Chair National Youth Sector Advisory Board

Regional youth work units can play a key role in connecting the local youth sector with national developments and policy. Units understanding of their respective regions supports and assists youth organisations, both local authority and voluntary, to position themselves and to plan. Workers interviewed as part of this research commented on the value of working as part of a wider network, and the support, advice, and information which a regional perspective brings. The reality however is that the reach and scope of youth work units across the country has been varied, often due to lack of funding. It is pleasing therefore that Yorkshire and Humberside have researched and is now publishing an analysis of how youth work contributes to young people's lives in the region as well as providing clear pointers about the need for the unit to play a more strategic role as voice for the sector. The report is strengthened by insightful inputs and guidance from Higher Education establishments. Young people's views are central and well documented. The approach taken to weaving in young people's views through peer research and bespoke youth work sessions provides a great practice-based model for others to follow.

Dan Jarvis MBE MP - Barnsley Central

The delivery of high-quality youth services is absolutely critical to our future prosperity. This report puts the voices of young people at its heart and provides a compelling and comprehensive review of the shortcomings of the current strategy and makes practical recommendations to improve services.

From climate change; to transport; to mental health, time and time again we've seen the difference young people can make when they join forces and speak up about issues that they're passionate about. It's vital they have access to the support they need to fulfil their ambitions. This research highlights the importance of place and how a regional focus will help young people to flourish.

I warmly welcome this report and hope the recommendations are considered and adopted so that where you grow up doesn't determine where you end up, and the next generation are best placed to shape their own futures.

Emma Hardy MP, Hull West, and Hessle

This report is a timely examination of youth work in the region. It presents a wide-ranging and in-depth look at the current situation, against the backdrop of the seemingly never-ending reduction in central funding to local authorities and the affects this is having on provision of youth services.

As a Member of Parliament, I regularly meet with young people both in the constituency and in Parliament. Too often, while being told they are the key to our future they are simultaneously blamed for problems they have played no part in creating and feel that their views and experiences are not valued. I welcome this report's decision to put young people at the heart of this enquiry through peer-led research. It is no surprise to me that the young people involved found it hugely rewarding, and the report's conclusion that there is a need for a long-term approach to engaging and working with peer researchers is one which should be followed.

I hope this report will lead to greater recognition of the value of the work undertaken by youth workers and the Youth Work Unit itself, the support they need, and a stronger voice for the young people involved.

Professor Richard Woolley, Head of School of Education, Faculty of Arts Culture and Education, University of Hull

I am delighted to endorse this *'State of the Region's Youth Work and the work of the Youth Work Unit - Yorkshire and Humber'* (2022) research report. It makes a significant contribution to understanding the issues that matter to young people and that affect their everyday lives. The report shines a light on the changing landscape of youth work and raises the profile and importance of youth work as a profession. Young people have been at the heart of this research. It is incredibly positive to note the participatory peer research methods that were developed through the project and the commitment to working collaboratively with youth work organisations and partner universities in the region. As a School of Education, we are driven by the belief that education is an empowering force, capable of challenging inequalities and injustices in society. This report has relevance to young people, those who work with them, policy makers, funders and anyone wanting to become a youth worker and make a difference in the lives of young people. It signals the ongoing need for research as a tool for making a difference in relation to key challenges. Knowledge exchange between universities and practice is an increasingly important process in closing the gap between policy and practice in pursuit of advancing social justice.

I am proud of the University of Hull's longstanding commitment to delivering transformative youth and community-related education. For over twenty years we have led the field, and our committed and expert team continue to strive for excellence in youth work and the preparation of youth workers.

Professor Stephen Hardy, Dean of the Faculty of Business, Law & Politics and Civic Engagement Lead, University of Hull.

This is a much welcome and important report on the *'State of the Region's Youth Work And the work of the Youth Work Unit - Yorkshire and Humber'* (2022).

The significant findings of this report highlight a variable picture of youth work within the region and the significant challenges arising including national sector service cuts and the impact of the pandemic. There are numerous examples of excellent practice within the region and effective needs led approaches to youth work in place across the Yorkshire and Humber region.

The research also provides a useful resource for knowledge exchange and civic engagement given the highly connected partnerships' working it evidences. To that end, this empirical work created a partnership approach to research perspectives of young people and those engaged in youth work in the region, through a network of 5 Yorkshire Universities. Accordingly, I endorse this report for finding new ways to develop this important work, by co-ordinating and maintaining networks for youth workers and young people, to maximise opportunities for collaborative, shared learning.

Abbreviations

APPG – All Party Parliamentary Group

ADCS - Association Directors Children’s Services

BAME – Black Asian Minority Ethnic

CIO- Company Interest Organisation

CSE – Child Sexual Exploitation

CYI - Centre for Youth Impact

COP 26 – Conference of the Parties

ESB – Endorsement and Quality Standards Board for Community Development

HESA – Higher Education Statistics Agency

IMD – Indices Multiple Deprivation

JSNA – Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

LA – Local Authority

LGA – Local Government Association

LGTBQ + - Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual, Queer +

NIHR – National Institute for Health Care Research

NTS – National Transfer Scheme

NCS – National Citizenship Service

NHS – National Health Service

NYA – National Youth Agency

OCN – Open College Network

OFS – Office for Students

OHID – Office for Health Improvement and Disparities

ONS – Office for National Statistics

Onside – A National Charity that establishes and creates youth zones

RYCA – Regional Youth Climate Assembly

SEND - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

TUC – Trade Union Congress

UASC – Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

U of H – University of Hull

VCSE – Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise

YH- Yorkshire and the Humber

YWU – Regional Youth Work Unit – Yorkshire and Humber

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Executive Summary

Context

Yorkshire and Humber [YH] is a region of contrasts. It is the third largest region in England and is made up of urban, rural, and coastal areas with high levels of affluence and established patterns of deprivation. YH is also the third most diverse region after London and the West Midlands. According to the 2021 Census there was an estimated 1,022,998 young people aged 10-24 living in YH. Those young people are growing up in unprecedented times where transitions into adulthood are marked by significant differences in terms of space, place and opportunities that will impact across the life course. Young people's lives are structured by where they live, the schools they go to, the communities they are a part of, as well as the assets, resources, opportunities, and services they have access to and can make use of.

The report identifies that over a decade of austerity measures, and subsequent cuts to services, has produced a sharp rise in poverty and inequality in the YH region. The impact on the lives of young people, especially those living in the most deprived communities in YH has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Yorkshire and Humber along with the Northeast and West Midlands have comparatively higher levels of poverty driven by worklessness. Young people in Yorkshire live in some of the most deprived wards in the UK and are working in sectors where jobs are likely to be most at risk. This research explored local, regional, and national data sets which connected to some of the perspectives young people shared in this research about the lives they live in YH and the issues that matter to them including whether they feel that there is an 'equity in access to services and opportunities' and whether there are 'affordable homes and jobs' that are not precarious. Over a decade of deep cuts to youth services has meant variable and often limited access to support to young people in being able to access places to go, things to do and people to talk to. The pandemic highlighted the pivotal role that youth work continues to play in the lives of young people and the need for consistency as future youth offers are developed in the region. The report found that the Youth Work Unit [YWU] has a key role to play in working strategically with young people and key stakeholders to sharpen the role of youth work in engaging young people in identifying solutions that address regional inequalities impacting future life chances.

The purpose of the research study

This research is the first of its kind between the University of Hull, located in the School of Education, Social Justice research theme group and the YWU, supported by Universities of Huddersfield, Leeds Beckett, York St John, and Sheffield Hallam to provide a qualitative insight into perspectives of young people about the issues that are important to them, the state of youth work in the YH Region and to explore the advocacy, support and influence role and purpose of the Yorkshire and Humber Youth Work Unit (YWU) in a changing landscape. The Warren, a Youth Project based in Hull, developed infographics and a film to provide an alternative and accessible way of presenting the research. The research was conducted over a twelve-month period between May 2021 and April 2022. The research benefitted from a small Research England grant and in-kind resources from each of the participating universities especially in terms of time and expertise, a commitment to the principle of knowledge exchange, and the role of research in policy and in practice.

Method of data gathering

The project used collaborative action research methodology (Mcniff and Whitehead 2013, Feldman, and Rowell 2019) as a process to draw on multiple perspectives of a range of stakeholders including young people and those who are engaged in work in the youth work sector and who work with the YWU including youth workers. The research was organised in two parts. The first part was led by young peer researchers who worked with young people and youth workers during a youth voice weekend residential to gain insight into perspectives including challenges faced by young people and the changing nature of youth work practices through the pandemic. In the second part of the research, YWU staff worked collaboratively with the University of Hull through their existing networks, to organise themed dialogues using focus groups as a method with key stakeholders to facilitate a discussion relating to the state of youth work in the YH Region.

Technical documents including the application for ethics, the schedule for research activities and focus group questions are available upon request.

The project sought to harness and build on the YWU's strong tradition of working collaboratively in the region with young people and their youth workers, strategic youth work leads and local universities. The process of the research was designed to inform ongoing discussions about the changing landscape of youth work, and the role of the YWU

as an infrastructure organisation in advocating for the sufficiency of youth work as part of the development of a future 'youth offer. This is in line with the YWU's aim to ensure that all young people living in YH have sufficient and consistent access to high quality youth work provision.

Overview of themes

The research highlighted the complexities inherent in seeking to create a regional overview of what it is like for young people growing up in the YH, the size and shape of the youth work sector and the varied challenges it faces in responding to young people's needs. The fragmented nature of youth work across the region creates challenges for the YWU in how it strategically directs limited resources to advocate for and support the development of a sufficiency in high-quality youth services and equitable access to them in equal measure. The research encountered numerous examples of innovation and good practice in response to young people's needs, government policy and funding initiatives. There was, however, an inconsistent picture which highlighted potential gaps in organising structures that facilitate strategic mobilisation of resources and collaboration in developing sufficiency in youth work across the region. At the time of this research being undertaken several Local Authorities were in the process of updating their plans and local leaders have a potential role to play in raising awareness of the work of the YWU. As one strategic lead said in the research *'there needs to be a concerted effort at the local level to ensure that Heads of Services understand the role of the YWU and are able to incorporate this into strategic planning processes and in relation to local funding bids.'*

Key Themes

The research identified five key themes relating to issues that were identified by participants and explored from different perspectives across all focus groups. Linked to each theme are key questions designed to act as a catalyst for further collaborative inquiry and strategic action to ensure the sufficiency of youth work across the YH region

The themes are:

- In the middle and on the margins
- Data Matters
- Nothing about us without us
- Workforce development

And

- Working Collaboratively.

In the middle and on the margins

The research highlighted that the YWU was recognised as pivotal to the operationalisation of national youth work policy and strategy and valued by participants in providing infrastructure activities including opportunities for networking and training. The research highlighted how the YWU was in the middle of work to support the sector through a range of infrastructure activities but on the margins in terms of how it is supported in developing and sustaining its own capacity.

Key questions emerging from this theme included:

- Does the YWU need to review its model of membership and support functions in dialogue with local authorities and voluntary sector partners?
- Is there a need for the YWU to diversify long term funding streams to address internal capacity and retain independence within the youth work sector?

Data Matters

This research highlighted the challenges of working across data to understand issues impacting young people and the size and shape of the youth work sector in the YH region meaningfully.

Accessibility of existing data, the quality and gaps in data combined with a lack of agreed and shared criteria to inform data gathering often means that comparison and analysis is not always possible. This was identified as presenting challenges for the youth work sector in being able to identify trends, inform planning processes and priorities and in advocating for resources.

The research highlighted both the need for further discussion about the role and purpose of regional data sets in relation to key stakeholders, locally, regionally, and nationally, and the challenges that the YWU must navigate in relation to facilitating the capacity of the youth work sector to work productively with data to produce high quality youth services, with the

rights of young people and the ongoing need for data processes that facilitate the voices of young people themselves.

Key questions emerging from this theme included:

- What data would be useful to collate at the regional level in relation to young people, youth work and youth services?
- How can regional data sets be used to highlight gaps and identify priorities for collaboration?
- What role can regional data play in advocating for resources into the region against agreed priorities?

Nothing about us without us

The requirement to engage young people in decisions about them is now well documented and enshrined in legislation. In this context this research has highlighted the vital role that peer research can play in enabling young people to identify and investigate issues that are important to them and shine a light on experiences from their own perspective. Peer research as a participatory methodology offers an approach to research designed to enable young people to take informed action and to play a role in influencing and setting agendas which potentially opens new understandings and shape solutions.

This research highlighted how peer research gives recognition to young people as assets rather than as 'problems to be fixed.' Peer researchers who participated in this research identified the need for a longer-term plan for peer research as part of a regional youth work strategy, the potential to upscale peer research projects, consideration of how to support peer researchers to train young people in participatory approaches, the development of peer research methods and creative methods for dissemination.

Key questions that emerged from this theme included

- Is there a need to develop a long-term plan for peer research as an integral part of the YWU?

- What organising structures does the YWU require to embed peer research and young people's engagement in shaping policy priorities and agendas for action?
- Is there a need for training opportunities for decision makers seeking to work with young people on peer research projects and voice and influence work more generally?
- Is there a need to look at opportunities for accreditation of peer researchers?

Workforce development

There is currently no local, regional, or national picture of what constitutes the youth workforce, their qualifications, where they are located, what they do, how they are funded and supported in YH. A review of Local Authority Corporate Plans and Children and Young People plans do not generally provide information about long term youth work force requirements and often where professionally qualified youth work posts are advertised within the region, they often do not offer a realistic career pathway including hours of employment and salary in line with graduate employment. The research highlighted a gap between long term policy aspiration to grow the youth work sector including investment in professionally qualifying 10,000 youth workers (NYA and YMCA 2021) and short-term realism driven by a perception from participants that the youth work sector is unable to meet workforce needs with 'failure to recruit' most cited as evidence of this. Participants highlighted the benefits of developing a regional youth work strategy in line with the national youth work force strategy with the aim of mapping and planning for future workforce needs that reflect the diversity of communities of young people it seeks to work with and training requirements.

Key questions emerging from this theme included

- Is there a need for a regional workforce group to advance youth workforce development including entry, progression, recruitment, and diversity?
- How can youth workforce initiatives be shared across the region including 'grow your own,' internships and placements?
- Is there a need for the YWU to review its own workforce strategy including diversification of workforce, progression, and succession planning?
- Is there a need for a national campaign to foreground youth work as a career to address failure to recruit

Working collaboratively

The research identified the vital role of collaboration and partnership in the leadership, management, and delivery of youth work in the region. There is a diverse range of formal and informal partnerships and commitment to collaboration across the region. Participants highlighted that collaboration and working in partnership were infrastructure activities and required recognition as such. Often the time and resources required to enable effective collaborations were overlooked. The role of the YWU was identified as central in enabling youth work providers to network with each other in the region to develop high quality youth work and to connect to national policies and priorities. Local infrastructure organisations play a significant role in understanding the scale and scope of local youth work activity and in joining up communication with smaller organisations who may have less capacity. They also play a significant role in bridging the gap between uniformed organisations, smaller self-help groups and the funded Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) and Local Authority and for this reason were understood to be well placed to track local provision and feed this into a wider regional picture via the YWU. Effective partnership working and collaboration was seen to be central to maximising specialisms, avoiding competition, duplication, and maximising limited resources. Participants highlighted the need for a formalised regional partnership made up of stakeholders who are responsible for strategic decision making to initiate and drive youth work strategy in the YH

Key questions emerging from this theme included

1. There is a need for a formalised regional strategic partnership for youth work: what should the terms of reference be, who are the key stakeholders?
2. What is the mechanism to ensure that a regional strategic partnership for youth work is locally responsive, accountable, open, and transparent?
3. What are the strategies for engaging young people who reflect the diversity of communities they are part of as part of strategic partnership arrangements regionally?

Future directions

The research highlights the complex environment in which youth work operates in local authority areas and the political and ethical imperative of renewing local youth offers that play a central role in redressing inequalities and in enabling young people to develop capabilities to thrive, make good transitions into adulthood and maximise life chances

The diverse range of contributors to the project, in and of itself, reflects the rich ecology of the youth work sector across YH and the commitment to work collaboratively to strengthen the consistency and quality of the youth work offer to young people across the region.

Overall, the research highlights the pivotal role of the YWU as part of this ecology of youth work provision in YH and the potential for greater strategic collaboration across the region in relation to workforce development, recruitment training and impact and quality measures

The research identified the need for greater collaboration with the YWU in the strategic development of youth work across the region and its contribution to priorities across policy areas by Senior Leaders including Heads of Children's Services, Metro Mayors, Health, Education and Police Crime Commissioners.

There is scope to explore a formalised strategic partnership with key stakeholders which can increase capacity to mobilise, attract and target resources into youth work. YH has a strong university presence and there is untapped potential in terms of their role as anchor institutions including opening funding for research and evaluation and in contributing to workforce development strategies for professionally qualifying youth workers.

Finally, this research offered a reminder of both the creativity and commitment of young people when there are opportunities to participate and play a role in making a difference in the communities of which they are a part.

Introduction

The Report Structure

The report is organised into five main sections following this introductory section. The sections are:

1. An overview of the project aims methodology and limitations
2. The context for the research.
3. A statistical insight in relation to the lives of diverse groups of young people living in YH.
4. A summary of outcomes from primary research and participant perspectives
5. The themes are identified and discussed and report conclusion

About the Regional Youth Work Unit – Yorkshire and Humber

The Yorkshire and Humber Regional Youth Work Unit (YWU) a Company Interest Organisation (CIO) was established in 1998 it is a registered charitable incorporated organisation, governed by trustees who collectively have expertise in leading, managing and delivering youth work internationally, nationally, regionally, and locally in the UK. The YWU vision is that ‘all young people have access to high quality youth provision delivered by a thriving vibrant youth sector’ (YWU Nd: online). The YWU is part of a network of eight independent regional youth work units across England who collaboratively seek to:

...act as hubs for developing and supporting youth work in their regions, working with commissioners, providers, and young people themselves to ensure the sector is well-informed, skilled, and responsive to changes in government policies and young people’s needs. (Network of Regional Youth Work Units Nd: online)

The size, shape, and scope of activity of regional units and funding to support this varies across England. Although the YWU is situated in Yorkshire and the Humber (YH), one of the largest regions in England, it is one of the smaller units employing 4 part time staff and supported by 25 volunteers. Funding for the YWU comes from a diverse range of sources to support Youth Voice and Social Action Work delivered in partnership with the British Youth Council. Funding for Youth Voice work comes from the NHS, Ernest Cooke, and Combined Local Authorities. Funding to support the operationalisation of national strategy and support to the regions Youth Sector locally comes from a range of funders including Local

Government, the National Youth Agency (NYA), Centre for Youth Impact (CYI) and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

The establishment of regional government offices in 1994 co-ordinated the implementation of national government policies and acted as a conduit for a range of initiatives including the context for the development of the YWU in 1998. In this period Local Authorities, as the strategic lead for youth services, worked collaboratively with the YWU to coordinate regional responses and communications with government offices. In 2011 government offices were dissolved alongside a general shift of focus away from geographic regions to a more direct relationship between central and local government.

Whilst Local Authorities continue to be responsible for ensuring the sufficiency of youth work a decade of austerity, unprecedented cuts to youth services and the erosion of traditional structures for organising youth work services have dramatically transformed the operating environment for the YWU and key stakeholders.

Examples of this include:

- changes in boundaries and governance through the devolution agenda and the establishment of mayors in West and South Yorkshire
- a diversification of providers across the voluntary and statutory sectors including McDonald's commitment to one youth worker in every McDonald's in the UK, creation of youth work posts within Housing Associations and the NHS as part of a national network of youth work providers and the growth of Onside initiatives
- movement and community-based practices designed to transform cities and services and facilitate social action. Including for example UK Youth, Marmot Cities and People's Powerhouse
- key funders playing a more proactive role in collaborating through initiatives such as the Funders Collective to strengthen youth work infrastructure and impact.

The changes in the landscape of youth work have required the YWU to be flexible and adaptive in responding to the needs of the youth work sector in YH. This research provided an opportunity for the YWU to think with young people and key stakeholders about the contemporary context for youth work in YH and going forward its strategic role in enabling youth work to thrive in the region in an increasingly fragmented environment.

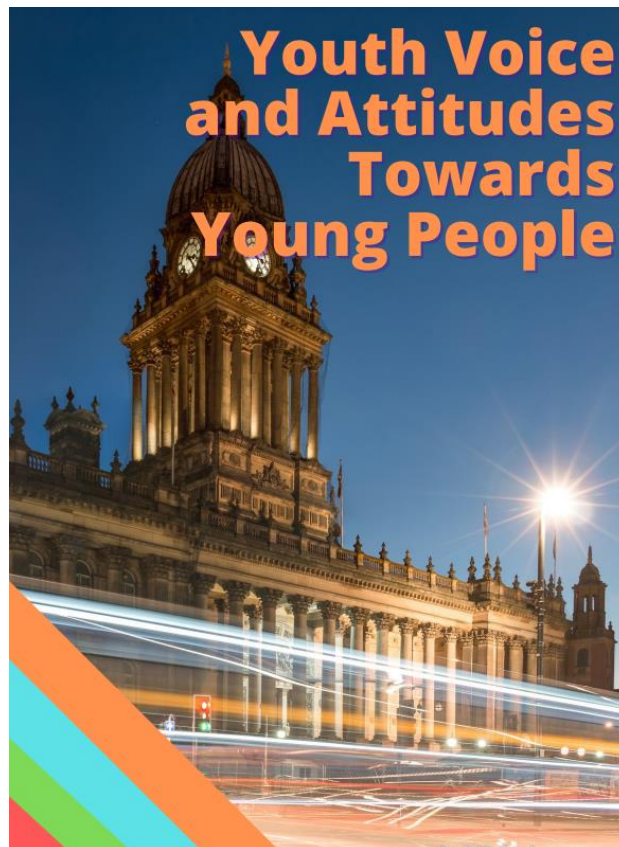
The Project

This is a joint project between the University of Hull, located in the School of Education, Social Justice research theme group and the YWU, supported by Universities of Huddersfield, Leeds Beckett, York St John, and Sheffield Hallam to provide a qualitative insight into the state of youth work in the YH Region. The project sought to harness and build on the YWU's strong tradition of working collaboratively in the region with young people and their youth workers, strategic youth work leads and local universities. The process of the research was designed to inform ongoing discussions about the changing landscape of youth work, and the role of the YWU as an infrastructure organisation in advocating for the sufficiency of youth work as part of the development of a future 'youth offer'. This is in line with the YWU's aim to ensure that all young people living in YH have access to high quality youth work provision.

Section One

Collaborative Action Research

Methodology



Peer researcher: *There is a very particular distinction I'd like to draw between voice and consultation. A senior youth worker in Yorkshire & Humber told me: "I think there is a massive difference between consultation and voice. The reason I say that is; I can consult you ... but I don't have to listen to [you] ... But if I listen to you, if I hear you, if I give you voice and give you the opportunity to participate in the decision-making processes that means I have to co-design the answer [with you]".*

Methodology, time scale and funding

The project used collaborative action research methodology (Mcniff and Whitehead 2013, Feldman, and Rowell 2019) as a process to draw on multiple perspectives of a range of stakeholders who are engaged in work in the youth work sector and who work with the YWU (Youth Work Unit) including young people and youth workers. The diverse range of contributors to the project, in and of itself, reflects the rich ecology of the youth work sector across YH (Yorkshire and the Humber) and the commitment to work collaboratively to strengthen the consistency and quality of the offer to young people across the region.

The project generated primary data to build on secondary data already in the public domain to explore questions that included:

1. the state, shape, and size of youth work provision
2. what a future 'youth offer' can look like for young people aged 11-25 years
3. youth sector strengths, gaps, opportunities, and challenges in seeking to deliver a future 'youth offer' in the region.
4. the role of the regional youth work unit as an infrastructure organisation in enabling the youth sector to develop and deliver a future 'youth offer.'

The project team used the statutory definition for 'services for young people' as set out in Section 507B of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (updated from the Education Act 1996) as a working definition for youth work to inform the research.

"Sufficient educational leisure-time activities" which are for the improvement of the well-being of qualifying young persons in the authority's area must include sufficient educational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their personal and social development, and

"Sufficient facilities for such activities" must include sufficient facilities for educational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of the personal and social development of qualifying young persons in the authority's area." (Section 6, 1 a and b)

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 identifies 'qualifying' young people as:

persons who have attained the age of 13 but not the age of 20; and

(b) persons who have attained the age of 20 but not the age of 25 and have a learning difficulty (within the meaning of section 13(5)(a) and (6) of the Learning and Skills Act 2000), (Section 6, 2 a and b).

Whilst the primary age focus was 13- 19 and 19-24 the project team acknowledge that some youth work provision will work with young people at an earlier age. The NYA (National

Youth Agency) in its youth work census methodology extended the age range of focus to include the 8–12-year age group (NYA 2021). This research adopts that rationale for extending the age range to incorporate this younger age group in consideration of secondary data.

The University of Hull provided ethical clearance for this research project. The project was in two parts:

Peer Research - May – November 2021

and

Themed Dialogues - November 2021 and April 2022.

The project teams work drew on Hughes and Cooper (2015) paper reflecting on a collaborative participatory action research project with young people to inform thinking about the design of the methodology and to think through potential ethical issues that might arise in the project given the multi-faced approach and to take account of power differences in relationships.

The University of Hull and the other supporting universities contributed in-kind resources including staff time to support the delivery of the project. In January 2022, the University of Hull was able to secure a small piece of Research England funding to work with The Warren, a citywide Youth Project in Hull, to collaborate with young people to develop the content of the report into accessible infographics and a short film. The funding also enabled the project team to employ a research assistant who supported the project with general data collection. The questions that formed the focus for inquiry were generated by staff in the YWU in discussion with the University of Hull project team.

YWU staff worked collaboratively with the University of Hull through their existing networks and to plan activities to generate data. The process included a young people's residential weekend, together with themed dialogues at a strategic meeting of youth work leads, a meeting with university representatives from Sheffield, Huddersfield, York, and Leeds Beckett who are part of the YWU Higher Education Network, a YWU volunteers and ex volunteers' session and with YWU trustees and staff. Each themed dialogue drew on the method of focus group to facilitate a discussion relating to the state of youth work in the YH Region. Throughout the lifespan of the project there were regular meetings between the

University of Hull and the YWU to oversee and reflect on the research and to address practical issues as they arose.

Peer research

A key part of the collaborative action research methodology used in this project was the engagement of young people in peer led work. This peer led element constituted a lead into the project and a process for engaging young people and youth workers in the research. Participants were also provided with an opportunity to critically reflect on their experiences of undertaking peer research. The YWU were responsible for engaging and recruiting young people who participated as peer researchers through their existing networks. The University of Hull worked alongside the YWU to work with young people to reflect on their experiences of working with each other and staff from the YWU and the university through a process of peer research and to identify areas for further development. Throughout this phase of the project young people had access to one-to-one support from members of the project team.

The sessions were conducted virtually, using zoom for meetings and Google Jam Board to capture ideas and discussions. Group sessions were held on different issues, which were designed to enable young people to engage and direct their research including inputs on ethics and methods. The YWU ensured a process was in place to cover expenses incurred through the research period. Each young person undertook a mini research project as part of this phase. Young people also facilitated data gathering at a regional residential event, described in the next section. Young People disseminated the findings from their mini research projects at a Regional YWU event, participated in evaluation and presented their reflections on their experiences of engaging with a process of peer research at the first national Peer Research Conference organised by the Young Foundation. The four areas covered in the peer research were:

- Youth Voice and attitudes towards Young People,
- Enrichment - Is it still relevant to the modern youth?
- Employment and Opportunity Accessibility through Covid-19,
- SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) provision - access all areas

The research was written into a report by young people titled 'State of the region. Report on

young people and youth services in Yorkshire and Humber.’ (Smith, Solomon, Winter, Spanton: 2021). Young people felt that there were a range of other research areas that they could have chosen to investigate ranging from ‘transport to sex education, climate change to carers’ they highlighted their view that ‘big issues’ were also specific to young people’s lived experiences.

The Residential

The residential included youth work activities that created opportunities for group discussion between young people and youth workers engaged in Youth Voice Work from across the YH Region. The YWU used their team of peer researchers to support the facilitation of activities, which generated insight from young people about their perspectives and experiences of youth work in the region. The YWU’s existing policies and procedures were used to seek consent from young people and their parent, guardian, or carer for the event. There was an accompanying information sheet about the residential which included the collaboration with the university and that the YWU would provide access to materials generated from the residential with researchers from the university. Young people and youth workers were required to participate in two 1.5-hour activities scheduled as part of the overall residential activity. Young people in the residential had the choice about whether to take part in the two peer led research sessions. Alternative activities were available for any young person who chose not to participate.

Themed dialogues

Themed dialogues were convened by the YWU and provided participants with an information sheet and obtained consent to give access to the materials generated from the dialogue with University of Hull Researchers. Where participants were unable to join a themed dialogue there was an option to meet on a one-to-one basis with researchers.

Participants in the themed dialogues included: strategic leads of youth work provision located in the statutory and voluntary sector, local and sub regional infrastructure organisations, staff and trustees of the regional youth work unit and academics from universities located in the region with a history of delivering professional youth work education. Together participants reflected on key issues with their peers. Each of the themed dialogues used a similar set of questions to stimulate discussion and used ‘open space’ techniques to identify any further reflections or issues not covered through the

session. All participants were offered the opportunity to share further reflections as a follow up from the themed dialogue either face to face with one of the project team or by email. The questions that ran through all dialogues were organised into three key areas drawing on participants' experience to reflect on:

- 1) issues relating to the 'sufficiency' of youth work, what a future youth work offer might look like within the region and opportunities, challenges, and areas for development of youth work provision.
- 2) the role of the regional youth work unit in responding to the needs of youth work providers within the region paying particular attention to areas of strength, areas for development and future focus
- 3) working in partnership at the regional level.

The themed dialogues were facilitated by members of the project team from the University of Hull and in relation to strategic leads facilitated by Sheffield University, Leeds Beckett University and Huddersfield University. There were three sessions organised; South and West Yorkshire, East and North Yorkshire, a general session where strategic leads from any part of YH could participate and one to one dialogue with a member of the project team where a strategic lead was unable to participate in one of the sessions.

The themed dialogue with participants from universities included a reflection on issues raised by strategic leads and implications for what the role of HE (Higher Education) is going forward. A member of the project team also participated in meetings convened by the YWU for strategic leads over an 8-month period, which provided a broad contextual backdrop to themed dialogues within the research and ensured that perspectives from leads in each of the Local Authority areas was incorporated. In addition, the YWU lead met one to one with each strategic lead and reflected on this in a one to one with a university researcher in relation to issues raised through the process.

Secondary data analysis

Secondary data analysis included a systematic review of Local Authority Corporate plans, Children and Young People's plans and Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA) in YH. A range of national and regional reports that had been published between 2019 and 2022 were also reviewed.

Make Your Mark is the UK's largest survey of 11 to 18-year-olds, offering the opportunity to have a say on policies they want to introduce or change. The Make Your Mark voting priorities (British Youth Council 2022) were used as a way of structuring data gathering using several different data sources including ONS (Office for National Statistics) and Public Health Fingertips. The project team identified that there were limitations to the Make your Mark voting priorities including the formulation of those priorities, which are discussed in the Centre for Youth Impact technical report (2022) incorporating analysis of the process. The Make your Mark areas were a way of generating data specific to the voting priorities of young people who participated in the survey and who were identified as residing in YH. The rationale was that this gave some consistency to the principle of the project to find diverse ways both in the primary and secondary data collection processes where possible to connect to the perspectives of young people. Additional data searches were used linked to existing national, regional, and local sector reports including the Centre for Youth Impact, National Youth Agency, and the Children's Commissioner Big Ask, Answers Report (2021).

Students from the University of Hull in their second year Issues and Interventions module on the BA (Hons) Education Studies and Youth and Community pathway, worked alongside the module team, who are also the research leads for this project, to undertake an initial scoping of data already in the public domain relating to young people aged 11-25 years living in YH. Students had an opportunity to see first-hand the role of data in understanding issues and interventions in youth work, using a real-world example as part of their learning through the module linked to taught inputs. Reports and research referred to in this write up draw where possible on research, reports and resources that are accessible online.

Contribution to shifting power in university/community relationships

The methodology was multi-layered and designed to be open-ended and developmental in building research capacity through knowledge exchange work in collaboration with universities and key stakeholders. The resources from universities in the initial phases of the research were in kind in the hope that the process could seed ways of working that close the gap between research, policy, and practice through knowledge exchange. This is a crucial change in approach from the previous, more traditional framing of knowledge transfer – assuming the university as ‘expert.’ Changing the language signifies that ‘exchange’ foregrounds the two-way nature which values knowledge and experience from all stakeholders engaged in the process. Across the HE sector there is an increasing

commitment to promote closer links between universities and community partners – in this case young people and youth work sector partners. This shift is crucial in approaches to engagement and developing a sense of joint ownership of knowledge. There have been researchers that have worked in this way for many years, and such approaches are now developing traction to become more mainstream, with the recognition that engaging in co-created projects there will be more sense of joint ownership and as such increased impact. This is an established practice in youth work with the recognition that ‘working with’ is more important than ‘doing to’ - which aligns with the old knowledge transfer approach. The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement enhances the engagement of the public with research and assists the HE sector in developing two-way engagement. This includes examples such as: Civic University Agreements, enabling Universities to demonstrate what contribution they make in their regions to people, place, partnership, and impact. This aligns with a movement to shift power and cultures of funding regimes. The Ideas Fund for example, with funding from Wellcome Trust via the British Science Association, promotes a relational rather than transactional approach to collaboration enabling communities to lead projects and invite researchers to be part of the process flipping the usual power dynamics. Research England encourages knowledge exchange to explore ways of closing the gap between policy and practice and The UKRI (UK Research and Innovation) and The Young Foundation’s new initiative offering funding to create researcher/community networks promoting greater involvement of communities in research and builds on the more established initiatives such as Public Patient Involvement in health. Recently the National Institute for Health Care Research (NIHR) has been working with The Forum in Hull on a piece of work about Hull and York Universities - to explore the possibilities of increasing connectedness between communities and researchers. The learning from this piece of research is, therefore, part of this movement for change in which young people and youth work sector partners' perspectives and practices have been at the centre of the process of shifting emphasis and power towards more equitable approaches to working with participants as partners in research.

Limitations of the methodology

The research worked through existing YWU networks, which whilst a strength was also a limitation, as the perspectives and practices of those not engaged in established networks are not captured through this process. All YH Local Authority areas are reflected in the

research drawing on statutory and VCSE perspectives from participants who are a part of the existing YWU networks. The issues raised are not intended to be presented as representative of the whole of the youth work sector in the YH region but to offer orientations to inform further dialogue and action in relation to the role of the YWU in a changing youth work landscape. Inevitably there are voices that are not captured through this process. Participants raised, for example, the increasing challenge for smaller organisations and underrepresented groups even with the support of local infrastructure organisations they continue to have limited capacity to raise issues relevant to the development of the youth work sector and particularly in addressing systemic issues related to discrimination.

There is recognition therefore, of the need to read the perspectives and practices reflected in this report as emergent from existing and established ways of working. Further research inquiry in this field of study should consider meaningful ways of how to gain greater insight into voices that are underrepresented. This was a key reflection from the peer research element of this project which also highlighted the importance of intersectional approaches to understanding 'youth-issues.'

Various parts of the project moved at different timescales and whilst the funded element of the project enhanced what was possible to achieve, the short deadlines were challenging and shifted the priority focus. A significant part of this project was conducted online which offered many benefits including minimising barriers of geography for meeting. The online nature of communication did however, also slow the project down significantly. Student engagement offers an invaluable resource to developing research projects such as this but there needs to be further consideration of the scheduling of activity to maximise learning for students at the same time as benefitting the process. The search for regional data sets highlighted the fragmented nature of data relating to both young people and the youth work sector specifically in relation to YH and more generally at the National level. Data is dynamic and continually in the process of being updated. Data presented in this research should be monitored and updated as part of an ongoing commitment to gather and analyse regional level data sets. A fuller discussion on 'data matters' is discussed in section two and five of this report.

Section Two

Context for the Research



Youth clubs were once a beacon of social interaction and were a part of the average teenager's weekly routine, during the 1970s and '80s and even before that right from the 1930s

A changing landscape

The impact of cuts to youth work services across a decade of austerity are now well documented (LGA (Local Government Association) 2021, NYA & YMCA 2021, YMCA 2020). The youth work sector nationally, regionally, and locally is in a state of flux. However, at the national level there continues to be significant developmental strides in constructing the architecture that will enable the youth work sector to regenerate and respond to the contemporary challenges that young people will encounter over the next decade and beyond (APPG 2021). There is, however, less qualitative insight into perspectives and practices in response to the unprecedented challenges during the pandemic and the impact upon young people, communities, and the youth work sector. What evidence does exist points to the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on northern communities and the YH Region (Longfield 2020, Office for Health Improvement and disparities 2021) in ways that have had a devastating, enduring and often hidden impact. In this context:

Local Authority (LA) and voluntary sector youth work professionals are concerned that within the current rapidly changing Children & Young People's Services (C&YPS) environment that the values, principles, standards, skills, methodologies, and professional practice of youth work, remain on offer to young people (YWU Nd 2021: online).

Covid-19 exposed deep regional divides in the UK in relation to inequalities, impacting on health and wellbeing and future life chances. In 2018 The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) introduced a new measurement of poverty in recognition of the need to understand the contemporary context referred to in their 2022 report understanding poverty (JRF 2022). This included a focus on 'persistent poverty' and 'destitution' including 500,000 children (JRF 2022). Marmot (2022) describes the contemporary context of rising levels of poverty and growing health inequalities exacerbated through the pandemic as driving society towards a 'humanitarian calamity'. Lewis (2022) highlights the impact of the rise in living costs including energy bills as creating both the conditions and potential for civil unrest in communities. In policy and practice YH can be seen as faring poorly in relation to a range of outcomes for young people and consistently worse by comparison to other regions. Young people living in poorer areas in YH continue to be disproportionately affected by a period of austerity where the most significant income losses occurred in households in which children and young people are living (Pickett et.al 2021).

A 21st Century vision for youth work

Youth Work in collaboration with a range of other youth and community service providers has a pivotal role in working with young people in communities to shape a fairer future and in ensuring engagement in civil society to work creatively and collaboratively to solve 21st century issues that matter to young people. The LGA have set out for example their long-term vision and principles for effective youth services (LGA 2017) and the call for young people to sit at the heart of Covid-led recovery (LGA 2022 online). The NYA have outlined a vision for youth work (NYA, 2020a) and launched a curriculum for youth work NYA (2020b). Davies (2021) explores a Manifesto for Youth Work initiated in 2005, revised in 2015 and during Covid-19 revisited defining features and reflected on the 'current political context and the struggles and opportunities for youth work' in contemporary times.

Mind the Gap

There is significant consensus across a diverse youth work sector of the need to hold young people at the centre of a holistic, joined up, asset-based approach to policy making that shape interventions into their lives (Thornton 2019, Voices that Shake 2021, De St Croix and Doherty 2022). In recent times there has been increased investment in posts and resources targeted to build research infrastructure capacity within national organisations such as UK Youth, NYA, and The Centre for Youth Impact (CYI) with an aim of demonstrating impact and in developing evidence-based practice.

This research identified that organisations such as the YWU often play a role in facilitating engagement of the sector in national research projects but funding to support infrastructure to do this is often not sufficiently factored into strategic plans.

Universities can be described as anchor institutions within local and regional communities in terms of contribution to the local economy and more broadly in relation to communities of interest. They also offer the potential to contribute to research capacity and knowledge exchange as discussed in the previous section. This project identified 80 pieces of research just in the University of Hull related to young people, youth services and or youth work. It was difficult to identify the extent to which such research had been disseminated and impacted upon youth work practices. This highlighted a finding for further collaboration and inquiry between universities and the youth work sector to explore ways of closing the gap between research, policy, and processes to maximise accessibility of research and its influence in practice. The recent work of De St Croix and Doherty (2022) providing resources

designed to improve an understanding of the value of youth work is one of many examples of the considerable role universities can play in building capacity in the youth work sector.

This research identified knowledge exchange as a potential means to enable a strengthening of collaboration with universities with a view to developing research-informed relationships in the youth work sector that are needs-led, engage young people, practitioners, and policy makers in co-joining policy and practice.

Such a view is supported by the growth of national research (Beresford 2021, Cottam 2018, Williams 2021) that provides compelling evidence for new ways of organising to address local social issues and the need for a change in relationships between social institutions, services, professionals, young people, and communities. Such research points to an ongoing need for collaborative work that continues to explore the range of participatory methodologies that can be harnessed in knowledge exchange work and to strengthen ways of working that are rooted in young people's lived experience and are asset based and solution focused.

This research identified the potential of peer research as part of knowledge exchange process to close the gap between research by young people into their own lived experiences, policy, and youth work practice.

Levelling up, regional inequalities and the role of youth work

The policy context in which the YWU operates is uncertain and fragile. The YWU has a key role in facilitating an understanding of various decision-making contexts for youth work across the region. The YWU also plays a key role in raising awareness of best practices in youth work and the role such practices can play in informing equitable local policies that are

- targeted to maximising limited resources

and

- work to reverse the trend of rising levels of poverty, inequality, and the social determinants of this as they relate to young people.

In February 2022, the Conservative government published its flagship policy to level up the UK in recognition of the growing regional inequalities that have taken root and have been compounded by the pandemic. The Levelling up Agenda is described as a bold and ambitious strategy to reverse the overall trend of poverty, rising levels of inequality and

discrimination that impacts on young people's life chances and to strengthen community empowerment (Housing and Communities 2022).

The Levelling Up Paper acknowledges the complex and multi-layered nature of inequality and the interweave between a range of issues that require sustained long-term intervention across a range of policy areas and metrics designed to support that. 'Twelve missions' have been articulated in the Levelling up paper which signal a commitment to a cross cutting approach to combat regional inequalities and were designed to act as policy objective (Housing and Communities 2022 xvii - xviii). The missions are wide reaching and include living standards, transport and infrastructure, digital connectivity, education, health, wellbeing, pride in place, through to housing, crime, local leadership and research and development (Housing and Communities 2022 xvii -xviii). These broad mission areas map to issues raised by participants in the research including young people themselves both in regional feedback gathered by peer researchers and in focus group discussions, through a review of Local Authority corporate plans and children and young people plans. For example, young people expressed concern about the contrast of living in an urban or rural area in YH and the impact on being able to access youth services relating to their health and wellbeing. Young people also commented on their love of YH but feeling unable to stay or return to the region due to lack of opportunities.

The Child of the North Report

The Child of the North: Building A Fairer Future After Covid-19" report (Pickett et.al 2021) was cited in a recent House of Commons debate in March 2022 (Hansard 2022) exploring the discursive ways in which child poverty sits at the forefront of regional inequalities. Before housing costs YH were identified as having the third highest levels of child poverty after the northeast and west midlands, In YH, Hull was identified as having the 5th highest rate of poverty (Pickett et.al: 2021:17). The same report emphasises how 'interpersonal, cultural and structural racism impact on deep health inequalities' and how belonging to a minority ethnic group is also powerfully associated with child poverty' (Pickett et.al 2021:17). The report highlights the 'urgent need to consider the intersections of child poverty and ethnicity as well as other aspects of identity such as gender, disability and age' (Pickett et.al 2021:17). Key stakeholders within the YH will need to consider strategies for engaging and embedding such intersections in future research inquiry.

Youth Offer

The DCMS is responsible for the formulation of policy in relation to youth services. The DCMS in 2018, as part of the Civil Society Strategy, and in Feb 2022 as part of the Levelling up agenda, referred to the ongoing commitment to provide greater clarity on the Statutory Duty for Local Authorities on youth services. The commitment to level up youth work provision in areas of high need in regions across England is already beginning to make a difference in redressing deep cuts to services. However, perspectives from key stakeholders in this research highlighted the need to also underpin this with clear guidance on the sufficiency of youth work to build consistency back into the sector.

The policy context for youth services remains incoherent and fragmented. This research highlighted the harmful impact of piecemeal ‘policy churn,’ especially in the last decade. Notwithstanding that there has also been significant lobbying and commitment to rebuild the architecture for youth work specifically and youth services in recent times. There has also been an ongoing call from grass roots organisations through to national bodies for increased join up of key policy areas and a more integrated approach to local youth offers as this was seen to be one way of maximising limited resources. Increased collaboration across policy areas has the potential to harness skills and capabilities of key stakeholders both horizontally and vertically and the ability to be increasingly agile in responding to diverse needs of young people (APPG 2021, NYA (c) 2020, Choose Youth Nd: Online, In Defence of Youth Work Nd: Online).

Historic cuts now well documented have limited the potential of what policy does exist to realise ambitious aspirations for young people to flourish and the LGA (Local Government Association:2021) has documented the budgetary pressures faced by local authorities and the need to focus resources to child protection activities.

Reading across the policy landscape the Civil Society Strategy 2018 for example gives clear recognition to the ‘transformational impact that youth services and trained youth workers can have, especially for young people facing multiple barriers or disadvantages’ (Civil Society Strategy 2018:42). Other key policy areas relevant to the Levelling Up agenda and the strengthening of local youth work offers includes the National Supporting Families Outcome Framework and programme 2022 -2025 which extends the earlier ‘troubled families’ policy commitment, drawn up by former PM David Cameron post the 2011 ‘riots. This policy

focused on parental responsibility, to implement an integrated approach to working with vulnerable families and in transforming public services in response to a range of issues including domestic abuse, homelessness, and youth offending. The Health and Social Care Integration White Paper (Department of Health and Social Care 2022) has connectivity with the Supporting Families Programme and the Levelling up agenda more generally including the emphasis on young people's mental health and wellbeing. The recent SEND Green Paper launched for consultation in March 2022 aims to review SEND and alternative provision with the aim of ensuring that it places an emphasis on young people having the 'opportunity to thrive' and to receive 'the right support at the right time' (Department of Education 2022).

The policy commitment to a Levelling Up Agenda has resulted in a range of local initiatives that will continue to have a life span beyond the pandemic and continue to contribute to the transformation of how key stakeholders work together and respond to social issues locally including the Holiday Hunger Scheme (DofE (Department of Education) 2022), Social Prescribing (Office for Health Improvements and Disparities 2022), Volunteering and Social Action (Volunteering Matters and UK Youth 2021), National Citizen Service (NCS Nd: Online) and going forward the extension of uniformed groups and the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme into schools (DofE 2021).

Councils have responsibilities under the Children Act 1989 and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child)) to ensure children and young people have space and opportunity to articulate their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and a right to have those views taken seriously in the formulation of policy and provision of youth services. Article 12 states:

'Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child' (UNCRC 1989: online).

The Children Act 2004 and more latterly Children and Families Act 2014) which focuses on moving towards early identification and intervention to help support the child, but also their wider family and living environment. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 places duties on the Police, Clinical Commissioning Groups and Local Authorities to work together (and with other partners locally) to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their

area. The Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 statutory guidance refines this, and Para 59 recognises that ‘youth services not delivered by local authorities or district councils’ are of importance. Para 60 confirms that this applies to volunteers also. Other relevant legislation and guidance includes but not limited to:

Legislation and guidance	
-Crime and Disorder Act (1998)	Data Protection Act (2018)
-Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act (1999)	-Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0-25 years (2015/updated 2020)
-Education Act (2002)	
-Equality Act (2010)	-Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy (2021)
-Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014)	-Domestic Abuse Act (2021)
-Modern Slavery Act (2015)	-Police, Crime, Courts, and Sentencing Act (2022)
-Counter terrorism and security Act (2015)	
-Sustainable Development Goals (2015)	

Sufficiency – a Youth Services Duty

As referred to in the previous section, the 2006 Education and Inspections Act, Section 507b still requires Local Authorities to retain a responsibility 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. This is often referred to as the ‘youth services duty.’

In part this research sought to better understand the factors that impinge and enable the emergence of local youth offers from participants' perspectives taking account of a decade of austerity measures and the impact of Covid-19 on youth services, young people and whether there were commonly understood and agreed metrics to determine this.

A local offer in this report is understood in its broadest terms to include the full range of youth services and youth related activity delivered formally and informally by the VCSE and the statutory sector. To give some further focus to this the recent NYA Census report (2021a:5) identifies four main parts of the sector including National uniformed organisations, especially those affiliated to Scouts and Girlguiding, Local Authority youth

services, Voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations which are not affiliated to a national uniformed organisations and provision which is delivered through faith groups.

It was a clear finding from participants in this research that there was a great deal of variation in local offers and in the capacity to advocate, develop and sustain local youth offers. There was recognition that Covid had already distorted a hard to read picture about the coherence and accessibility of local youth offers. In 2021 the NYA published Times Running out which highlighted that Youth Services were 'in crises and the need for long term investment' and that puts 'young people at the heart of Covid Recovery' (NYA 2021b: 2-3). Understanding the shape and size of youth work is a key measure that was identified in the APPG for Youth Work in 2019 and which has led to the launch of the first National Youth Work Census in 2020.

National Census

The UK Civil Society Almanac 2021 provides a broad backdrop to understanding the shape and size of the VCSE. In this context the NYA initiated a National Youth Work Census to provide an initial snapshot of youth work provision. The Youth Work Census whilst identifying key limitations in the collation of data is designed to develop in substance and scope more in-depth analysis over the longer term in terms of telling a story matched to local knowledge and what is happening in practice. A report outlining initial Census findings has been published (NYA 2021a) but at the time of authoring this report further findings from the data is still in process of being analysed. The initial snapshot indicated that regional infrastructure support made up 13% of overall reported provision and that in the YH region 38% of provision reported was happening in areas of deprivation within the region and most of the youth work provision/direct delivery being delivered at a local/community level (NYA 2021a:14). In 2021 alongside the initial Census report, a further report 'Overlooked' was published by the NYA (2021c) which highlighted the disparities between rural and urban youth work provision. This was identified as something especially significant to young people as participants in this research living in rural and coastal areas in YH and concerns linked to this related to loneliness, equality of access to key services and transport.

Some Local Authority areas had adapted practices to put in place good local infrastructure to interpret government policy and match what was happening in local communities in

response to local issues. This contrasts with other parts of the region where youth work provision was described by participants in this research as ‘patchy to non-existent.’

The role of data, addressing Inequalities and targeting interventions

The Levelling Up White Paper (2022) identifies how initiatives to achieve lasting change have often been ‘hamstrung by a lack of data’ and the commitment therefore to ensure that there is investment in systems, structures and processes which facilitate comparable data on ‘performance.’ The DCMS, in devising a methodology for the eligibility criteria for levelling up funding, highlighted the limitations of comparable data sets. Something this research also encountered in trying to produce meaningful regional data sets.

Despite YH being cited by Public Health as having 6 Local Authorities in the lowest deprivation, not all these areas qualified for Youth Investment Funding. Alongside this, those areas that did qualify, may have found their funding targeted to specific Wards.

The decision to target wards located in areas of greater wealth where an area would ordinarily be excluded for eligibility for funding potentially addresses the issue of pockets of deprivation being overlooked for development. The levelling up agenda is about addressing regional inequalities and there is a recognition that those inequalities can be highly localised and therefore masked. This in turn highlights a need for policy interventions and investment of sustainable funding to redress this. Several areas in the YH were not eligible for YIF funding including Leeds, Bradford, Kirklees, Calderdale, York, and most of North Yorkshire but it was not sufficiently clear why not especially given the deprivation indicators.

Part of the decision as to where to target YIF was based on spend on youth work. Data on funding for youth work is gathered through an annual return to the DCMS. This research has identified that it is difficult to understand how criteria for Youth Work spend is interpreted by individual LAs, with some including all spend on children and young people whilst others focused on youth work. Consequently, this can distort a regional assessment and baseline of actual youth work activity. This also impacts on the question of what constitutes sufficiency in YH according to the working definition informing this research.

Section Three

Statistics



This mini-report will explore the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and recent years of funding cuts on the accessibility for young people to engage with opportunities like work experience, apprenticeships, formal work and more. Coming off the back of (hopefully) the worst we have seen of the virus, it is essential to reflect upon its damage to young people's prospects to interact with the job market meaningfully. This is to ensure that improvements can be made in years to come

Young people are unique individuals

Statistics are one way to gain a deeper understanding of the context of young people's lives including how the geographical environment shapes experience and perspectives. Every young person living in YH is a unique individual and so are the lives they go on to live as they transition into adulthood. As individual as young people are, their lives are also structured and shaped by where they live, the schools they go to, the communities they are a part of, as well as the assets, resources, opportunities, and services they have access to and can make use of.

Many local, regional, and national data sets connect to some of the perspectives young people shared in this research about the lives they live in YH and the issues that matter to them including whether they feel that there is an 'equity in access to services and opportunities' and whether there are 'affordable homes and jobs' that are not precarious.

Long term impact of inequality over the life course

This section of the report offers a snapshot of statistics that help to tell a story about what it means to be a young person living in YH in contemporary times. The statistics provide a partial insight of the challenges young people face and how the pandemic impacted in certain areas of their lives more than in other parts of England. Wilkinson and Pickett's study (2010, 2018) highlights the long-term impact of inequality over their life course in terms of a range of social issues including poverty, health inequalities, exposure to violence and increased likelihood of suicide and self-harm.

The region and its population

YH has a total population of 5.5 million an increase of 3.7% since the last census in 2011 and continues to be the largest county in England (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID), 2021).



Figure 1- Regional map of Yorkshire and Humber showing four sub regions

Fifteen local authorities operate across Yorkshire and are organised into four sub regions, which are West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and four local authorities of North Lincolnshire, Northeast Lincolnshire, Kingston upon Hull, and East Riding located in the Humber.

As part of devolution West and South Yorkshire have established Metro Mayors in place. North Yorkshire and City of York are in the process of moving to a mayoral system. Hull and East Riding rejected the idea of establishing a Metro Mayor as it was considered that the two authorities were too small to justify this. The two authorities have been successful in securing a joint county- based devolution deal and as part of the Levelling Up agenda are in the process of moving to a Combined Authority with a rotation of council leaders in the role of Chair.

YH is made up of urban, rural, and coastal areas. Leeds located in West Yorkshire is the largest City in YH and the third largest in the UK. Data identifies that 21.4 % of young people living in Bradford are under 15 making it the highest youth population in YH and fourth highest in England (OHID, 2021). The University cities of Hull, Leeds, Sheffield, and York have 'higher proportions of young adults (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities 2021). YH is the 3rd most diverse region after London and the West Midlands. Populations from ethnic minority groups are estimated at 10.4% (ONS 2020).

Data from the 2021 Census identified that Hull is the most densely populated Local Authority area and Ryedale is the most sparsely populated area in Yorkshire. Six of the Yorkshire and Humber local authorities are within the 25% of local authorities with highest

deprivation score overall including Bradford and Hull (Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government (2019)). According to the 2021 Census there were an estimated 1,022,998 young people aged 10-24 living in the YH. This can be broken down to:

Age	Totals	Percentage
10-14	338,241	33%
15-19	313,855	30%
20-24	370,902	37%
Total	1,022,998	100%

Figure 2: Census (2021) Youth Population, 10 -24 years living in YH 2021

Age	Male		Female	
	Total no's	%	Total no's	%
10-14	171,414	17	166,827	16
15-19	160,429	16	153,426	15
20-24	189,194	18	181,708	18
	521,037	51	501,961	49

Figure 3: Census (2021) breakdown of youth population by gender. *Does not reflect young people who do not identify as either male or female

Data highlights Yorkshire and Humber as the 3rd most diverse region in England after London and the West Midlands making up 10.4 % of the population. (ONS 2020) Across the region there is variation in the demographic with a lower proportion of residents categorised as from an ethnic minority in Barnsley and East Riding by comparison to Bradford.

According to the Census (2021) 29% of young people aged 10 -24 years of age have been identified as BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic).

Age	Total	White British %	BAME %
10-24	1,022,998	71% (726,328)	29% (296,669)

Figure 4: Census (2021) breakdown of youth population by ethnicity

Additionally Young People known or believed to be other than English between the age of 10 -24 living in the YH are estimated to make up 16% of the population (163679).

YH is part of the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for unaccompanied asylum seeking

children (UASC) and has been part of this since 2016. There are three entry authorities in the region Hull, NE Lincs and N Lincs. According to Migrant Watch YH in 2020 was responsible for caring for approximately 300 UASC. Migrant Watch highlight the difficulty in Identifying official data but that their informal regional data in 2020 identified over 500 former UASC care leavers in receipt of services (Migrant Watch 2020).

According to Nickson (2016) this type of data highlights that the region is 'superdiverse' linguistically, culturally, and demographically. 'Superdiversity is a 'a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade' (Vertovec, 2007:1024),

Migrant Watch (2020) in written feedback to Parliamentary Committee identified that UASC who live in rural or less ethnically diverse areas often have 'challenges in accessing services such as ESOL, tailored education, activities, sports, youth groups and opportunities to meet up with other young people.' They often must travel long distances to attend places of worship and have other cultural needs met. Some UASC can find this experience difficult and isolating and express a wish to move to London or to bigger cities such as Leeds or Sheffield. Migrant Watch (2020) feedback also identified that 'boredom coupled with previous trauma can have a negative impact on the emotional well-being of young people. Such feedback resonates with many of the issues highlighted by young people who participated in this research about living in rural areas outlined in section 4 of this research. Nickson (2022) notes that although Vertovecs observation is over a decade old, superdiversity has (if anything) increased in the region since Vertovec (and others drew) superdiversity to attention. Nickson, 2016:24 highlights that

'superdiversity' has implications which include recognising that the characterization of migration as a process of 'waves' of settlement by ethnically, socially, or economically homogeneous people are inaccurate. From this, a further implication is that policies associated with the management of migration including language policies and policies in relation to youth provision should be formulated to reflect the realities of superdiversity if they are to be effective.'

Nickson (2022) identifies a key challenge for practice and practitioners has its origins in the failure (deliberate or otherwise) of state policy to embed 'superdiversity as an approach to policy making from a monocultural and mono-linguistic perspective (e.g., 'Life in the UK,'

narratives around British values) that insists migrants cohere or 'integrate' into 'British culture.' (Nickson 2016:24) suggests that such a policy approach is 'not to face the reality of contemporary UK' (Nickson 2016:24). This research identifies the need for Ongoing collaboration to engage Unaccompanied Children Asylum Seeking (UCAS) to make their voices visible in relation to concerns articulated via organisations such as Migrant Watch and to consider the implications for youth work provision across the region.

Make Your Mark – Young People's Ballot

This report now turns its attention to statistics analysis in relation to Make your Mark themes. Earlier in the report this research outlined that the project team chose to use the Make your Mark themes that were used in the 2022 survey as a way of identifying and structuring key statistics in relation to those themes. In 2018 the ONS identified the total UK youth population 11-18 years as 6,152,619 of which 513,794 were identified as living in the YH (BYC 2022).

There were 434,492 who voted in the Make your Mark Survey across the UK representing a turnout of 7.06% of the total eligibility (BYC 2022), this included 55,042 from YH, which represented 10.71% of those eligible to vote. This was 3.65% above the overall UK average (BYC 2022). Within Yorkshire, Barnsley was identified as having the highest voter turnout in the region and Doncaster, Wakefield and Northeast Lincolnshire appearing in the top 20 areas for voter turnout in the UK (BYC 2022). Bradford had one of the lowest voters turn outs (BYC 2022) and it may be significant that the area has limited local infrastructure to support citywide, regional, or national youth voice. In the North YH alongside the Northwest and Northeast had above national average voter turnout.

The extent to which there is a correlation between the engagement of young people in political education initiatives such as Make Your Mark, youth parliaments and infrastructure support from Regional Youth Work Units, given the higher voter turnout by comparison. This research identifies this as a potential area of further inquiry beyond the scope of this research project. A further point to note is the dramatic drop in overall voting at the national level and regional level in previous years especially 2018 and 19. It is likely that Covid-19 has had a cumulative impact on voting levels reflecting in voter turnout but again, this would need to be explore in greater depth to assess the extent of correlation.

The 7 key themes ranked in terms of voter priority in the YH region are highlighted in **figure 5 below**:

Make Your Mark 2022					
Priority Yorkshire and Humber	Priority overall voter UK	Issue	Yorkshire and Humber	UK	% Contribution to overall vote
1	1	Health and Well Being	12267	93023	13.18 %
2	2	Jobs, Money, Homes, and Opportunities	11629	81068	14.34%
3	4	Education and Learning	9034	77470	11.66%
4	3	Environment	8855	74500	11.88%
5	5	Poverty	6493	53058	12.23%
6	7	Covid Recovery	3824	27349	13.9%
7	6	Our Rights and Democracy	2940	28024	10.49%

Figure 5- Overview of Make Your Mark Survey results highlighting voting priorities in Yorkshire and Humber

It is beyond the scope of this research to undertake an analysis of the findings from the Make Your Mark Survey. Voting at regional level did however understandably produce local variations in priority ranking. It is however not possible from the Make Your Mark Statistics alone to understand the significance of this. There was only slight variation between voting priorities for voters in YH and overall, in the UK with ‘Environment’ being ranked in voting priority over ‘education’ and ‘Covid Recovery’ being ranked in voting priority over ‘Our Rights and Democracy.’

Young voters across all voting areas ranked health and wellbeing above child poverty. Kingston Upon Hull ranked Health, Education, Jobs, and environment higher in voting than poverty. Kingston Upon Hull has one of the highest proportions of child poverty in the country, with 33.4 % of children living in relative poverty. As a comparator only 5% of local authorities were identified as having a child poverty rate of over 30% (DWP 2021).

Our Rights and Democracy was ranked lowest in voter priority with 2940 votes regionally which is a potential area of inquiry given that the young people participating in the survey are likely to be the most engaged.

The statistics alone are not sufficient to fully understand voter choices, how they compare to national statistics about the voter's themes and the significance of these. As stated earlier the survey was, according to the British Youth Council, intended as a catalyst for further research with young people at a 'local level' (BYC 2022:3).

Health and Wellbeing 12,267
<p>Health and wellbeing were ranked highest as a voting priority by young people living in the YH region. 'Health and wellbeing' are umbrella terms that includes issues relating to mental and physical health.</p> <p>The broad framing of health and wellbeing spanning mental and physical health was reflected in the topics included in the Make your Mark survey which covered improved access to Mental Health Support, End Food Poverty and Banning Gay Conversion Therapy. The inter-relationship between health as a public issue that impacts on the life chances of young people over the life course is well documented (Institute of Health Equity 2020). There is a lower life expectancy in the YH. This translates at birth between the least and most deprived areas to a gap of 9.5 years in females and 11.2 years in males (OHID, 2021).</p> <p>In 2012 the Health and Social Care Act saw the transfer of public health from the NHS (National Health Service) to local authorities with a requirement to work with a range of stakeholders including health and the VCS to improve the health and wellbeing of young people and children. The Health and Social Care Act was updated in 2022 and along with the earlier NHS Long term plan (2019) sets out a commitment to expand Children and young people's mental health services over the next 10 years. This was critical in meeting young people's current and rising mental health needs. Newlove – Delgado et al (2021) Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2021 - wave 2 follow up to the 2017 survey reported on the rates of probable mental disorders in children and young people aged 6 to 19 years and noted an overall increase in these populations since the first survey in 2017. For 6- to 16-year-old from one in nine (11.6%) in 2017 to one in six</p>

(17.4%) in 2021 and in 17-to-19-year-olds from one in ten (10.1%) to one in six (17.4%) in 2021. Rates in both ages groups remained similar between 2020 and 2021.

Figure 6 provides a regional breakdown of children and young people identified with a probable mental disorder aged 5-16 in Wave one of the follow up to the 2017 Survey (NHS Digital 2020). Of the regions YH is identified as 3rd highest alongside the Southwest with the West Midlands ranked as highest and the East Midlands second highest.

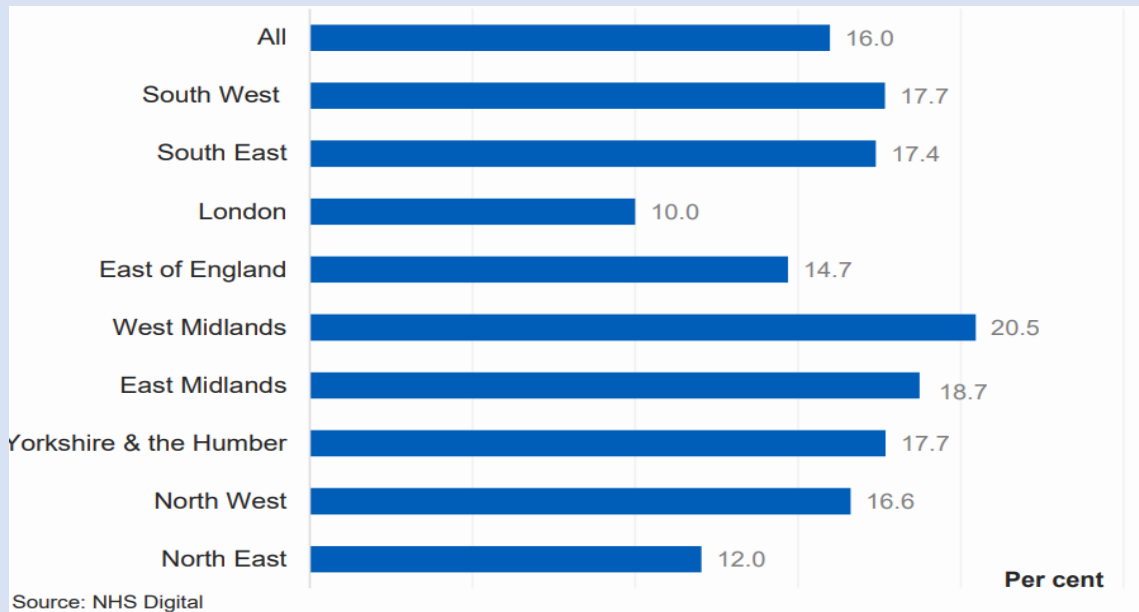


Figure 6- Percentage of children with a probable mental health disorder by region, 2020 (base 5- to 16-year-olds) (NHS Digital 2020:17)

Newlove-Delgado et al (2021) report that:

- 39.2% of 6-to-16-year-olds had experienced deterioration in mental health since 2017, and 21.8% experienced an improvement.
- Among 17-to-23-year old's, 52.5% experienced deterioration, and 15.2% experienced an improvement.

Further data collated using the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) Public Health Area Profiles gives insight into the mental health of young people in the YH region compared to national figures. OHID (2021) data shows that hospital admissions linked to mental health in YH are 74.5 per 100,000 of the population, this figure is increasing and getting worse. Whilst this is lower than England at 87.5 per 100,000 of the population there are areas that are significantly higher within YH including North Yorkshire at 114.7 and City of York at 109.3 per 100,000 of the population.

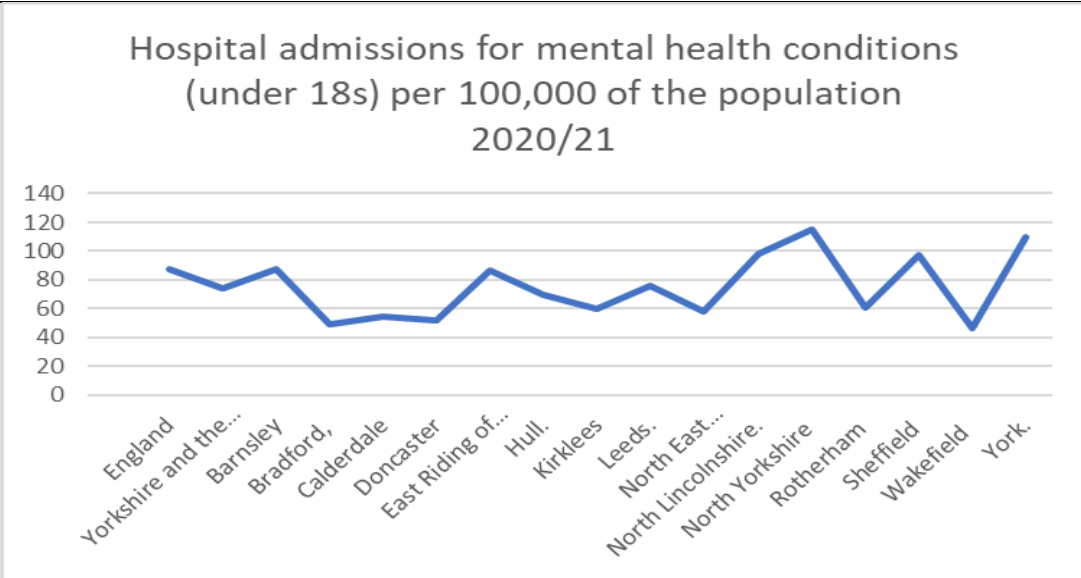


Figure 7- Hospital admission for mental health conditions (under 18's) per 100,000 of the population 2020/21 (OHID, 2022).

In addition to the above the numbers of young people who have attended contacts with community and outpatient mental health services per 100,000 of the population under 18 years also presents a mixed picture across the region with some areas significantly lower than the figure for England and others much higher.

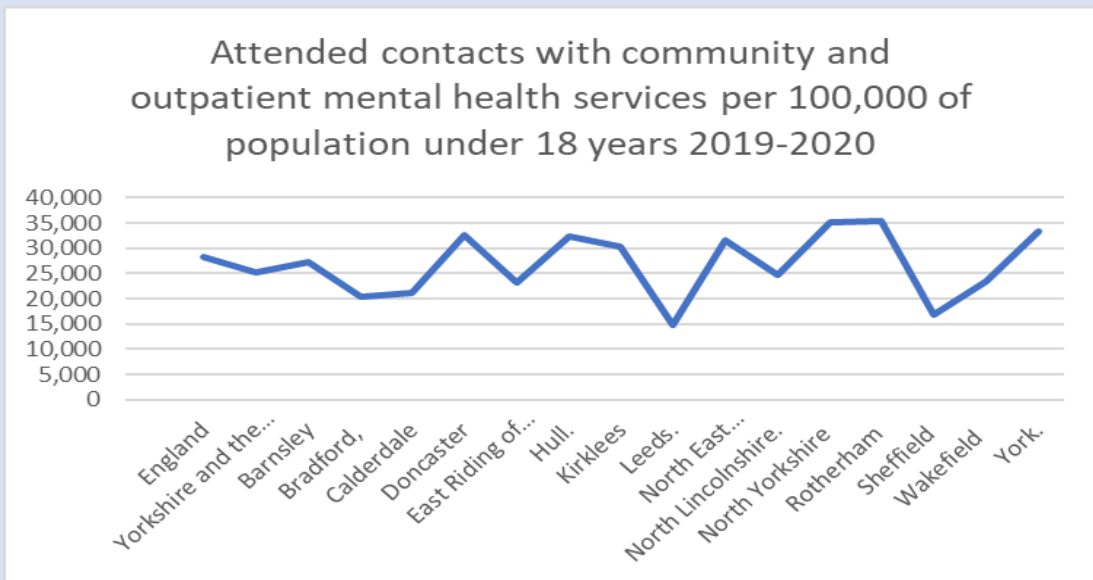


Figure 8- Attended Contacts with community and outpatient mental health services per 100,000 of population under 18 years 2019-2020 (OHID, 2022).

New referrals to secondary mental health services are higher for YH at 7,035 per 100,000 of the under 18 population compared to 6,977 for England. Rotherham is significantly higher at 18,214.

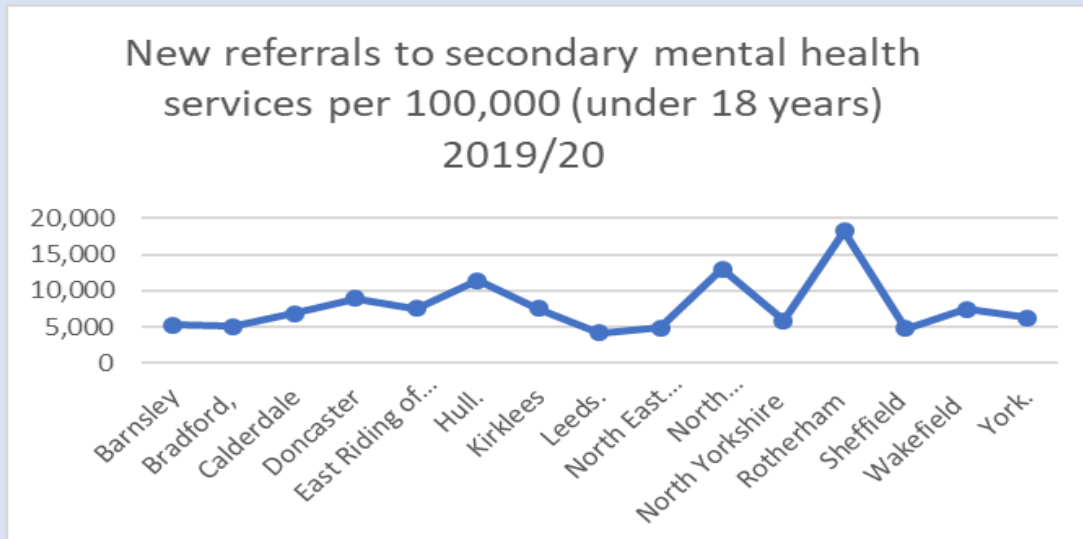


Figure 9 – New Referrals to Secondary Mental Health Services per 100,000 (under 18 years) 2019/20 (OHID, 2022)

The data for hospital admissions because of self-harm in YH at 358.4 per 100,000 of the population is lower than England at 421.9. However, there are areas such as Barnsley with significantly high numbers at 659.3. It is important to note that as a taboo issue the actual incidence of self-harm will be much higher.

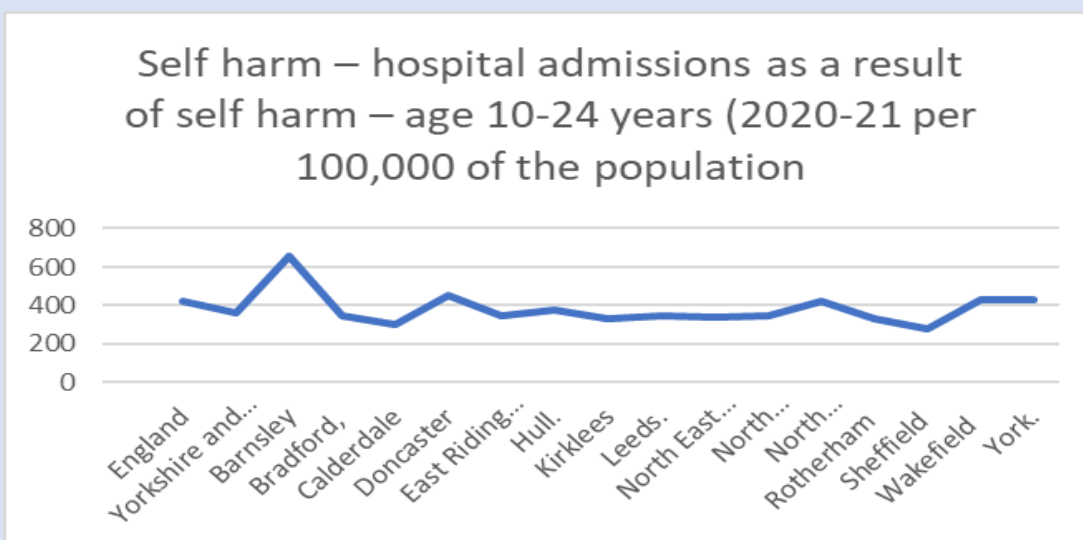


Figure 10 - Self harm – hospital admissions because of self-harm – age 10-24 years (2020-21 per 100,000 of the population) (OHID, 2022).

The Suicide rate (persons) per 100,000 population (2018 - 20) for England is 10.4 and for YH is 12.5. The 2020 data is provisional due to a backlog of inquests due to the Covid pandemic (Baker,2021).

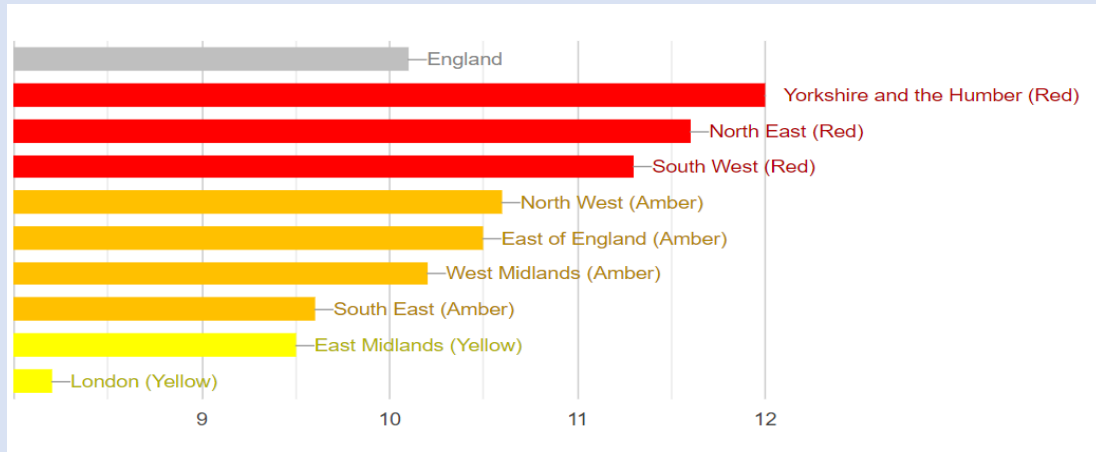


Figure 11: Suicide rates per 100,000 of the population (2018-2020), (Baker, 2021)

In relation to other health-related issues, using the same collation of area level data from OHID, the YH region is broadly in line with the England rates. However, as has been seen previously, there is a mixed picture across the region in relation to other key issues identified in this report. For example, the Proportion of children with SEN (Special Educational Needs) support (**See Figure 12**), the prevalence of overweight children (including obesity) at year 6 (**See Figure 13**) and the number of under 18s and under 16 conceptions (**See Figure 14**).

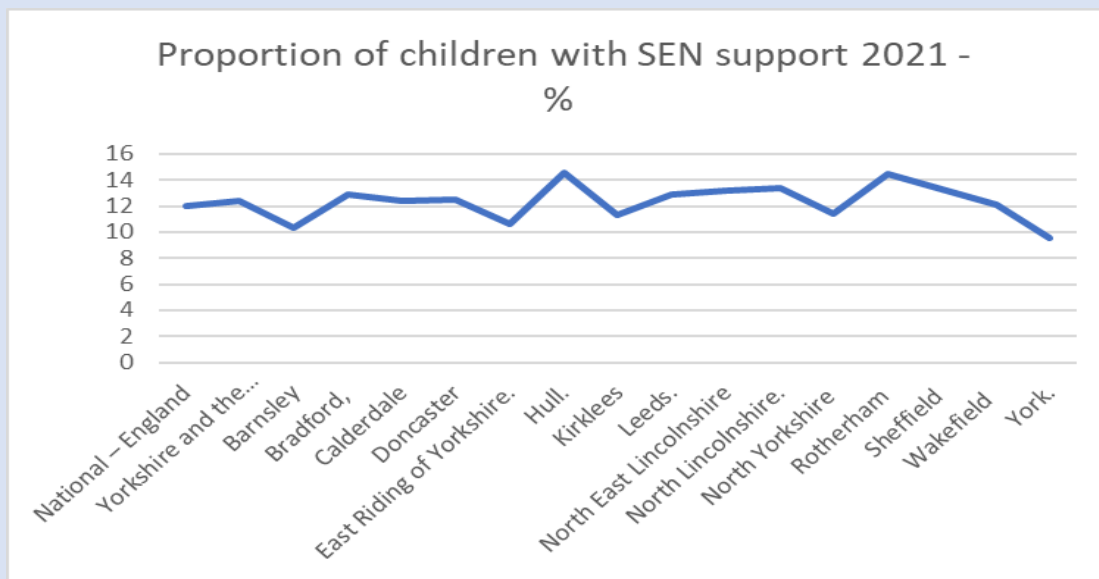


Figure 12 – proportion of children with SEN support 2021 – (OHID, 2022)

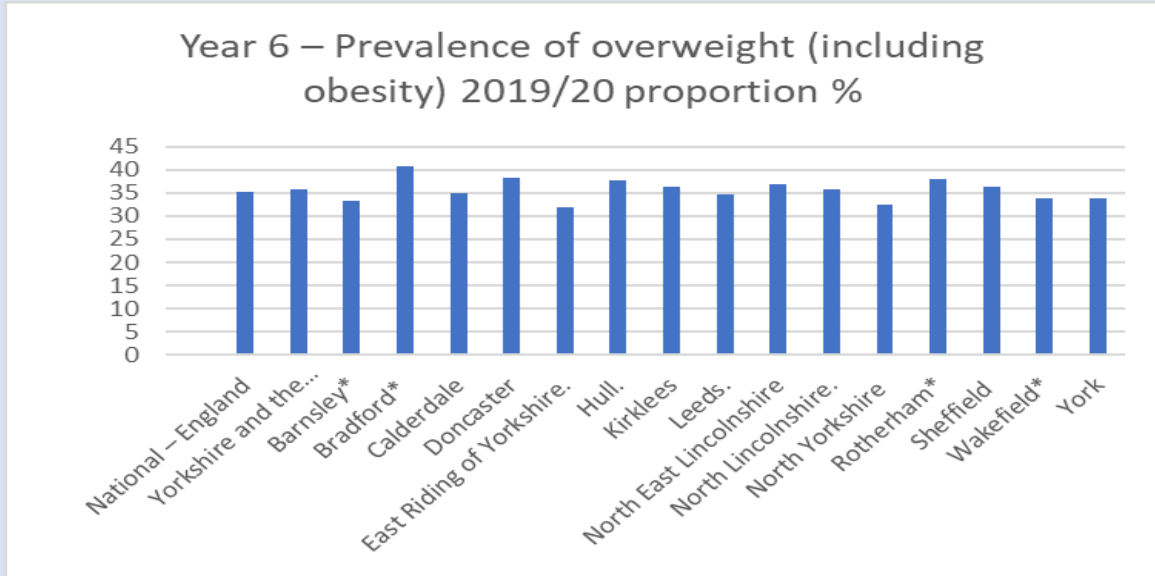


Figure 13 – Year 6 – Prevalence of overweight (including obesity) 2019/20 proportion %
 For areas with a * data should be interpreted with caution (OHID, 2022)

Overall conception rates in the YH in 2020 are only slightly higher than the national average but there are significant variations with higher levels of conceptions in Hull, Doncaster, Northeast Lincolnshire, and Barnsley (ONS, 2022).

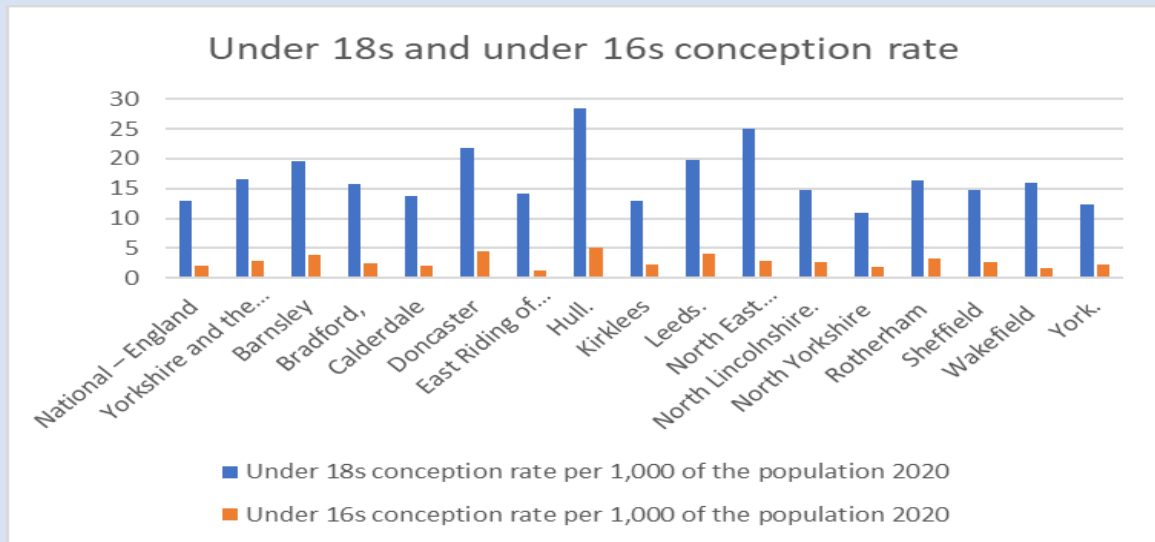


Figure 14– Under 18’s and under 16’s conception rate 2020. (ONS, 2022)

Jobs, money, homes, and opportunities

11,629

In 2020 the TUC (Trades Union Congress) identified that Yorkshire and Humber were on the brink of a 'surge in youth unemployment due to Covid-19 and that young workers (16-24) are more likely to work in sectors where jobs were most at risk (TUC 2022). The Northeast (25%), West Midlands (25%) and YH (24%) have comparatively high levels of poverty. In these areas poverty is more likely to be driven by higher rates of worklessness and the higher proportions of adults in lower-paid 'routine' occupations (JRF 2022:26). In 2022 the government published a new index for social mobility in line with the Life Chances Act (2010) set out a new agenda that concentrates on creating jobs and opportunities within regions rather than needing to leave where you live if you live in a deprived area to succeed (Social Mobility Commission 2022). The new index identifies that there has been insufficient focus on improving skills for young people especially in relation to basic literacy, numeracy and employability skills and gives recognition to the challenges for young people living in deprived neighbourhoods and the intergenerational impact of poor education and economic outcomes (Social Mobility Commission 2022).

The following data has been generated using the ONS Official Census and Labour market statistics for the 12-month period ending December 2021 with the latest data at the time of authoring this report April 2022. In YH region young people aged 16-24 years represent 13.8% of the population (603, 000) (ONS 2022). Of these:

- 59.9% are economically active (60.9% males and 58.9% females) with the employment rate at 52.8% (53.0% males and 52.6% females).
- Of the 52.8% of young people in employment 64.5% were employed full time (69.7% males and 59.2% females) and 30.3% of males and 40.7% of females worked part time.
- 40.1% are economically inactive (39.1% males and 41.1% females)
- 11.9 (13.0% males and 10.8. females) were unemployed

The qualifications held by young people in full-time employment were:

- NVQ4+ = 17.6%*
- NVQ 3 only = 30.9%

- Trade Apprenticeships = 3.1
- NVQ 2 only = 26.2
- NVQ 1 only = 8.7
- Other qualifications (NVQ) = 3.2
- No qualifications (NVQ) = 10.4

* Degree level was not stated in this data set, it is therefore assumed that this is included in NVQ4+ but is an area which is identified as requiring further inquiry.

The qualifications held by young people in part-time employment were:

- Degree or equivalent and above = 15.1%
- Higher education below degree level = 2.7%
- GCE A level or equivalent – 36.3%
- GCSE grades A-C or equivalent = 32.6%
- Other qualifications (GCSE) = 2.7%
- No qualifications (GCSE) = 10.5%

(ONS, 2022)

Homes

When Covid-19 struck there were millions of people, often young people, and families, who found themselves locked down in poor quality rented accommodation – affecting their health, well-being, and education. In 2020 33% of people accessing accommodation in YH were young people who were rough sleeping (Homeless link 2020). The Young and Homeless (2021) report found young people were the only age group that saw an increase in statutory homelessness in 2020/21. The pressure of lockdowns led to increased family breakdowns and services reported impacts on worsening mental health and substance misuse (Homeless link 2021). Young people are more likely to experience ‘hidden homeless’ situation (e.g., sofa surfing) rather than access services where they exist. Many single women and young people may therefore not be captured in statistics (Homeless Link 2020:26)

Education and learning 9034

Young people are legally required to attend school until they are 16. They can leave school on the last Friday in June in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 31st May in Scotland if they are 16 by the end of the summer holidays. In England they are then legally required to stay in full time education at a school, college and undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship or spend 20 hours or more working or volunteering while in part time education or training (Gov.UK). Education is a basic universal right but not all young people experience education in the same way.

A NYA report outlining guidance to local authorities on providing youth services stated that '85% of young people's leisure time is spent outside of a formal school setting' (NYA 2021c:20) and it follows that young people who are most disadvantaged are likely to have the least resources to access leisure-based provision. A recent Sport England report supports this highlighting that activity levels are lower in young people who are 11-16 and identified as disadvantaged and that 'those from low affluence families are the least likely to be active at 39%' (Sport England 2021:9). Clearly there will be multiple other factors that have a bearing on young people's activity levels including increased screen time. Young people in section four of this report gave some insight into how they spend their time in the YH. There is however still a need at the local level for further exploration of how young people use their time outside of formal schooling.

The percentage of young people aged 16-17 years who are not in education, employment or training or whose activity is not known in YH is 6.3% compared to 5.5% in England (OHID, 2020). **Figure 15** provides local level data across the region highlighting a notable spike in North Yorkshire, followed by Leeds and Sheffield sitting above the National average. This contrasts with York and Calderdale which are identified as sitting below the regional and national average.

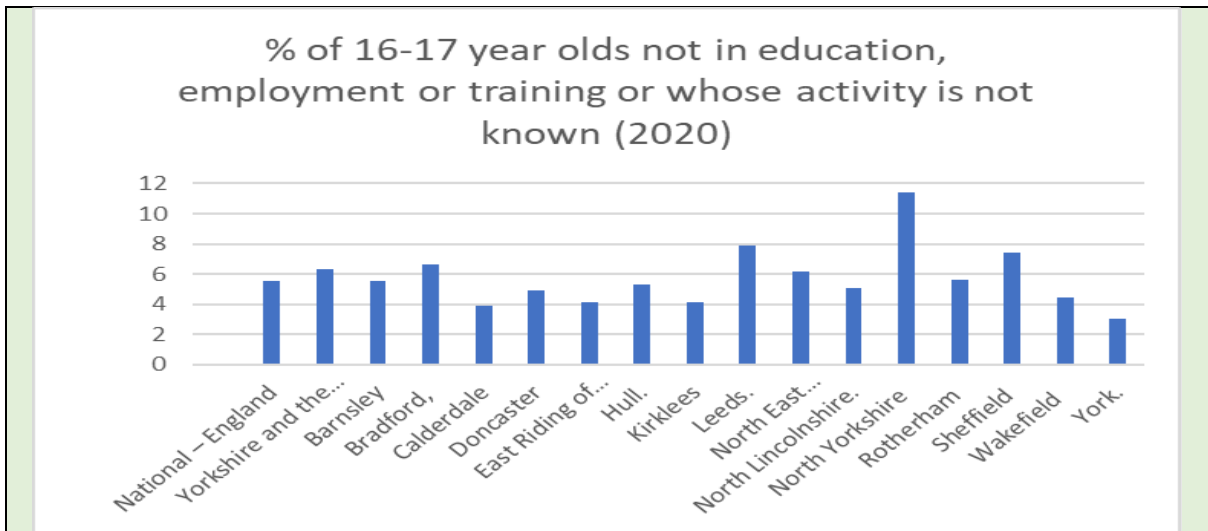


Figure 15 - % of 16-17-year-olds not in education employment or training or whose activity is not known (2020, OHID).

Young people are categorised as ‘disadvantaged’ if they are eligible for free school meals within a six-year period and ‘persistently disadvantaged’ if for 80% of time at secondary school they are eligible for free school meals. The ‘disadvantage gap’ is a key measure of social mobility and used as an indicator to measure whether inequalities are reducing in education. Research shows that young people who are eligible for Free School Meals and categorised as disadvantaged are more likely to be at risk of being Not in Education Employment or Training and to earn less than their peers who are not entitled. In 2019, 11,000 young people in Yorkshire and the Humber left the education system at 19 after 14 years of full-time education without 5 GCSEs or the technical equivalents. Of these 30% were children eligible for Free School Meals Children’s Commissioner (2020) Growing up North after Covid-19. **Figure 16** highlights the percentage of children known to be eligible for free school meals which demonstrates consistently high levels of eligibility across all areas except for York and North Yorkshire.

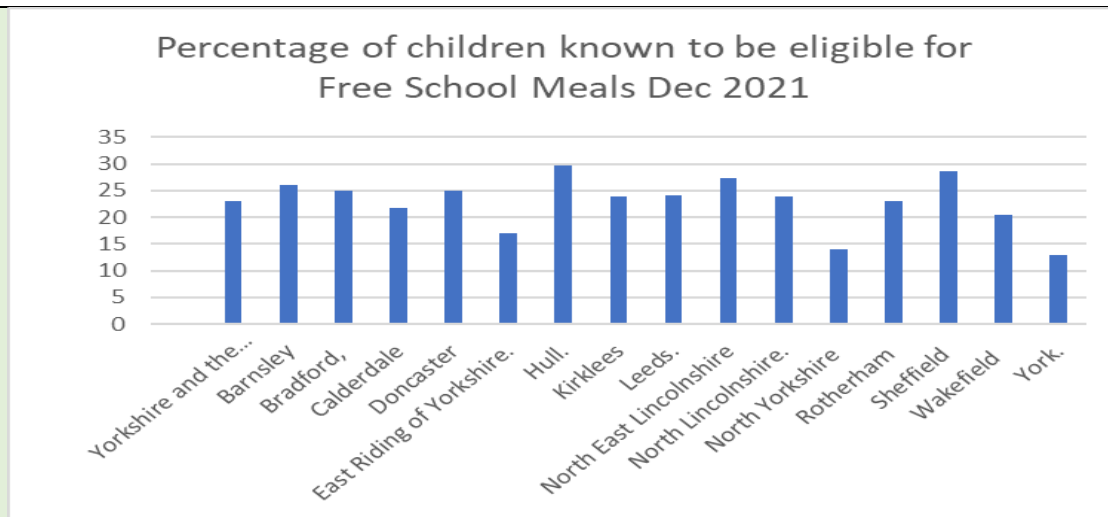


Figure 16: Percentage of children known to be eligible for Free School Meals December 2021. (OHID, 2022)

The Social Mobility Commission (2022) calls for a more nuanced approach to understanding socio-economic background of children in schools as currently the measure of FSM (Free School Meals) which is insufficient. The Social Mobility Commission (2022) also calls for a harmonisation of data and methodologies something that this research has identified across a range of different issues in this report.

Environment – 8855 votes

The YH region face a range of challenges and issues in relation to the environment. Communities across YH face a variety of flood risks including from, sea, river, and rainfall. Hull is second only to London for flood risk. There are a range of flood management measures across YH from large, engineered defenses to nature-based solutions at the community level. No single measure can be guaranteed to prevent flooding entirely (Yorkshire Flood Resilience, Nd: online). Major floods in YH in recent years including 2021 leave a significant impact on young people and communities. The Environment Agency and British Red Cross (Environment Agency, 2018) warned that young people were most at risk in a flood. Young people aged 18 to 34 years were least aware of the dangers of flooding in their areas, over half would not know what to do in an emergency and the mental health impacts of floods can last two years or more.

The Emissions per person (tCO₂) in YH is 6 tCO₂s which is the highest in England (BEIS (Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy) 2021). YH has the biggest growth in its renewable energy contribution since 2003. However, in relation to jobs there are significant gaps between productivity, earnings, and access to good jobs in the North in comparison to other parts of England. For every job created in the North, just under three were created in London and the 'Greater Southeast.' On net zero, despite the North being home to many of the assets that are needed to transition to a greener and more sustainable future, the region remains held back from shaping its own net zero future. This is typified by the fact that while the North generates more than 50 per cent of England's renewable energy – with YH alone seeing a 4,206 per cent increase in its renewable energy contribution since 2003 – the promise of widespread green jobs seems like a distant prospect in many places. (Webb et al 2022: 3).

Whilst the data identifies a lack of awareness of the youth population, many of the young people who participated in this research demonstrated an awareness of and concern for the environment. The next section highlights how such awareness and concern translated into action that ranged from 'youth activism' through engagement in youth led initiatives such as Regional Youth Climate Assembly through to campaigning for accessible transport and smaller everyday actions in the community such as litter picking.

Poverty
6493

Child Poverty has a long-term impact on young people’s development and their overall mental health and wellbeing. According to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (2019) YH are the fourth most deprived region in England (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019). The YH region also has wide disparities in terms of deprivation, for example Hull at the time of this research ranked 9th in England in contrast to York at 275.

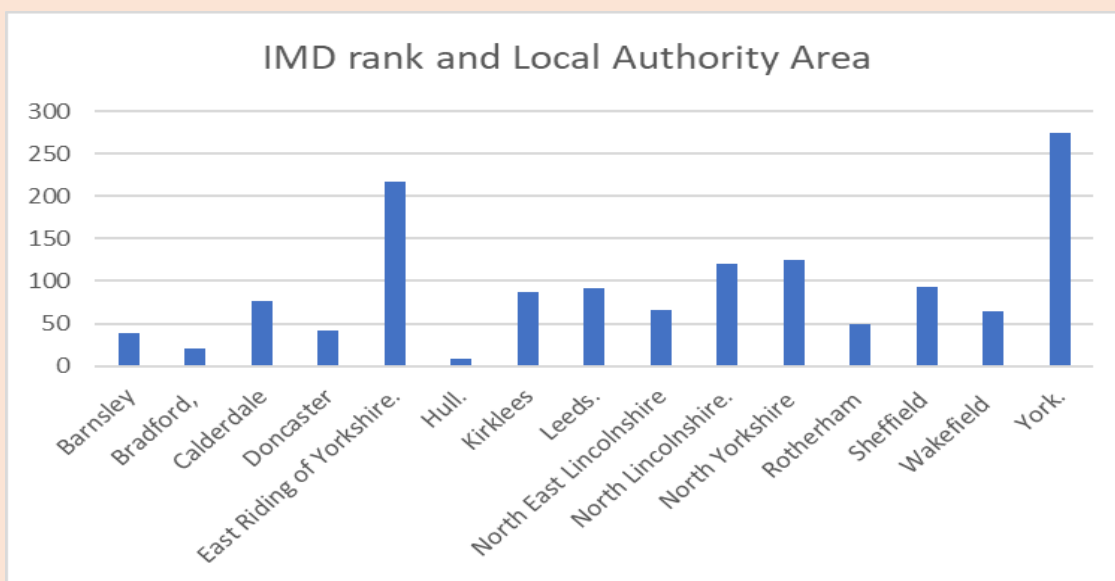


Figure 17 – IMD (Indices of Multiple Deprivation) rank and Local Authority Area (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2019).

Before housing costs, the Northeast has the highest child poverty rate at 30% and YH the third highest, after the West Midlands. The National percentage of children in absolute low-income families under 16s in 2019/20 is 15.6% whilst for YH it is 20.9% (OHID 2022). Children in relative low-income families under 16s is 19.1% in England and 25.1% for YH. Again, there are variances across the region for both absolute and relative low income ranging from 10.5% and 13.0% for York and 32.3% and 37.6% for Bradford.

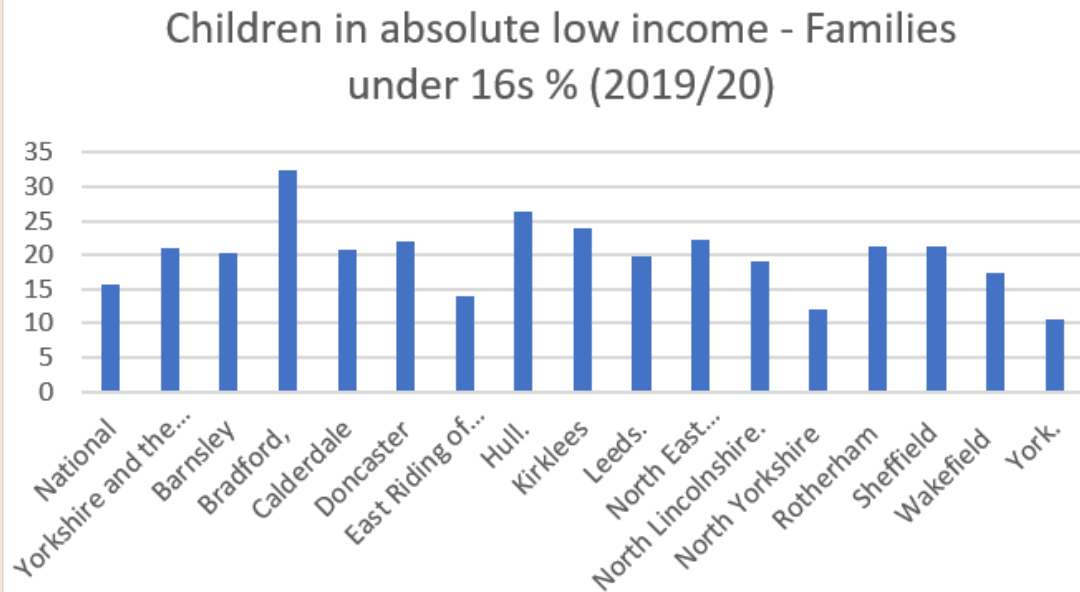


Figure 18 – Children in absolute low income – Families under 16’s % 2019/20. (OHID 2022)

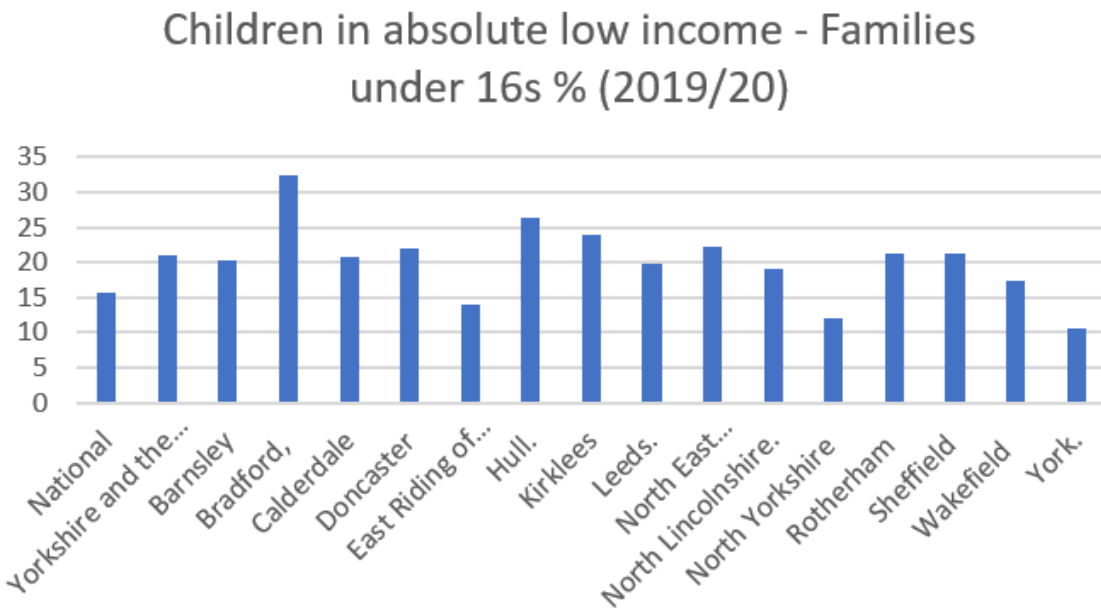


Figure 19 – Children in relative low income – families under 16s % 2019/20 (OHID 2022).

Oxfam (2018) estimated that over two million people are malnourished in the UK, with another three million at risk of becoming malnourished. Blake (2021) from the University of Sheffield Institute for Sustainable Food (2021) has created the first interactive map of food security in the UK. The map highlights YH as in the top 20 per cent of UK council districts where people have been going hungry (Blake 2021).

The Trussell Trust has highlighted the incremental growth of food banks providing an overview of food parcels given out in 2014/15 in the YH for adults from 58,939 to 122,726 in 2020/21 and for children from 20,732 in 2014/15 to 47,739 in 2020/21. The Trussell Trust identifies this as a 13% increase in adults accessing foodbanks and a 17% increase in children accessing food banks in YH.

A national Citizens Enquiry into the changing nature of youth work practices during Covid-19 was launched in May 2020 and ran for 9 months capturing the stories of youth workers through diary recordings. The research highlighted the changing focus of youth work during the pandemic and that making food accessible became an essential element of youth work provision (Batsleer et.al 2021). Youth work in England continues to play a key role in working alongside young people to address food insecurity.

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is a government initiative which was introduced following public pressure and campaigning due to a growing concern about the impact of child poverty and food insecurity. HAF provides free healthy meals and activities to children eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals (FSMs), in line with School Food Standards. The Food Foundation and the University of York reviewed the implementation and impact of the (HAF) programme in Bradford, Sheffield, York, and North Lincolnshire and published interim findings in October 2021. According to Gov.Uk 21.9 % of pupils are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) (Gov.uk, 2021a); placing the region fourth highest in the country for the proportion of pupils eligible for FSM. During Covid-19 Yorkshire experienced an overall 2.5% increase in pupils' eligibility for FSM, one of the biggest across the regions, in the period spring 2019/20 and autumn 2020/21 (Gov.Uk, 2021a). The interim findings highlighted that in Yorkshire '23% of children aged 7-17 experienced food insecurity over the summer holidays, 22% of children had visited a summer holiday club and 71% of children aged 7-17 said they really enjoyed the holiday clubs they attend' (Food Foundation 2021:4)

COVID Recovery

3824

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER 2022) identified the YH region as an area with relatively high levels of deprivation something also established in the research highlighted in this report by comparison to other regions and the complexity of need that arises from that.

Examples include that

- YH experienced one of the highest rates in the country of Covid-19 cases per 100,000 of the population and above the rate for the UK in general (Gov.uk, 2022b).
- The higher rates of Covid-19 and the longer duration had negative consequences including the impact on health and income but also a delay in 'starting the journey of recovery learning lost during school closures' (NFER 2022).

The Child of the North Report (2021) highlighted that disadvantaged children and young people had very different experiences of learning from home during Covid-19 inevitably impacting on attainment levels over the longer period. A range of issues have been highlighted in various reports ranging from living in temporary and/or overcrowded housing, (Shelter 2020), digital poverty impacting access to WI-FI (Pickett et.al 2021), parents feeling ill equipped to support children's learning or working and not able to provide support (Green 2020).

- Absence from school due to Covid-19 related circumstances in the Autumn term of 2020 was recorded as 7% Nationally by comparison to YH with a recorded rate of 8.3% (Gov. UK, 2021c)
- As England moved out of lockdown so absence rates continued to exceed the National average. Data from March 2021 highlighted attendance in state-funded schools was lowest in YH at 86 % compared to 90 % nationally) (Gov.uk, 2021b)
- In primary maths, by the second half of the autumn 2020 term, pupils in YH experienced 5.3 months learning loss compared to less than a month in the Southwest and London (DofE 2021b).
- Youth Work alongside other professions such as teaching, and nursing was designated key worker status during Covid-19. According to a TUC report (2022)

11% of children in poverty are part of key worker families. In the YH region the TUC estimates that there are 434,335 children living as part of families where at least one working person is classed as a key worker. Out of these 47,659 children living as part of a family where at least one working person is classed as a key worker is living in poverty.

Our rights and democracy 2,940

The Civil Society Strategy (2018) sets out the importance of young people engaging and participating in democracy and in playing an active role in shaping society. Such an agenda has become critical given the recent pandemic and the rapid societal change that is happening nationally and globally. The UK Youth Parliament, the work Members of Youth Parliament (MYP) undertake, the Make Your Mark Survey conducted on an annual basis are approaches designed to enable young people to understand the role of government and their ability to influence change. National initiatives such as #IWill and National Citizenship Scheme encourage young people to take social action in relation to key issues. Whilst young people have rights often these rights are contradictory in relation to what it is legal to do and at what age. The other side of rights is the denial of young people's rights.

Rights

In England, a child is defined as anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday.

According to the DoF (2018) even if a child has reached the age of 16, they are still legally children and should therefore be given the same entitlements as all other children. At 16 young people can live independently, join the army, leave school and be in further education. A child may be in custody or required to live in a secure unit or in hospital. In 2020 a Children's Rights Alliance (CRAE) Report on the rights of a child identified that Covid-19 has amplified the diverse ways in which young people's rights and access to support are routinely overlooked. CRAE (2020) highlighted that there are significant issues which have a bearing on the rights of children including health and educational inequalities in relation to child poverty exacerbated for those from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, violence against children including lack of support for victims of modern child slavery and trafficking and abuse in the home; inadequate resettlement

options for children seeking protection, inadequate protections for children separated in the immigration system, lack of play in the community and schools and cuts to youth services. Some of the issues picked up by CRAE have been touched on briefly in this report (See for example section 3 in relation to poverty, education, covid-19 recovery) providing general statistics on issues impacting children including Growing up North (Pickett et.al (2021) and specific reports on cuts in support and services including the YMCA report Devalued (2022).

The CRAE report (2020) highlights the inconsistencies in the legal definition of a child in England using two examples CRAE (2020) highlight how children are denied the right to be treated as a child as the age of criminal responsibility in England is 10 years old (much lower than in other European Countries) and the impact of being worked with through the Criminal Justice System rather than Children and Young People's Services on health and wellbeing. CRAE (2020) also draw on how 16/17-year-old are often denied the protection and support they have a right to as they are treated as adults using homelessness and CSE as examples of this. The National Make your Mark Survey identifies a further denial of rights in relation to the right to vote at 16 which has been one of the top recurring voting themes (2022). Issues impacting young people's rights are complex and there is a need for ongoing participatory research including peer research to understand more fully perspectives of young people about their rights, entitlements, protection, and support afforded to them. An APPG is currently in process exploring the rights of young people to access 'political literacy education in promoting youth participation in democratic life' – with a goal of ensuring that 'all young people become politically literate by the time they finish their secondary education' (APPG Political Literacy: online). As previously stated in the introduction of this section of the report the 2022 Make your Report highlights that 'Members of Youth Parliament will be able to conduct localised research to better understand how an issue impacts upon the communities and people they stand to represent' (BYC 2022:3). This research identifies the key role of the YWU in collaboration with young people and key stakeholders in developing a long-term strategy for working with young people to:

- set an agenda for research as a process for developing political literacy

And

- increasing visibility of young people’s perspectives of the issues they encounter and in strengthening rights and entitlements to protection and support.

Equality

In 2020/21, 27% of school children in YH identified as being from an ethnic minority background. This figure was 25% in the Northwest and 12% in the Northeast (Pickett et.al 2021:48).

Hate Crime

The highest rate of hate crimes for all offences recorded by the police per 100,000 population in 2020/21 was in the West Yorkshire police force area (374). The lowest rate was found in North Yorkshire (82). The rate for England and Wales including the British Transport Police was 208. West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester were the only police forces to appear amongst the top 10 highest rates recorded for each strand.

Figure 20 identifies Yorkshire and the Humber Police Force areas ranking in the Top 10 police force areas with the highest offence rates for each hate crime strand (England and Wales 2021/21. It is important to note that the statistics only reflect what is reported and as the scale of underreporting is unknown this means that levels will be much higher across all hate crime strands (Government Equalities Office, 2018, Fitch – Bartlett and Healy, 2022). Youth work plays a significant role in understanding young people's experiences.

Hate Crime Strand	Rank	Police Force Area	Rate per 100,000 Population
Race	1	West Yorkshire	272
	6	South Yorkshire	171
Religion	4	West Yorkshire	17
	6	Humberside	13
	8	South Yorkshire	10
Sexual Orientation	2	West Yorkshire	52
	6	South Yorkshire	38
Disability	1	West Yorkshire South	40
	3	Yorkshire	28

Transgender	2	West Yorkshire	9
All Hate Crime	1 7	West Yorkshire South Yorkshire	374 239

Figure 21 – Rates of Hate Crime according to police force areas.

*Many offences have more than one motivating factor e.g., race and religion (Allen and Zayed (2021)). The community plays a significant role in delivering youth work responses to hate crime. In 2020 for example Abdullah Balouchi aged 20, was murdered outside of a local park. The community response was to set up a local youth work project in Hull called the Peel Project providing somewhere to go and something to do.

Vulnerability

Involvement with gangs and at risk of child sexual exploitation

In 2021 Longfield, the Chair of the Commission for Young Lives, identified that there were 12,720 children identified by children's social services as at risk due to involvement in gangs in 2020/21. This is 13% lower than pre-Covid 2019/20 (14,700) but still 16% higher than 2018/19 (10,960). In YH, 1090 children were identified as being at risk because of involvement with gangs and 1760 because of child sexual exploitation. This was lower than London at 3500 and the Northwest in 1750 in terms of at risk of involvement with gangs but higher than the East of England in terms of Child Sexual Exploitation at 1480.

Absence from school

Bradford, Leeds, and Sheffield were identified in the top ten areas with the greatest number of severely absent pupils. With Sheffield, Bradford, and Doncaster in the top ten areas when absence was converted to rates. The rate of severe absence is worse in YH, West Midlands and the Northeast. In YH, over 1 in 20 schools are missing an entire class of children (Centre for Social Justice 2022).

Children and young people who are Looked After

In 2021, the number of Children Looked After (CLA) by local authorities in England rose to 80,850, up 1% on last year and continuing the rise seen in recent years. In the YH region, the numbers of CLA aged 10-15 years in 2021 was 3,440 (86.2 per 10,000 young people with the worst areas in the region being 121.6 per 10,000). This positions YH as the fourth highest in the country. Key factors to note here are the impact of Covid-19 due to a decrease in adoptions and the length of time CLA increasing due to lock downs

(Gov.Uk, 2021d). According to the 2021 crude rate of Children in care per 10,000 of the population in England the rate was 67 and in YH was 77 (OHID, 2022).

Figure 22 shows the significant variances across the region with for example 165 young people in care per 10,000 in Hull (OHID, 2022)

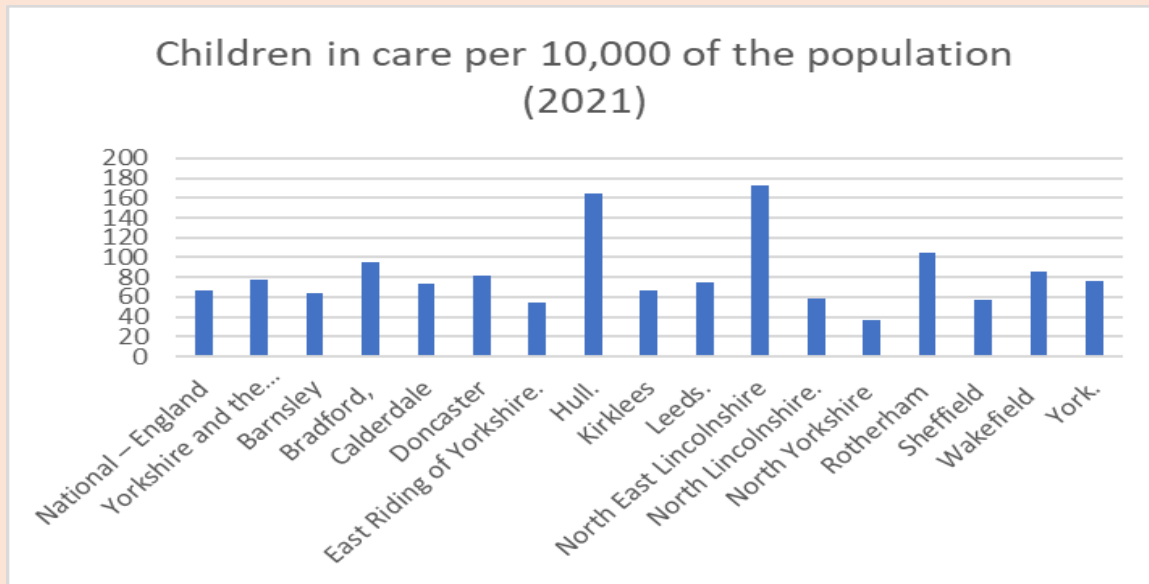


Figure 22 – Children in care per 10,000 of the population (OHID 2022),

Figure 23 illustrates that children living in YH who are looked after whose emotional wellbeing is a cause for concern is slightly higher at 39.1% than the percentage for England overall at 38.8%. There are notable variances across areas in the region including Calderdale at 50% significantly higher than both the national average and the average in YH.

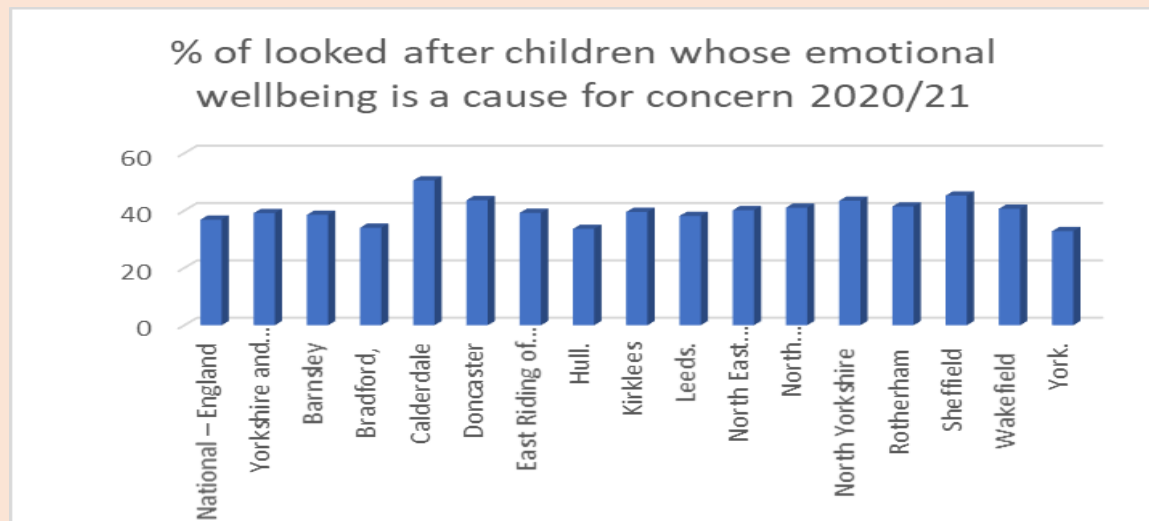


Figure 23 -% of looked after children whose emotional wellbeing is a cause for concern 2020/21 (OHID, 2022).

Jones et.al (2020) undertook qualitative research in the North of England through which they questioned the extent to which being publicly labelled as ‘looked after’ impacts on a

sense of emotional wellbeing and educational achievement. They highlight that the term ‘looked after children’ is defined in law under the Children Act (1989) and often abbreviated to ‘LAC’ by professionals and in social policy. The findings from the research highlighted the negative impact of the term ‘LAC’ on young people who it is applied to as they say ‘in the context of school processes and practices often set up to support serve to distance them both from and by their non-looked after peers and exacerbate their sense of Otherness (Jones et.al 2020:12). Jones et.al (2020:12) go onto highlight an example of the impact of ‘regularly being taken out of class for meetings, being subject to insensitive handling of their ‘looked after’ status and being subject to overly professionalised and highly bureaucratic corporate parenting practices. The paper highlights how such practices ‘inhibited young people’s ability to just ‘be’ a young person’ and the key role that youth work can play in developing young person centered, practices.

Youth Justice

There are also significant variances in the number of 1st time entrants into the Youth Justice System across the region with the overall number per 100,000 of the population also being higher in YH than overall in England. At Local Authority level Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees have higher levels of first-time entrants into the YJS (Youth Justice Services) than the overall average in YH and in England overall (OHID 2022).

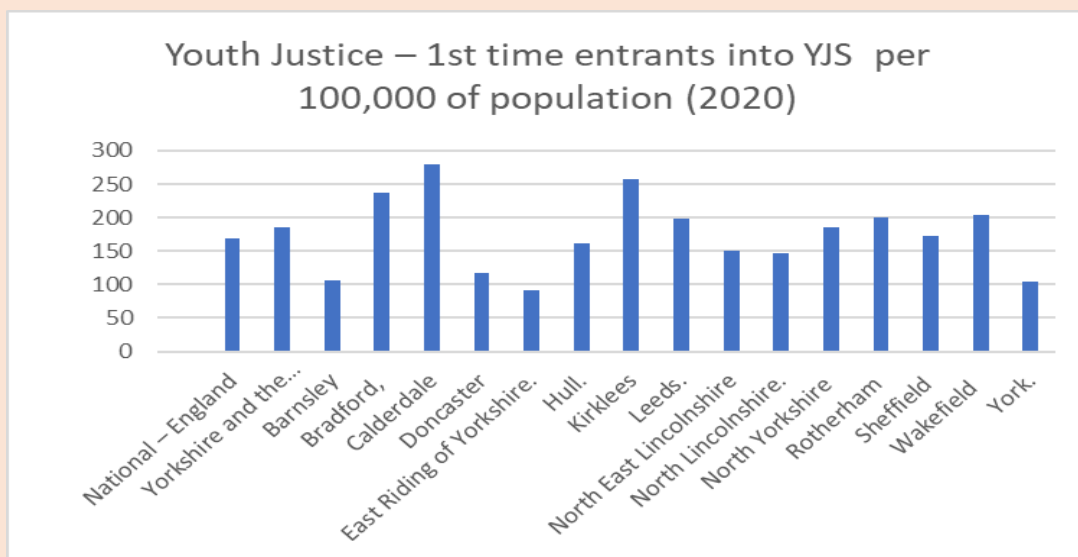


Figure 24- Youth Justice -1st time entrants into YJS per 100,000 of population 2020 (OHID 2022)

Local Authority Spending

Earlier in this section of the report the youth population for Local Authority areas was presented as reported in the published Census data 2021. This provided data for overall age bands of 10-24 broken down into age bands 10-14, 15-19 and 20-24. **Figure 25** re-presents the total 10-24 youth population alongside the identified 0–17-year total spends for each Local Authority for 2021 spend on children and young people’s services (not education per 10,000 – 0–17-year old's)

Local Authority Area	Youth Population 10-24	Total Spend 0–17-year-olds
Barnsley	39945	16793
Bradford	110026	6473
Calderdale	35706	9745
City of Doncaster	51800	9325
City of York	48385	6336
Kingston Upon Hull	50277	10531
Kirklees	81360	8528
Leeds	174820	8494
Northeast Lincs	26419	11674
North Lincs	27940	7956
North Yorks	92262	4764
Rotherham	44769	14363
Sheffield	131862	7969
Wakefield	55919	7498

Figure 25 highlights at a level of generality the difficulty in understanding how local authorities can demonstrate the use of funding targeted towards meeting the legal requirement in ensuring a sufficiency of youth service provision for the 13-19- and 20-24-year age groups as set out in the 2006 Education and Inspection Action, Section 507b to ensure a sufficiency in youth services. The NYA in 2020 produced a comprehensive guide to the statutory duty and sufficient levels of youth services. The guide refers to the 13-19

age group, the 20-24 age group and extends this to incorporate 8 – 12-year-olds. The guidance calls for ‘robust data needs to support a public health approach for young people’s wellbeing. Typically funded for young people 13-19 years of age and up to 24 years for those with learning difficulties, youth services are regularly accessed and need to plan for use by young people from ages 8 and 11 years old’ (NYA 2020:1).

This research identifies that there is currently no alignment between age categories for reporting and meeting legal requirements and a need for engagement with the national driver to address this.

This is compounded by insufficient guidance on what individual local authorities might include or exclude in reporting youth service spend. The impact of this is difficulties in being able to make meaningful comparison or analysis across data sets as there is no agreed reporting format.

This links into feedback from participants in this research who identified the need for further guidance from the government to begin to develop a baseline understanding of what constitutes a sufficiency in youth provision. Headline statistics identify broad trends but alone are not sufficient to address some of the systemic issues and failures implied. Increased time is required to engage in in depth research to understand more fully the issues and how to work strategically to target interventions in ways that address issues identified.

Austerity measures have impacted young people disproportionately, with deeper cuts to youth services in the Northern region including YH. According to the recent Devalued Report by the YMCA (2022) an average of 49million per annum was spent on youth services in the YH which they cite as equating to an average spend of approximately £57 per head of the 5–17-year-old population. The figures are based on local authorities’ financial reporting and outturn surveys submitted annually to the Department for Education.

The YMCA as part of the same Devalued project provided an analysis of every Local Authority spend in England per head of youth population highlighting whether there had been an increase or a decrease in that spend over the last decade. The YMCA ranked local authorities in terms of spend with 1 representing the lowest spend. **Figure 26-** YMCA breakdown of local authorities spends over the last decade. According to the YMCA analysis all 15 local authorities in the YH made cuts to spending over a 10-year period.

Spend per head in the region varied. East Riding spend per head was identified at £27.74 to Kingston upon Hull at £169.38. Decreases in funding were identified as ranging from -92% in Barnsley to North Yorkshire at 30%. Overall Local Authority spend Rank ranged from East Riding at 48 to Kingston upon Hull at 172.

Local Authority	Spending rank	Per Head	Increase/decrease
Barnsley	102	49.35	-92
Bradford	100	48.29	-75
Calderdale	138	76.11	-64
City of Doncaster	114	56.6	-68
City of York	112	55.77	-72
East Riding	48	27.74	-85
Kingston Upon Hull	172	169.38	-47
Kirklees	88	40.01	-74
Leeds	55	29.58	-89
NEL	163	111.53	-56
North Lincs	94	43.29	-79
North Yorkshire	154	94.06	-38
Sheffield	122	59.25	-78
Wakefield	89	40.08	-84

Figure 26: YMCA breakdown of local authorities spend over the last decade (YMCA 2022).

Data is dynamic and there is recognition that whilst the above table shows a decrease in spend that local authorities are reviewing local youth offers and in some areas the level of investment is starting to increase. Sheffield for example has announced a 2-million-pound investment in a co-produced youth service strategy and Kirklees a 1-million-pound investment with an emphasis that includes ‘youth places to go’ (Kirklees Together 2021: Online).

The NYA Census 2021a highlights the regional differences in the location of youth work provision in relation to areas of disadvantage across England. **Figure 26** highlights that there is a greater concentration of youth work provision within areas of deprivation. YH for example is highlighted as 37% of Youth Work provision concentrated in the most disadvantaged areas by comparison to the Southwest with 18% concentration of youth work provision in its most disadvantaged areas. The location of youth work provision in the most disadvantaged areas within YH is significant given the levels of decrease to spending in

youth services over the last decade in the region and the poverty highlighted in the previous section.

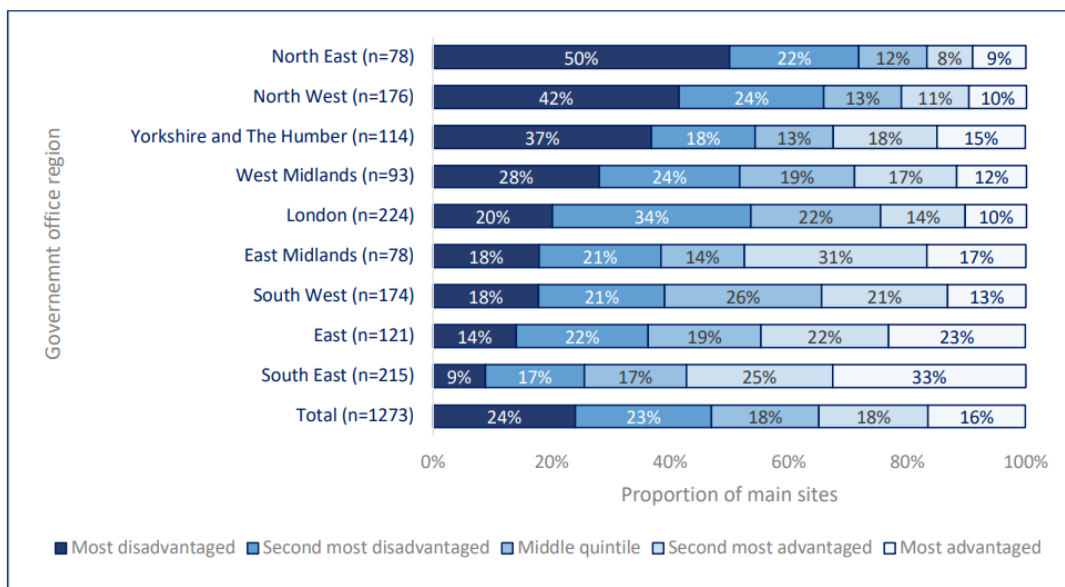


Figure 27- Regional breakdown of youth work provision reported in 2021 Youth Work Census (NYA 2021a).

The extent to which cuts to youth services and general access to informal social spaces and support has contributed to an overall escalation of issues that impact on young people's personal and social development and their rights and ability to self-determine requires ongoing inquiry, monitoring and evaluation. The reported disparity in youth service spend across the region demands further inquiry to more fully understand why these differences are so stark and to inform a more coherent approach to establishing consistency in youth service provision across Local Authority areas in YH. The Levelling Up Agenda (Housing and Communities 2022) identifies the harmful impact of regional inequalities particularly in the context of local variations. Increased research can contribute to an overall aim of mobilising resources and co-ordinating youth work strategy and services to play a role in securing young people's rights to thrive and flourish and to have a voice and influence in the services that play a role in supporting this to happen.

Section four of the report includes different perspectives shared by young people during the research many of which give voice to statistics provided in section three in relation to issues that young people living in the YH had identified.

Section Four

A summary of outcomes from primary research and participant perspectives



As part of the Peer Research Project, supported by the Youth Work Unit Yorkshire and the Humber, that took place over the summer 2021, Reece, conducted research into what opportunities exist for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

This section of the report presents different perspectives shared during the research including issues impacting young people.

Peer researchers Participants reflect on their role and experience of being peer researchers, issues, and things to take forward

Young People who participated in this report reflected on the role of research in giving voice to issues that matter; a young person articulated that they ‘brought their own angle, experiences and personality’ into the research process. Young people were clear that areas of inquiry often overlapped with other issues, and this guided how they worked individually and collectively through the research process. In the context of this research project young people identified many benefits to engaging in a process of peer led research including: ‘space and opportunity to work with other young people and workers,’ to, ‘identifying and investigating issues’ that mattered to them in greater depth ‘being supported in developing an agenda for the research and encouraged to be creative in how to do this,’ through to ‘accessing training.’ Young people fed-back that working online meant that the project was more accessible as they were able to work with young people from across the region, which might have been more difficult because of time, cost, and transport. Young people were able to see the benefits of engaging in research to further future aspirations for work and further study, something that was also noted by young volunteers and ex-volunteers in relation to the wider benefits of participating in informal education processes in youth work.

Young people were able to reflect on areas for development going forward wanting to think about a youth-led training, the trainer approach to peer research, ‘training the next generation! It would be good to share experiences.’ Young people continued along the theme of planning for future peer research work. Suggesting the need to, ‘host an event for young people to share our work and approach for next year – use this to recruit the next cohort.’ Young people felt that their research should be part of an ongoing approach and that their work should be seen as ‘something to be built upon.’

This feedback highlights the need for a long-term approach to engaging and working with peer researchers rather than on a project-by-project basis when funding opportunities arise.

Continuing the theme of sharing learning young people felt it was important to create opportunities to showcase the learning from their experiences as peer researchers as well

as what they researched. 'I think it would be cool to make an evaluative video,' 'like a how we made it mini documentary.' Young people felt that the more peer research became a part of a programme of work through the YWU the more it would be possible to gain experience in 'Working on different ways of presenting research to have more impact,' and to 'think about different creative methods for engaging young people in research beyond interviews, focus groups and surveys.' The feedback highlights the need for further inquiry into the potential of multi-disciplinary approaches to peer research to harness the creativity of artists, filmmakers and photographers who work with participatory methodologies. One of the issues highlighted by young people in their role as peer researchers was attitudes and responses of some decision makers. One participant in their presentation at the Young Foundation Peer Research Conference highlighted the need for further work with decision makers and adults in positions of influence to be aware of discriminatory attitudes and the impact of adultification of young people. One example was cited where a decision maker at a dissemination event of the peer researchers' findings of their mini projects questioned the extent to which young people were representative of the diversity of young people rather than focusing on the young people's findings, what they learnt from the process and what they could find out from their audience.

One of the key issues that young people identified and reflected on was the distinction between consultation and voice and the potential role of research in enabling young people to influence issues that matter to them. Young people were aware of the legal requirement of local authorities to have arrangements in place to meaningfully engage with young people's perspectives and the extent to which negative attitudes towards young people and their abilities impacted the potential of such processes. Lundy (2007) questioned whether 'voice' is enough and the need for there to be other conditions in place to enable meaningful voice work including the role of decision makers.

Some 15 years on from this earlier critique this research identified that attitudes towards young people and how they are perceived, especially through Covid-19, as well as engagement of young people in decision making, did place limitations on the potential influence they could have and that all too often engagement was a one-way process with lack of feedback highlighted as a common concern.

This was a perspective shared by local leaders:

Young people are not always necessarily fed back to very well about what has happened to what they said so when people come to us and say we want to talk to young people we will say to them what is your plan for feeding back to young people once you have had your chat with them because feeding back [about] difference made [is not there]. And quite often young people get fed up (Strategic Lead Participant).

Cuts to Youth Services were seen as having an impact on the ability of local authorities to engage young people. Youth workers were often well placed to bridge gaps in communication and work alongside young people to ensure a meaningful process is in place. The research also identified many examples of where young people felt they had opportunities to meaningfully participate including engagement through the Youth Combined Assembly who work with the Mayor for South Yorkshire, through to initiatives led by young people such as Regional Youth Climate Assembly and participation at COP 26, through to less formal groupings such as joining a discussion group or contributing to debates organised by the YWU.

The research highlights that often a rationale for involving young people is to ‘identify what support they need.’ Young people, as peer researchers, felt that there was a wider issue about whether young people are seen as ‘assets’ and able to make positive contributions to agendas that affect them. Young people felt that the YWU had a role to play in working with decision makers to enable them to be aware of the potential for discriminatory attitudes to young people and how to enact meaningful approaches to youth engagement. This part of the research also highlighted the need to showcase examples of good practice across the region of youth voice work. A key reflection from young people was the importance of giving recognition to diverse ways of presenting and disseminating research beyond the written word and in developing creative participatory research methods.

Young People: -

Peer researchers work with young people to reflect on and explore what matters to them, how they feel about where they live, what they get involved with and what they think about youth work

Through the youth work networks, you are a part of, what is important to young people and you?



Young People identified a wide range of issues as being important to them, such as the importance of having 'safe spaces to go to,' to 'hang out,' 'being involved' and 'have fun.' The responses highlighted that young people were also concerned about wider issues which affect their lives such as the environment, climate change and a concern for those more vulnerable including homelessness and their identities growing up such as 'leaving Europe,' and 'being British.' Young people were concerned about their own mental health and in wider health matters linked to smoking, sexual health, and the impact of hate crime on health and wellbeing. The issues raised by young people provide a snapshot of concerns which are also consistent with issues raised through the Make Your Mark survey 2022 and the DCMS Levelling up youth survey as part of a Youth Review in relation to the importance of 'spaces to go' and 'things to do' (DCMS 2022).

a lack of consideration of safety for using those spaces for example a lack of lighting. Some young people were hopeful about changes they could see taking place in their local area and the 'rich cultural scene.' Young people highlighted how an area may be categorised as being deprived with a divided community and a bad reputation but that often masked what it was 'really like to live there.' Young people pointed out that sometimes there were good and bad places to live in the same geographical area.

Issues identified by young people were wide ranging and included discussion in relation to health, mental health, sexual health, and wellbeing, smoking through to the environment including litter. In addition, young people raised issues in relation to hate crimes and discrimination linked to racism and disability. Young People also raised concerns about the rise in homelessness, the invisibility of young carers and worries about domestic abuse. Across all discussion groups with young people concerns were raised about inequalities in relation to access to youth services where they are not available within their local community.

There was a strong feeling that the lack of transport in some areas made it difficult for some young people to independently access services if they needed to travel to another area that was not within walking distance. Young people highlighted a sense that the lack of access to youth services increased vulnerability and risk, difficulties in maintaining friendships, feelings of loneliness and isolation. There was no direct reference in the discussion to the significance of Covid-19 impacting lived experience but as with the Make Your Mark voter ranking of this issue in the previous section it is not possible to know from this research whether that was because young people did not feel this was important or not. Clearly there are potential gaps in relation to whose voices are heard in any piece of research and how those voices are interpreted. There is an ongoing need to tune into what the silences in the data might say. As one research participant stated, 'there are increasingly large numbers of young people who are no longer heard.'

Youth Workers

Peer researchers work with youth workers to reflect on how their practices changed during Covid-19, what they would do more of and what they would leave behind, the issues that they feel impact on young people, what a future youth offer should look like and the role of the YW



The direct voice of youth workers engaged in grass roots work with young people is often filtered through a range of different stakeholders. The research presented an opportunity to draw on the perspectives of youth workers located across the YH region in both the statutory and voluntary sectors during a single regional event. The peer researchers asked youth workers during focus groups about their perspectives on what they felt were the issues impacting young people based on their experiences.

Responses were wide ranging and highlighted a concern about the level of reach of youth work into communities and the need to develop strategy and capacity to 'reach isolated, excluded and disenfranchised young people' and the importance of creating spaces for young people to make friendships, participate in activities and build confidence.' Youth workers commented on concerns about wider youth services and facilities and young people's access to those services including mental health, dentists, and transport.

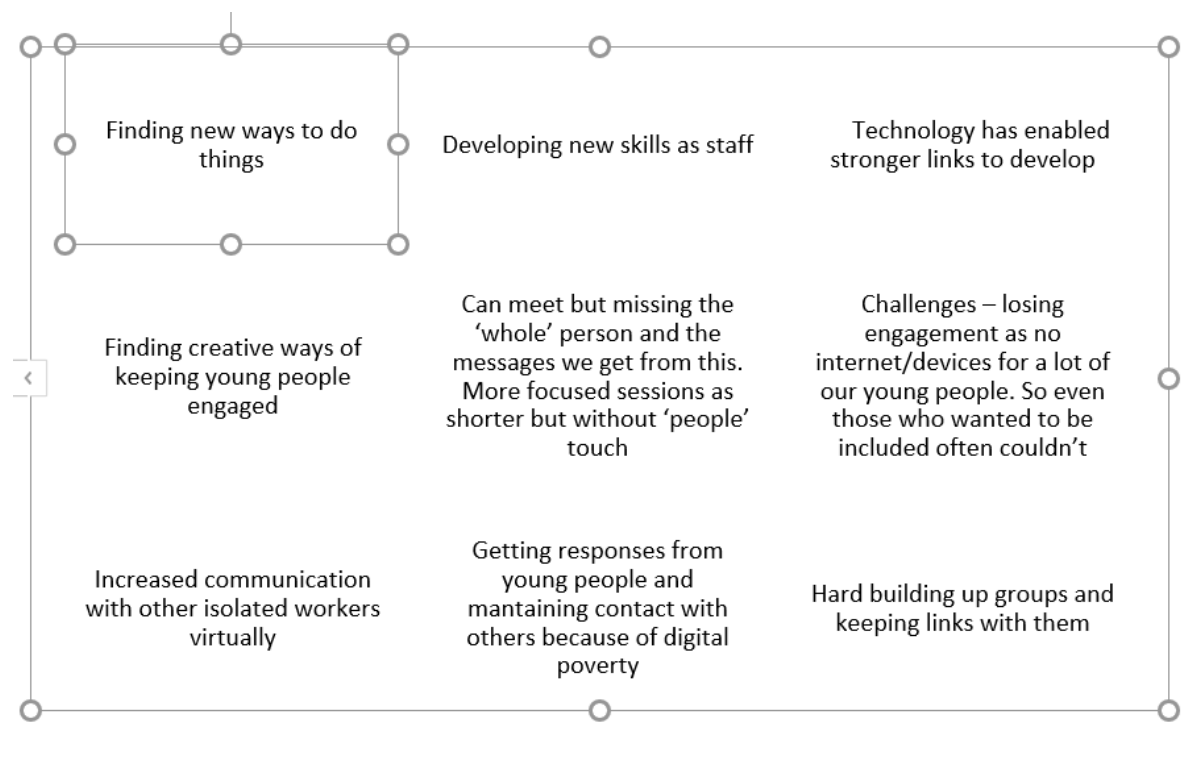
Changes and challenges during Covid-19, what will be left behind and taken forward

Youth workers described the challenges that they experienced during the pandemic and in particular the 'resilience' of the profession to be creative and find ways of engaging young people virtually and via detached and outreach programmes. They felt that there were

important lessons to be learnt from the changing nature of practice during the pandemic including strengthened networks of support between youth workers across geographical divides.

This research found that youth workers identified the importance of maximising learning from the pandemic especially in relation to increased opportunities for skill sharing and a sense of feeling connected regionally and nationally; specifically, on becoming more confident working online and speaking into public spaces.

Youth Workers also raised how accessing a wider network of youth workers opened space to think about a range of different issues impacting young people and youth work practices, broaden their horizons and belief that they could make a difference by sharing perspectives and exploring possibilities. Whilst youth workers identified concerns about young people's equality of access to digital youth work and limitations in relation to the value of the 'human' touch there was also a recognition of potential benefits of maintaining digital youth work practices in particular contexts especially in relation to young people's access to advice and information. Assessing the scale and scope of digital youth work through the pandemic and areas of good practice from a youth work perspective is a potential area of further research inquiry.



Many of the issues raised about the changes to youth work practices described by participants in this research particularly in relation to working online held resonance with the National Citizens Enquiry referred to in the previous section (Batsleer et.al 2021).

Going forward Youth Workers commented on what they felt were important considerations within a future youth offer



Youth workers described the importance of a youth offer having a statutory basis providing young people with the right to access modern, relevant, and relatable youth services. Youth workers felt that a youth offer should be educational, youth led, relationship based and caring. There was consensus that diversity was a key issue that should sit at the centre of a youth offer. Youth workers felt that a youth offer should be multi-disciplinary and able to work with young people on a range of issues from mental health and wellbeing to financial capability through to political education.

Youth work practitioners were asked to describe their experiences of working with the YWU

Youth workers identified the value of working as part of a wider network, valuing the sense of connection beyond locality benefiting young people and youth workers. They identified support, advice, information, qualifications, skill sharing and access to resources as essential elements of what the YWU does. Youth workers commented on how a sense of connection and commitment to collaboration created a sense of being able to ‘achieve more.’ Youth Workers identified a concern about how the YWU is funded as an issue in terms of their infrastructure and capacity to deliver a core offer to the youth work sector consistently across the region. Youth workers also commented on the role of the YWU in facilitating

access to national networks, resources and opportunities including research and sharing best practice but there was also concern raised that ‘nationally it still feels that issues raised are South and London.’

Networking opportunities wider than location based	YWU has a good oversight of what is happening regionally and nationally and are a major source of support, knowledge, info.	Together we are stronger	Funding is a challenge as without a budget how can we access you?
Together there is more reach and can achieve more	Youth Work has been the centre point to run youth work	Co-ordinating work across the region – keeping us linked in	Help and guidance
Co-ordinating work across the region – keeping us linked in	Well supported to work towards youth work awards	Sharing skills, resources, ideas, and training	Support for young people to work regionally and nationally

The direct voice of youth workers engaged in grass roots youth work is often filtered through a range of different stakeholders and can often be diluted especially when working in isolation of a wider youth work team or youth service provision. The research presented an opportunity to hear the direct voice of youth workers and to draw on their perspectives of youth work practices in the YH region across both the statutory and VCSE. This research identified that youth workers held concerns about the level of reach of youth services into communities of young people. Youth workers highlighted the need to ‘develop strategies to increase the capacity of youth services to engage with young people especially disenfranchised young people’ (Youth Worker Participant).

What should a youth offer look like?



Young people highlighted a range of essential elements that they felt needed to be included in future youth offers ranging from the importance of accessible spaces providing somewhere to go. Young people highlighted the value of feeling like they ‘belonged’ somewhere and felt a part of a community with relationships in which they felt valued. Young people emphasised the importance of being able to take up opportunities that were enjoyable and fun and through which they could learn, grow, and develop. Conversation was something that young people felt was important having someone to talk to individually and as part of groups to explore issues that matter and for advice.

Themed dialogues

Strategic Leads University researchers worked with participants who were part of the YWU strategic leads network to reflect on the challenges young people face living in the YH, challenges, threats and opportunities facing the youth work sector, the role of the YWU and who key partners were locally, regionally, and nationally



Strategic leads identified the changed relationships between the YWU and local authorities specifically, the impact of austerity compounded by the recent pandemic and the requirement to find diverse ways of working in the changing landscape of youth work. There was recognition of the continued relevance of a YWU particularly in relation to co-ordinating and maintaining networks for strategic leads, youth workers and young people. Their function in relation to training and the promotion of quality assurance in the management, planning, delivery, and evaluation of youth work was also referred to. Like youth workers, strategic leads highlighted the benefits of the coordination of information and linking local agendas to national initiatives as well as providing an overview of policy developments in the youth work sector and funding opportunities. Participants gave recognition to the challenges to developing a regional strategy underpinned by a universal approach given the diverse arrangements in place to deliver youth work across YH. Local and sub regional infrastructure organisations like Goole Youth Action, ERVAS, Leeds Youth Alliance and VANEL were all seen to perform a key role in the ecology of youth work. Local infrastructure organisations were seen to bridge gaps between smaller organisations and the YWU and

national organisations such as the NYA. Participants cited examples of the contrast between levels of youth work provision and different models in operation across the region including community-based approaches, outsourcing and commissioning, various levels of funding and capacity to be able to lever in funding with some organisations better equipped to approaches across the region presents an opportunity to develop consistency of approaches rather than uniformity and in sharing and developing good practices.

Participants were concerned that government youth policy was not integrated and relied on localities being able to interpret policy and make connections between policy areas. A contemporary feature of youth work is the need to make connections with the wider workforce to ensure that the potential of youth work in local strategy making was well understood. Such strategies have greater potential to thrive, avoid duplication and maximise limited resources where there was established youth work provision and qualified youth work staff able to contribute to such a process. Several examples of policy areas were cited in relation to, teenage pregnancy, violence reduction, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), youth offending, families, SENDI, Mental Health and Well Being. The coordination of effort to maximise opportunities for collaboration even in localities with more established infrastructure was identified as complex, fragmented, and required 'skills, knowledge and understanding of youth work and the wider strategic and operating environment.'

There was a strong consensus that the government did need to take a lead in articulating what constitutes 'sufficiency' in a local youth work offer and that this would go a long way to facilitate an integrated approach to youth work policy and to address concerns in relation to equity and access identified by strategic leads. Drawing on participants perspectives this research found that that the YWU did need to develop strategy in relation to the engagement of senior leaders in both the Local Authority, health, police and across the VCSE to enable a regional dialogue and consensus over how to enable a more joined up approach to the refreshing of local youth offers and its contribution to corporate strategies.

Participants also identified that the regional youth work unit had a potential role to play in researching policy and providing more in-depth policy briefings to inform strategic development locally, across localities within the youth work sector, with elected members and across the wider youth services sector. Recognition was given to the work already happening in relation to this in terms of briefings about funding linked to policy via 'in the

loop' an electronic newsletter but that this could be broadened out in line with the previous point.

A further area of consideration was the role of the YWU in enabling young people and youth workers to come together across the region and to extend opportunities for engagement in voice and influence work regionally and as a springboard into national and international opportunities. Participants were concerned about the level of reach of youth work to engage with the diversity of young people living across YH especially at a time where localities were looking to renew their youth work offer and recognition of the under representation of groups of young people also reflected in the lack of diversity in the youth workforce. Another potential to highlight was that participants felt that more work needed to be done to develop strategies that widened the reach of youth work and that the YWU could play a role in working with localities to develop a range of approaches to this including the role of community/place-based work.

All participants were concerned about challenges of recruitment of youth workers given examples of often not being able to recruit to posts that require qualified staff and the gap this presents between 'policy aspiration and operational reality.' Whilst participants were concerned about the impact of budget cuts on staff development some localities have adopted a pioneering 'grow your own' strategy with a commitment to enable staff recruited to become qualified. There was a general concern about skills required to undertake a professionally qualified youth work role, the level of support and supervision needed for new staff and experience required to work in certain environments with higher risk levels.

In recent times participants also identified increased pressure on retaining a qualified workforce as staff leave the profession for more secure employment or take up more substantive employment opportunities in other sectors such as health.

Recognition was given to the role of the YWU in co-ordinating training in the region and in initiating support for the development of apprenticeships. Participants did feel that more work needed to be done at both the national and regional level to strengthen the coordination of promotion of youth work as a profession, entry routes, qualification requirements and bursary support as well as continue to advocate for sustainable career pathways. Participants highlighted the need to pay particular attention to approaches that build a workforce that reflects the diversity of communities of young people it serves.

A consistent theme through this dialogue was the importance of ongoing opportunities to collaborate and work in partnership at the regional level. Capacity was cited as a key barrier particularly in localities where there had been significant cuts to youth work services. Participants felt that there was a need for further reflection on the nature of strategic partnership, engagement of key stakeholders at the regional level and role in identifying shared priorities and direction of funding and resources.

Other points raised by participants included the need to discuss further how local funding bids could include an element of infrastructure support from the YWU and/or the potential for the YWU to co-ordinate a funding bid to support shared activity in relation to identified themes which could include Devolution and local knowledge exchange.

YWU Trustees

Researchers worked with YWU trustees to reflect on their role as trustees, the role of the YWU in responding to the changes in the landscape of youth work, what a future youth offer can look like, threats, opportunities, and challenges and who the strategic partners are



YWU Trustees reflected on their strategic role within the YWU and within the region both in terms of vision that incorporates advocacy for a vibrant youth work offer enabling young people to flourish, legal responsibilities in ensuring good working practices and in ensuring the YWU is financially sustainable in responding to the needs of the youth work sector.

Trustees felt that the YWU played a pivotal role in interpreting the regional landscape for youth work and in closing the gap between national policy and grass roots activity alongside facilitating a range of different approaches for young people to engage and influence those processes. Trustees, like other participants in the research, felt that regional variations across YH were an important contextualisation for understanding opportunities and challenges in responding to the needs of the youth work sector. Trustees pointed to several examples including differences between rural, coastal, and urban areas, demographic profile including age, gender, ethnicity and disability and deprivation indicators.

Trustees identified that it was important that there was an ongoing process for understanding regional variations and their interpretation at both a national and local level and highlighted the important and ongoing role for quality research citing an NYA report *Overlooked: Young People and rural youth services* which highlights that there is 'little or no co-ordinated provision in many rural areas to tackle inequalities and put young people at the heart of Covid Recovery' (NYA, 2021b). Such research was cited as playing a key role in providing analysis that supports local experiences within youth work.

This research identified that trustees felt that the youth work offer within the region was not sufficient because it was not consistent in terms of what a young person can expect as a minimum entitlement in youth work.

Trustees expressed concern that historic disinvestment in youth work has had a cumulative impact on differential levels of youth work provision in the region and where a young person lives rather than what young people need has been a driver. One trustee highlighted how a decade ago young people who had higher support needs would have been able to access that through youth work in particular areas across the region all too often now would have no options for support available to them. This was something that volunteers who participated in the research also highlighted in terms of where they lived and equity of access.

Whilst there are many similar comparisons trustees cited as an example variation in youth work provision between North Yorkshire Moor and Scarborough as a coastal town which has been targeted for investment including in its youth and community work provision. Trustees were hopeful that the Levelling Up agenda was attuned to the issue of the complexities in relation to regional inequalities, the impact of this and the need to target resources.

The Levelling Up agenda has introduced a shift in responsibilities in relation to the devolution agenda with South and West Yorkshire establishing Mayors and the opportunity to work directly with young people in shaping policy. North Yorkshire and York are in the process of moving to a Mayoral system which contrasts with East Riding and Hull who moved to reject the establishment of a mayor in favour of a combined authority. Devolution has been a key theme through the Levelling Up agenda and what this means in terms of strategic influence in determining policies and priorities and directing resources is still emerging.

Trustees felt that the trend towards postcode lottery youth work provision by default needed to be addressed. They identified that there was a continued and urgent need to make representation to DCMS to provide guidance on the statutory duty to move towards consistency of provision and entitlement. Alongside this there was also a need to ensure that there was greater join-up between policy areas including regeneration initiatives to ensure that the potential of youth work was harnessed. Trustees felt that one of the consequences of disinvestment in youth work as a profession has been the exodus of professional and skilled youth work staff and at the same time a loss of memory of the strategic potential of the profession across a range of policy areas.

Across the region there are some excellent examples of the ways in which local youth work leads are working across policy areas to maximise resources available to youth work across the region. The YWU could work with local authorities to extend showcasing of best practice as evidence to inform regional policy. Trustees felt that good practice was reliant on local authorities employing a strategic lead for youth work who could work across policy areas and have the capacity to work collaboratively with a range of partners. Trustees felt that in recent times there was an increasing and significant variation in practices between local authorities and that the level of seniority those responsible for leading youth work were employed at and where they were located had a bearing on this.

Trustees did feel that there was a need for engagement with Directors of Children's Services as well as Mayors and possibly council portfolio holders to explore a more strategic approach to establishing sufficiency of youth work across the region and scope out common priorities where collaboration would help address regional inequalities and common issues in building youth work infrastructure such as investment recruitment, workforce development, quality assurance and training alongside meeting the needs of young people.

Trustees reflected on the role of the LGA and the NYA in working to facilitate this at the regional level and the potential role of the ADCS (Association of Directors of Children's Services) for the YH Region.

Strategic partnerships and collaboration were themes that ran through trustees' reflections and the role of the YWU in the youth work landscape when policies and priorities are changing at a national level and as local authorities are developing new plans. There was consensus that the YWU plays a pivotal role in sense making in both the strategic and operational environment for youth work. The question that arises out of this from a trustee perspective, was how it positions itself to maximise support around infrastructure in a way that engages young people as a motor for driving priorities and influence. There was a view that partnerships at the national level with the YWU were pitched at the right level citing the increasing ways that the network of regional youth work units were working together and co-ordinating their communications and work with the NYA, Centre for Youth Impact and UK Youth. Trustees questioned what further strategic moves were needed at the regional level so that senior officers in local authorities were aware of the YWU and how it relates to their services. Trustees felt that there was further work to be undertaken to consider the potential of untapped partnerships in relation for example, to schools and uniformed organisations and the need to take 'an evaluative look at who is in the region and can make alliances with.'

The fragility of the youth workforce was identified as one of the most significant threats to levelling up youth work in YH and concerns about the current crisis in recruitment which will be compounded in coming years by the overall reduction in students professionally qualifying to be youth workers. Trustees welcomed the commitment by DCMS to continue to invest in training and to develop the youth workforce. Trustees considered there was an ongoing need to interface with national initiatives such as the work led by UK Youth to promote youth work as a career pathway and their continued role in training and engaging with employers and universities in developing apprenticeships. They also felt that there were regional initiatives that could be led by the YWU to engage with a range of providers including schools to raise awareness of youth work as a profession and as part of this showcasing examples of good practice in youth work across the region and the potential of social media to do this.

Overall capacity of the YWU was identified as a key challenge and which trustees felt was compounded by overall cuts to youth work provision discussed earlier in this section which has increased demand for support from the YWU. A further challenge as well as a strength was that the expertise within the YWU is bound up in individual members of staff. This was identified as potentially posing a risk to the work of the YWU should anything happen to those staff. It was felt that this highlighted the need for funding specifically for infrastructure posts to diversify the staff team and ensure sustainability.

Whilst trustees were mindful of a range of strategic challenges, they were clear that these also presented opportunities. There was general agreement that the YWU was well established and embedded in the youth work sector. Its ability to work across diverse networks regionally, locally, and nationally means that even though it is a small unit it has been able to sustain its position and influence. Going forward this was considered to continue to create the conditions for opportunities and collaborations to advocate for the youth work sector in the region. Trustees did feel that developing a range of strategies for engaging young people in shaping the youth work environment and in articulating what matters to them was a significant priority. The region has taken a lead in developing youth voice work but there was a consensus that there was more work to do as in the same way that youth work provision is patchy so is youth voice work. It was also considered that there was a need to ensure *that youth voice work was continually refreshed to avoid the 'creep of professional consultees'* and ensure a wider engagement with young people on an ongoing basis. The YWU has a particular role to play in working with youth work providers to build infrastructure to engage with a diversity of young people that reflect the communities in which they are a part which was something identified by peer researchers through their pilot feedback. Trustees did feel that there *was a need for further discussion about what this might mean in terms of strategic relationships to enable this to develop.*

YWU Staff

Researchers worked with YWU staff to reflect on the role of the YWU and the work that they were involved in, issues and challenges facing young people living in the YH, threats, challenges and opportunities for a future youth work offer and perspectives on key partners



The YWU has a team of four staff. Two staff also have wider youth work roles, one as a SEND participation worker and as a sessional send youth worker and the other undertaking participation work in a Local Authority and working in an alternative youth work provision.

The team is engaged in a diverse range of work which contributes to regional infrastructure and advocacy and development support at the local and national level. Locally this includes support to staff who work with young people in care, the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority Youth Assembly, the West Yorkshire Youth Collective and the Humber Youth Health Network. The YWU seeks to work developmentally with young people engaged in youth voice networks across the region including supporting a process to establish a SEND regional network emerging from peer research and work by young people in Barnsley and the Regional Youth Climate Assembly which has benefited from the green mentor project. The YWU supports national and local work through the British Youth Council role in working with Members of Youth Parliaments at the regional level to plan campaign work locally. The YWU provides advice, information and support to local

authorities and organisations in the VCSE on matters relating to how to structure youth work, engaging with quality improving and evaluation tools through to training on the LGA catalyst framework and the NYA curriculum framework. The YWU also contributes to progressing national agendas including working as part of them. The YWU has a steering group made up of young volunteers who are drawn from a diverse range of geographical and issues-based youth voice networks across the region. Most young people who are part of this network are aged 16 plus. The steering group is regarded by the YWU as a pulse that informs the strategic direction of work and remains grounded in the perspectives of young people.

In reflecting on the changing landscape of youth work post Covid-19 staff highlighted that even though there are concerns nationally, regionally, and locally about the size and shape of the youth workforce, including commitment by DCMS, there are still redundancies being made across the region. Alongside this staff identified how changes to working practices in the region impacted on workers' ability to be able to maintain relationships and support some of the most vulnerable young people, citing young care leavers as one example. Another significant issue identified by staff was how to work with young people to negotiate the direction of youth voice work especially when drivers for engagement were so disparate. Workers identified the example of voice work in health where some young people may participate directly in relation to their long-term health condition whereas others might engage because they want to campaign for services and/or to protect services.

Limited resources make it difficult to sustain a developmental approach that can respond meaningfully to young people's needs but staff reflected on their commitment to working and developing trusting relationships with young people and finding ways of working young people to enable young people to develop their interests, to influence workers in other organisations and settings to work in this way and where it is not possible to meet a particular need to be accountable for explaining why not.

The YWU staff reflected on what they felt were issues impacting young people. Issues identified included poor transport and affordability of transport, mental health, and access to services particularly where young people live rurally or in a small town. Staff identified that unless you live in an urban area transport becomes a significant barrier including lack of

access to services where they do exist, loneliness and isolation, mental health, and well-being.

YWU staff identified equality and entitlement to have a voice as significant issues. Staff highlighted how young people are increasingly thinking about the way in which issues that affect them are interconnected. Staff identified that tokenism is a major issue for young people who put a lot of time and effort into issues feeling that they are often not valued for their knowledge and experience. This can be very frustrating for young people and highlights the *need to find ways of learning from best practice in the sector and working with decision makers that are asset based. This reinforces findings from the peer research that was undertaken as part of this project.*

YWU staff identified that in recent times they were increasingly experiencing a 'toxic social culture' with young people they work with reporting a rise in 'bullying and social isolation especially in relation to some minority groups.' Staff felt that 'the lack of youth work provision then becomes a real issue.' Staff identified the need for there to be a balance between targeted and open access work to ensure that there are opportunities for young people with diverse needs to mix with each other and at the same time access safe spaces to address specific needs including for example in relation to sexualities, disability, gender, and race. YWU staff felt that there was a need for CPD opportunities to raise awareness across social professions about the differences in emphasis of approach between equity and equality of opportunity.

What do you feel youth work should offer young people in response?

Drawing on experiences of working with young people in a range of different settings YWU staff felt that there was a basic gap in some areas across the region-with the lack of safe spaces to go. Some young people no longer know what youth clubs are and have no experience of being able to access a safe space to socialise and talk. Often spaces are conditional and/or targeted for specific outcome driven work e.g., health initiatives. Many young people are no longer able participate in open access, generic youth work. LGBT+ and SEND, although targeted, are now the most informal youth work interventions – many young people feel like they must fit into categories as they want to find places where they belong.

Somewhere to go, something to do, someone to talk to

YWU staff reflected on the impact of informal spaces across the region being closed and youth work support due to budget restrictions being withdrawn or reduced. YWU staff felt strongly that young people were entitled to access youth work and the informal educational opportunities that the approach opens-up. Staff felt that *there should be a diversity of provision to ensure that youth work staff could meet young people where they were at through detached and outreach provision but were also able to access safe dry warm spaces*. YWU staff highlighted that young people were not a homogenous group and want different things at different points in their lives and dependent on what they are experiencing at any one point. Consistency of opportunities was emphasised as key and if there were not opportunities for young people to meet in informal safe spaces then this limited the potential for their voices to be heard and to explore the diverse ways, they could make a difference in communities that they were a part of.

YWU staff highlighted how youth work is different from activities for young people and the importance of relationships, conversation, and consistency of those relationships is key: 'if all we want to do is occupy young people then buy them a cinema ticket.' Staff identified that this related to discussions on whether youth work is about containment and diversion or about voluntary participation, open-access youth work where young people choose activities, enter dialogue and informal learning in safe spaces.

Academics:

Researchers worked with academics to reflect on their role in workforce development, threats, opportunities, and challenges facing the youth work sector, the role of the YWU in working with the sector to develop a future youth offer and perspectives on key partners



Participants who either teach and or have taught on youth and community programmes in the YH reflected on the changing landscape of youth work and the political and ethical imperative on universities to work collaboratively for social good. This includes the role of research, knowledge exchange activity and teaching to enable inquiry into youth work as a professional practice, young people related issues and educating future generations of professionally qualified youth and community workers.

Participants explored the inter-connected nature of the youth work sector in relation to cuts to provision, lack of visible and viable graduate pathways into youth work employment and the impact on demand for youth and community work programmes with 3 out of 6 standalone degree programmes closing in the region in the last 3 years. Degree apprenticeships are a potential strategy to renew professional qualification routes in collaboration with employers.

In some localities, as identified in the strategic leads meeting, there is good infrastructure with strong partnerships and investment in youth work to facilitate development of youth work apprenticeships, although they noted that this was not the case across the region which could reinforce disparities in equity of access to youth work provision. There was a

general lack of strategy and data from employers locally and/or through national infrastructure organisations to inform decision making about the demand for apprenticeships in the short, medium, and long term as part of workforce planning. Alongside these participants noted the lack of coordination locally with universities between Level 3 training as a potential access route into Level 6 training.

Participants reflected on the role of the YWU in bringing together strategic leads and university providers to consider a locally driven regional strategy and to identify developmental support required to enable the growth of Level 6 apprenticeships. Such a network could help to ensure consistency of approaches to the promotion of youth work as a career and joined up approaches to marketing.

Universities represent a significant resource within localities and their role as anchor institutions within communities that could be further developed in relation to the youth work sector. Participants explored the potential of universities to contribute to building infrastructure and capacity of the youth work sector in developing critical research informed practices as a long-term strategy. Participants felt there was a need to shine a light on the potential role of participatory action research in which young people are valued as assets in identifying solutions to issues that matter to them. This was felt to be especially important given that increasingly voices of communities of young people are not being heard and the need for understanding of the impact of poverty, inequality, and discrimination on future life chances.

There was recognition that such reflections were not new and that there are many good examples of practice in these areas but that there was a need to refresh discussions about 'what universities can do' in advancing practitioner research in the youth work sector. Participants identified several practical considerations including the role of research in identifying needs, setting, and advancing agendas for action and/or evaluating programmes of work. There is also a need for universities to consider how to make research accessible, especially in relation to how and where it is disseminated and how research is used. Public Engagement is a current policy focus, as described in the introduction of this report, 'so this is an opportune moment to work together on how this can work in practice and increases the potential of knowledge exchange between universities, young people and YW practitioners.' Participants highlighted a recognition of the different rhythms in working practices between universities and the youth work sector. A need was highlighted to work

with the youth work sector to assess the impact of that and what practical measures can be taken to ensure greater synergy between research and practice. Knowledge exchange was identified as one feasible way of developing better cooperation between universities and the youth work sector in building relational partnerships to create opportunities for needs-led research, open sources of funding and in developing research infrastructure. The Wellcome Trust funded British Science Association Ideas fund is, for example, being piloted in Hull, this flips the balance of power enabling the community/groups to host the project with the university as partner rather than the traditional university led approach, changing the cultural landscape to conjoin and value lived and learnt experience. This also engenders trust in partners to identify need, host funding and contract with universities. In York St John, they have a seed fund as part of their strategy for social justice where researchers are matched to community projects (in this instance community is a catch all and includes young people).

Other examples to collaborate were the potential for themed undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations and theses, which respond to need, the research generated from these could be collated and shared. In addition, universities can work collaboratively with the sector to offer short term internships that could form part of a 'grow your own' strategy.

Section five

Themes

The research identified five key themes relating to issues that were identified by participants and explored from different perspectives across all focus groups. The themes offer potential areas for further exploration and to inform collaboration at a regional level. Those themes are in the middle and on the margins, data matters, nothing about us without us (a framing originally from the disability movement), workforce development and working collaboratively.

In the middle, on the margins

The research has highlighted that the YWU as part of the network of Regional Youth Work Units is pivotal to national strategy in rebuilding the infrastructure that supports the growth of consistent, quality, vibrant and dynamic youth work locally across the YH Region. The key role of Regional Youth Work Units is reflected in their inclusion in the NYA ten year strategy as playing a role in meeting key objectives linked to 'evidence of impact and the need for youth work, 'the role of data', 'diversification of funding streams' and initiatives that support those objectives including in relation to the national youth sector census, the young researchers network, dissemination of knowledge, engaging the sector, collaboration in relation to NYA regional road shows, regional approaches to training including co-ordinating DCMS funded bursaries, delivering training and the establishment of regional youth work unit partnerships. The YWU also plays a key role in the Centre for Youth Impact strategy including convening the regional quality and impact network as well as working locally with youth work sector providers to work with a range of quality frameworks.

The research highlighted that participants in the research who were already engaged in the work of the YWU valued the support, advice, guidance and access to information and opportunities and to share good practice. The research highlighted the increased support role that the YWU played during Covid-19 and in response to cuts to services where there was weakened infrastructure particularly in relation to support, advice, training, and quality assurance. The infrastructure activity valued by strategic leads and practitioners was not however reflected in local Children and Young People's Plans. There is recognition that at the time of this research being undertaken several Local Authorities were in the process of updating their plans and local leaders have a potential role to play in raising awareness of the work of the YWU. As one strategic lead said in the research. This maps to other key themes identified in this report but especially in relation to the need for strategic

partnerships that can formalise working arrangements with the YWU and consider the resource implications of this.

A common challenge for infrastructure organisations is that they are often, as this research highlights, in the middle of work to support the sector through a range of infrastructure activities but on the margins in terms of how it is supported in developing and sustaining its own capacity. The YWU staff identified that especially over the last two years a larger percentage of their funding is for voice and influence work over infrastructure activity linked to their support role in relation to the quality of youth work including training.

Working across formalised and strategic partnerships might contribute to a strengthening of long term coherent and sustainable funding strategy and in reversing the trend within the sector of being driven by short term projects and short-term funding. *The need for diversification of funding and resources linked to strategic partnerships was highlighted as key in growing the YWU's own internal capacity.* Participants valued the independence of the YWU within the youth work sector and its ability to advocate and influence policy and engage with movement and community-based practices. Diversification of funding over the longer term would enable the YWU to retain this independence whilst at the same time contributing to the operationalisation of government, national and local policy.

Key questions that emerge from this theme to inform further inquiry and action

- Does the YWU need to review its model of membership and support functions in dialogue with local authorities and voluntary sector partners?
- Is there a need for the YWU to work to diversify long term funding streams to address internal capacity and retain independence within the youth work sector?

Data Matters

The YWU is working in the context of a transforming landscape in relation to data from a diverse range of sources and in terms of a mix of methodologies used to generate data.

The government, as part of its levelling up agenda, has identified a lack of data and a lack of oversight of data. In contrast this research found that there was an abundance rather than a lack of data but that there are issues of accessibility, quality, and gaps. This presents challenges for the youth work sector, and the YWU specifically, in being able to read the regional landscape for the purposes of identifying trends, feeding planning processes and priorities, and advocating for resources. The research highlighted the need for further discussion about the role and purpose of regional data sets in relation to key stakeholders, locally, regionally, and nationally. The research highlighted the challenges that the YWU must navigate in relation to *facilitating the capacity of the youth work sector to work productively with data to produce high quality youth services, with the rights of young people and the ongoing need for data processes that facilitate the voices of young people themselves*. The State of Data report (2020: online) asks government, policy, and decision makers to recognise the harms that poor practice has on young people's lives and to act to build the needed infrastructure to realise the vision of a 'rights respecting environment in the digital landscape of state education in England.' The State of Data 'ask' is as relevant to youth services as it is to state education in England.

This research identified that all local authorities in YH provide access to granular data in relation to a range of issues and in the publication of Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) that feeds corporate plans and children, and young people plans. At a national level the ONS, Public Health fingertip data make it possible to build data sets to inform and shape understanding and decision making in relation to young people and youth services. Through the process of this research several limitations were identified in working with data to be able to make sense of trends in relation to young people living in YH in comparison to other regions and nationally and the use of different criteria that make comparison across data sets more difficult. Broadly speaking issues relating to the role of data within the youth sector and its limitations as a theme have been frequently referred to. The report of the APPG inquiry into Youth Work report identified the need for 'guidance should also provide clearer and more stringent instructions for completing Section 251 returns to ensure greater consistency of the key data that they provide' (NYA, 2019:32). The APPG review in 2021 also

identified specific data gaps such as ‘not knowing the number of professionally qualified youth workers employed within the sector as data is no longer collected’ (NYA, 2019:6) and the ‘need for the reinstatement of the Local Authority audit of youth services.’ (NYA, 2019, 6). The recent youth work census conducted by the NYA cites the challenge of data at the national level being exclusively related to local authorities but not detailed enough. The need to increase access to granular data relating to the VCSE and the challenges of being able to extrapolate that data to the general population was also identified as a key issue. The Census was identified as a strategy to address this. Tom Burke Chief Executive at Centre for Youth Impact highlights the need for a ‘data literate youth sector’ (Burke, 2022: online) and the consequences of a failure to work towards this in terms of the potential to undermine quality youth services. DCMS in its discussion of the funding methodology for YIF (Youth Investment Fund) rounds one and two identified a lack of data and criteria for decision making as a key challenge.’ The Youth Sector funders collective established in 2020 alongside policy and influencing, qualifications, regulation, and championing identified the ‘role of learning and data to collect, analyse and disseminate data and research to inform, develop and support the sector as a key area for development.’

Leading from these concerns and drivers for action, the Levelling Up White paper (Housing and Communities 2022) sets out the commitment to transform its approach to data and evaluation and linked to the ONS data strategy will work with stakeholders to improve data and its role in ensuring accountability in the design, delivery, and impact of public services. The Centre for Youth Impact has created a data hub that brings together different data sources including Indices for Multiple deprivation and the NYA Youth Sector Map. Local authorities also provide access to data hubs that brings together key data sets.

In this context. As part of the network of regional youth work units the YWU aims to:

- Collate information on the impact of policy locally and regionally to help shape national policy and practice
- Drive up the sector awareness on data and research available linked to youth services
- Ensure the information is cascaded out and fed back to national, regional, and local policy

Key questions that emerge from this theme to inform further inquiry and action

- What data would be useful to collate at the regional level in relation to young people, youth work and youth services?
- How can regional data sets be used to highlight gaps and identify priorities for collaboration?
- What role can regional data play in advocating for resources into the region against agreed priorities?

Nothing about us without us

Participation, voice, and influence are key concepts which historically have underpinned youth and community work approaches. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) saw a growth in local authorities employing participation, and voice and influence workers often with a background in youth work as part of meeting legal requirements to ensure young people have opportunities to have a say in decisions which affect them. The Centre for Youth Impact has recently launched research to understand the impact of youth voice work and outcomes from this are intended to inform shared understanding of good practice. The YWU is playing an infrastructure role along with other regional youth work units to facilitate the engagement of the field in this research. It can be argued that the various strands associated with voice and influence work are increasingly well established within the youth work sector. Examples including youth advisors and MYP's. Peer research by young people for young people is still an emergent field of practice within youth work with a longer history in community development and movement-based practices. As the field is emergent so there is an ongoing need to identify and extend good practices. In 2021 for example the Partnership for Young London published a tool kit for participatory research and the Young Foundation have launched a new initiative to create community led research networks.

Cottam (2018) emphasised the need to develop diverse ways of working in recognition of how society has changed since the establishment of the post war welfare state. Covid-19 has reinforced the enduring nature of social issues that have a profound impact on the

experience of growing up linked to Class, Race, Gender, Disability, Poverty, and inequality but it has also amplified new social issues including in relation to loneliness and digital exclusion. Research has a vital role to play in shining a light on experiences of young people from their own perspective and, dependent on methodology, as a process to undertake research on issues decided by participants themselves. Peer research as a participatory methodology is integral to the idea that education is an emancipatory social force (Curran, Gormally and Smith (2022)). It offers an approach to research designed to enable young people to take informed action in ways that increase capabilities (Fraser and Sunkara, 2019) to influence and set agendas and potentially opens new understandings that influence action. Peer research forces a shift in relationships between young people and adults to understand their potential as assets rather than as ‘problems to be fixed.’ This potentially unsettles the adultism that is deeply embedded and implicit in how social professionals and institutions operate (Corney et.al 2021). One participant in this research described the need for young people's engagement to run through all areas of youth work and services to young people like a ‘Yorkshire stick of rock’ Whilst the peer research was only a small pilot young people were able to explore the potential of peer research methodology as a strategy that would harness the approach already taken by the YWU to enable young people space and opportunity to articulate and explore issues of concern in safe spaces and access to decision makers. This was seen to be integral to, but distinct from, voice and influence and other formal methods of involving young people such as young inspectors. The methodology for the process of peer research drawing on Law (2004) was described as ‘messy methodology’. The methodology is understood as ‘messy’ as:

- The emphasis is on the educational process rather than pre-determined outcomes
- The approach is processual and relational

And

- designed to facilitate shared understanding and action

Peer researchers highlighted the *need for a longer-term plan for peer research as part of a regional youth work strategy, the potential to upscale peer research projects, consideration of how to support young people as peer researchers to train young people in participatory approaches, the development of research methods and methods for dissemination.*

Opportunities for young people who want to formalise their training to have access to accreditation is a potential area of inquiry and development. There is potential to work with

ESB in recognition of the process of peer research and/or to look at OCN in action research as routes for accreditation. The research highlighted ongoing collaborative projects that will continue to inform approaches to peer research within the work of the YWU such as ‘authoring our own stories’ a lottery funded project led by Young London.

Key questions that emerge from this theme to inform further inquiry and action

- Is there a need to develop a long-term plan for peer research as an integral part of YWU?
- What organising structures does the YWU require to embed peer research and young people’s engagement in shaping policy priorities and agendas for action?
- Is there a need for training opportunities for decision makers seeking to work with young people on peer research projects and voice and influence work more generally?
- Is there a need to look at opportunities for accreditation of peer researchers?

Workforce Development

In 2019, the APPG for Youth Affairs published an inquiry on youth work with recommendations. Two years later, the APPG reviewed the state of play of youth affairs and the progress towards statutory and voluntary youth services and published its report at the Youth Work Summit. In 2021 there was an interim review report of progress in relation to the recommendations set out in the APPG inquiry report. The review highlighted that there is ‘greater confidence in the role and potential of youth work identified by government in its principle aims to enhance young people’s skills for life and work and mental and physical wellbeing’ (Tiley 2021, online).

Such confidence is reflected in a range of national strategies including the Civil Society Strategy recognizing the ‘transformational impact that youth services and trained youth workers can have, especially for young people facing multiple barriers or disadvantage’ (2018: 42) and the DCMS review of youth work provision in 2021 as part of levelling up highlight the need for a qualified youth work force as integral to ‘increasing the quantity and

quality of youth provision. It is also supported by a range of national initiatives designed to strengthen the infrastructure for youth work and in the increased demand for professionally qualified workers across Health, Education and Community safety.

The role and potential of youth work has highlighted in practice the urgent need to continue to develop and embed workforce strategy to build capacity and reverse the incremental reduction of professionally qualified youth workers.

This research identified a gap between long term policy aspiration to grow the youth work sector including investment in professionally qualifying 10,000 youth workers (NYA and YMCA 2021) and short-term realism driven by a perception from participants that the youth work sector is unable to meet workforce needs with 'failure to recruit' most cited as evidence of this.

There was a general concern, highlighted through the research, by participants located in Local Authorities, the voluntary sector, and in regional roles of the ongoing need to safeguard against de-professionalisation of youth work and to ensure that 'youth offers' continue to ensure that the 'values, principles, standards, skills, methodologies, and professional practice of youth work, remain on offer to young people' (Participant in research - Youth Worker).

There is currently no local, regional, or national picture of what constitutes the youth workforce, their qualifications, where they are located, what they do, how they are funded and supported in YH. A review of Local Authority Corporate Plans and Children and Young People plans do not generally provide information about long term youth work force requirements and often where professionally qualified youth work posts are advertised within the region, they often do not offer a realistic career pathway including hours of employment and salary in line with graduate employment. The Office for Students (OFS) 2022 has revised conditions of registration and guidance that regulates quality and standards across the Higher Education sector. Inspections will be carried out from October 2022 by the OFS who will assess if institutions meet minimum requirements for quality and standards, where courses are judged to not meet these, it is the role of the regulator to ensure that such courses are not available for students to choose (OFS 2022). Of relevance to youth work degree courses and the State of the youth work sector is Condition B3: Student outcomes which includes a requirement for universities to ensure that professionally qualifying degree provision including youth work degrees provide pathways into graduate employment (OFS 2018, 2022). Failure to meet this requirement would

threaten the sustainability of professionally qualifying degree provision. This is of concern in relation to professionally qualifying youth work degrees and youth work employment and its ability to meet the criteria for graduate employment.

There has been no recent research undertaken to identify what percentage of youth work graduates are in graduate employment 6- 12 months following graduation. This is a potential area for further inquiry in line with the wider commitment to grow the professional youth workforce (NYA 2020).

The NYA is leading on the development of a national workforce strategy incorporating a range of initiatives to ensure that Youth Workers work both within the youth work sector and in targeted youth services. The National Census led by the NYA is the start of a process of better understanding the size and shape of the youth work sector but does not replace the need for profiles to be developed locally and regionally. The YWU is working with the NYA and local providers to increase recruitment into the youth work sector with a strong emphasis on bursaries to participate in entry level qualifications and collaboration to develop level 3 and 6 apprenticeships. Locally some participants have begun to develop a 'grow your own strategy.' In the context of national developments including the national workforce strategy this research highlighted the potential of a regional approach to workforce development as part of national strategy consistent with local youth work sector priorities. A regionally agreed framework was highlighted as being beneficial in strengthening coherence and consistency in workforce and increasing scope for recruitment.

The research pointed to the need for local and combined authorities in line with national strategy to consider investment into the co-ordination and mapping of existing youth workforce across the statutory and VCSE in line with strategic plans to identify future workforce needs over a 3–5-year basis.

The capacity to respond to youth workforce matters could be strengthened by local authorities and combined authorities working strategically at the regional level with the YWU. The YWU has a potential role in facilitating formal partnership between key stakeholders in workforce planning including training providers, universities, and representatives from across statutory and VCSE sectors.

The research highlighted that a regional approach would secure the potential for consistency in workforce planning and the sharing of best practice in relation to entry level

and professional qualifications, developing and ensuring appropriate supervision, support, and access to ongoing CPD opportunities. Similarly, there was a sense that working at a regional level as part of an overall national workforce strategy would strengthen awareness of youth work as a profession and maximise resources to recruit and retain youth work talent in the region. It was felt that this would be beneficial locally over the longer term.

The YWU as part of investment into the delivery of level 2 and 3 qualifications should work with stakeholders to develop initiatives that strengthen progression and access to professional qualifications. Research such as that undertaken by the Youth Race Equality Network (YREN) at the national level and young people's voices at the local level through initiatives such as the work by the Black Kings of Hull highlight that the youth work sector has further work to do to ensure that the workforce reflects the diversity of the communities it seeks to engage with.

This research highlighted the potential role of the YWU in working with stakeholders to strengthen the focus on diversity and difference including class, ethnicity, gender, and disability Commitment to grow the workforce requires regional strategy reflected in local strategic plans.

A key gap in the region is the absence of long-term youth workforce plans that include recruitment strategies that are linked to viable youth work posts and that can attract professionally qualified workers into the sector.

The research highlighted a continued need to support people to take up qualifications including young people who themselves may have accessed youth work opportunities and ensuring that there is an updated menu of CPD opportunities.

The research highlighted the need for workforce plans and recruitment strategies to give consideration of the need to ensure that the workforce reflects the diversity of communities it serves, and opportunities are in place *to facilitate this including gender balance, disability, and ethnicity*

Key questions that emerge from this theme to inform further inquiry and action

- Is there a need for a regional workforce group to advance youth workforce development including entry, progression, recruitment, and diversity?

- How can youth workforce initiatives be shared across the region including 'grow your own,' internships and placements?
- Is there a need for the YWU to review its own workforce strategy including diversification of workforce, progression, and succession planning?

Working collaboratively – the power of partnership and the need for a distinctive regional focus.

The research identified that there is a diverse range of partnerships in operation across the region and a broadening out of organisations and key stakeholders beyond youth work who are committed to collaborate to create opportunities and improve outcomes for young people. Local infrastructure organisations such as ERVAS (East Riding Voluntary Action Services), Kirklees Youth Alliance, Young Lives Leeds and Goole Youth Action play a key role in being tuned in to the scale and scope of local youth work activity and in both enabling and joining up communication with smaller organisations who may have less capacity and in understanding opportunities and challenges emerging through policy developments in the youth work sector. Local infrastructure organisations also play a significant role in bridging the gap between uniformed organisations, smaller self-help groups and the funded VCSE and Local Authority and for this reason were understood to be well placed to track local provision and feed this into a wider regional picture via the YWU.

There was recognition that some partnerships were more established in some localities than in others and that there are ongoing issues in finding collaborative ways of working that give recognition to the distinctiveness and specialisms of work across the statutory and VCSE sector with the aim of avoiding competition, duplication, and maximising and/or sharing limited resources. This also possibly has implications for community-based projects working with marginalised group's locally including young asylum seekers for example who will often be providing vital work but with limited capacity.

The research identified that organising structures for youth work across Local Authority areas have become increasingly diverse in recent years. Some local authorities such as Hull offer a balance between direct delivery through the city council and engaging the VCSE

through a process of commissioning over a 5-year period in contrast to Leeds who are Local Authority led supported by a strong youth alliance cutting across the VCSE and Bradford who use a commissioning approach to secure services to young people that are both responsive to local communities and cut across policy areas.

The research highlighted how the organising structures for youth work have changed with devolution. South and West Yorkshire for example has seen the introduction of local mayors. This mixed picture provides both opportunities and challenges in agreeing the nature and function of strategic partnerships, mobilising resources, and accountabilities within the region.

The changing landscape of youth work provides an ongoing imperative for the YWU to critically reflect on their role in bringing together new and different partnerships that meaningfully engaging young people and key stakeholders that map to national policy priorities are capable of mobilising untapped resources in ways that can be contextualised locally.

Participants felt that a starting point was the *engagements of Heads of Children's Services who were considered to have a pivotal role in directing and embedding a systematic approach to strategic youth work partnerships in the region*

There is evidence of a range of good practice in relation to voice and influence initiatives and opportunities for young people to engage and directly influence decisions and services about them. This research and studies such as the IPPR (Institute for Public Policy Research) Making Democracy work for young people: A Manifesto by Young People from the Yorkshire and Humber (2021) do highlight young people's ongoing concern about their engagement being limited to one-way consultation rather than partners and not always being given feedback despite their commitment and 'trying to take part' (IPPR 2021:7).

The research highlighted the need for

- Increased recognition of the distinctive role of regional and local infrastructure organisations as distinct from direct delivery and the need to build in specific funding to reduce competition in relation to limited resources.
- A more strategic approach to collaboration and funding of infrastructure organisations such as the YHU would increase the potential to strengthen co-ordinated approaches to lever funds into the region.

- Further inquiry and dialogue with policy makers and funders about how local infrastructure partnerships can be supported to be part of a process to direct funding to organisations that already deliver areas of work to strengthen delivery and good practice – rather than have funds parachuted in via an external funder who has no knowledge of an area or the organisation they are funding.
- Whilst there are established regional networks that are key in providing spaces for information sharing there are gaps in terms of how they feed into strategic partnership working in the region.

Key questions that emerge from this theme to inform further inquiry and action

1. There is a need for a formalised regional strategic partnership for youth work: what should the terms of reference be, who are the key stakeholders?
2. What is the mechanism to ensure that a regional strategic partnership for youth work is locally responsive, accountable, open, and transparent?
3. What are the strategies for engaging young people who reflect the diversity of communities they are part of as part of strategic partnership arrangements regionally?

Future directions:

This research project has engaged a diverse range of stakeholders in reflecting on the challenges and opportunities for young people growing up in YH post Covid-19 and in building an understanding of the changing landscape of youth work in the region. The themes highlighted in this report are ones which held resonance with participants in this research and are offered in this write up as a basis for further exploration.

The research has highlighted the complex environment in which youth work operates in local authority areas and the political and ethical imperative of renewing local youth offers that play a vital role in redressing inequalities and in enabling young people to develop capabilities to thrive, make good transitions into adulthood and maximise life chances.

The report also highlighted the need for the government to provide guidance on the sufficiency of youth work as part of the levelling up agenda to avoid the postcode lottery to equitable access to youth work opportunities.

Overall, the research identified the pivotal role of the YWU as part of the ecology of youth work provision in YH and the potential for greater strategic collaboration across the region in relation to workforce development, recruitment training and impact and quality measures.

The research identified the need for greater collaboration with the YWU in the strategic development of youth work across the region and its contribution to priorities across policy areas by Senior Leaders including Heads of Children's Services, Metro Mayors, Health, Education and Police Crime Commissioners.

There is scope to explore a formalised strategic partnership with key stakeholders which can increase capacity to mobilise, attract and target resources into youth work. YH has a strong university presence and there is untapped potential in terms of their role as anchor institutions including opening funding for research and evaluation and in contributing to workforce development strategies for professionally qualifying youth workers.

Finally, this research offered a reminder of both the creativity and commitment of young people when there are opportunities to participate and play a role in making a difference in the communities of which they are a part.

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