



# LYP CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT

**FINAL REPORT**  
**MAY 2023**



# 1

# Contents

<b>1. Contents</b> .....	02
<b>2. Executive Summary</b> .....	03
<b>3. Project Overview</b> .....	07
a. Purpose of the Report	
b. Background	
c. Project Summary	
d. Support Framework	
<b>4. Defining Local Youth Partnerships</b> .....	12
<b>5. Objectives</b> .....	14
a. Objective 1. Increase the number of functioning Local Youth Partnerships by 8-10.	
b. Objective 2. Foster coherent partnership approaches in support of sustaining local investment, including YIF (Youth Investment Fund)	
c. Objective 3. Increase the knowledge, skills and resources of the sector in support of local partnership working	
d. Objective 4. Support local strategies and plans informed by the needs and ambitions of local communities	
e. Objective 5. Establish a business case for partnerships as a key element of the local youth sector ecosystem	
<b>6. Area Profiles</b> .....	28
<b>7. The Business Case for Partnership</b> .....	30
<b>8. A Framework for Partnership</b> .....	36
<b>9. Further Findings and Reflections</b> .....	40
a. National to Local	
b. The Role of Regional	
c. Empowering Local	
d. The Funder View of Partnership	
e. LYPs and a National Framework for Youth Work	
f. The Challenges of Partnership	
<b>10. Budget</b> .....	49
<b>11. Supporting Documents</b> .....	51
a. LYP Area Profiles (summaries of each local area, and progress made)	
b. YPF Trust resources: A Framework for Partnership (with YMCA George Williams College)	
c. YPF Trust resources: Youth Voice and Partnership (by Network of Regional Youth Work Units)	
d. Full report – National to Local (by Renaisi)	
e. Full report – Role of Regional (by Liz Harding)	
f. Full report – Empowering Local (by GMCA George Williams College)	
g. Full report – Funder View of Partnership (by Ralph Hartley)	

# 2 Executive Summary

The LYP Capacity Building Pilot Project ran from September 2022 to March 2023, exploring the role of partnership in the youth sector through direct support to local areas, research, and sector engagement. Through the pilot, we have seen that the development of Local Youth Partnerships (LYPs) can shape local policy and practice, increase connection and collaboration between the public and VCSE sectors, make better use of limited resources, and increase investment.

In this report, we make a case for collaboration and partnership and provide recommendations for the future of partnership in the youth sector. We believe collaboration is critical to securing and sustaining outcomes for young people and must be at the heart of how we think about, support and resource organisations that work with and for young people.

Working alongside national partners, including the NYA, YMCA George Williams College, and the Network of Regional Youth Work Units, we recommend:

1. **Implementing a national programme** of support to partnerships across the country
2. **Establishing a consistent approach** to partnership in the youth sector which supports local needs and ambitions whilst providing clarity and consistency for supporters and partners
3. **Aligning partnership development** with a core offer for young people and organisations, including National Youth Guarantee and national infrastructure and guidance (e.g. curriculum, data, impact)
4. **Providing direct, tailored support** for local areas to understand, navigate and influence the opportunities available to them, alongside shaping their local strategies and plans
5. **Investing directly into local partnerships** through a broad network of local, regional and national funders so that this, in turn, creates the mechanisms for income generation and effective marshalling of resources.

To deliver these strategic recommendations, we propose supporting a thriving local and regional and national infrastructure across the country, which includes practical, helpful and specific investment in:

1. Local Youth Partnerships themselves to:
  - a. Sustain and develop current pilot project areas
  - b. Support further areas to explore and develop LYPs
  - c. Sustain existing LYPs
2. Regional Youth Work Units to deliver a set of core support and connecting functions across local, regional and national

3. National infrastructure, to support and grow a national programme and offer to local areas across the country

Through the pilot, it has become evident that the development of Local Youth Partnerships (LYPs) in new areas has the potential to optimise the utilisation of limited resources, and generate increased investment.

In Sunderland, the development of partnership governance, membership and communications has led to renewed engagement with the local authority and exploration of long-term core funding for the partnership as a critical stakeholder in how the city supports children and young people. Partners have also just secured funding of £105,000 from a local donor for the partnership.

In Southampton, the development of a partnership has provided a space for the sector to collectively engage with the local authority, co-designing the city's commissioning strategy and therefore directly shaping future public sector investment.

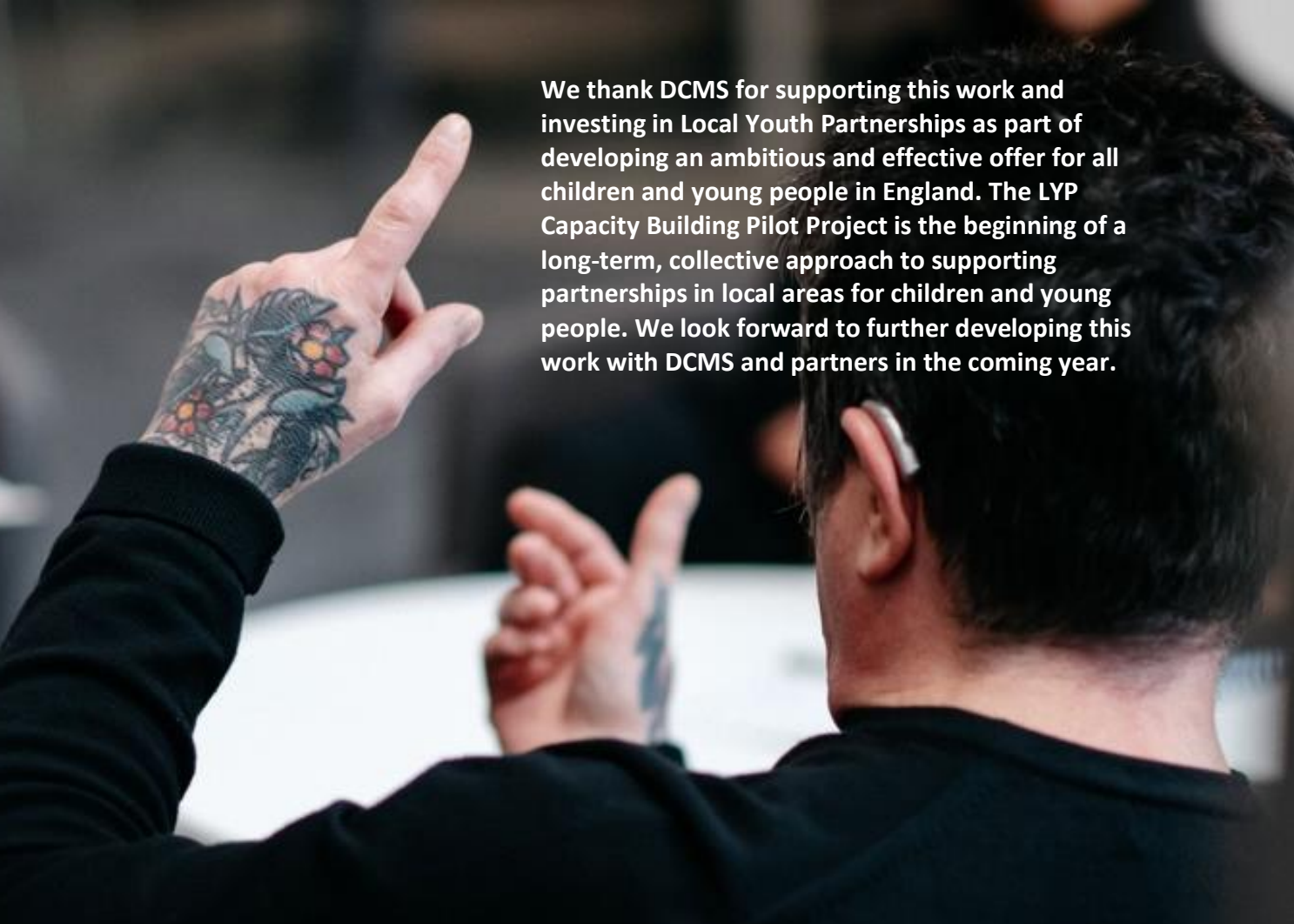
In both Warrington and Cornwall, local authorities are keen to harness the power and connections of the VCSE sector for outcomes for children and young people and are working collaboratively with them to shape new approaches and there are other examples from the pilot areas.

The pilot has enabled YPF Trust and our partners to learn more about how we should collectively support thriving local services for young people. Our key learning is explored in this report. It includes a considered and thoughtful approach based on valuing collective and place-based expertise, a strength-based model where local sites know best and are supported to access help which moves them towards their desired goals.

Our key learning includes:

1. **Personalised and relational approach:** Engagement and ongoing support for local areas should be framed by a personalised and relational approach that values local needs and autonomy rather than relying on generic national tools as the basis for support.
2. **Tools and resources:** Tools and resources are helpful, but they should support and encourage local leadership and ownership rather than imposing one model nationally.
3. **Peer support:** Peer support is as vital as central/national support. The right spaces need to be created for areas and organisations to share and learn together.
4. **Outcomes-focused collaboration:** People want to work together and want to be supported to find ways to build connections and opportunities for young people across an area. Collaboration should be motivated by the outcomes for children and young people; collaboration motivated by money will fail and not secure as much support and investment.
5. **Trust in local areas:** We must trust local areas with the right support and guidance. Local areas are the experts in their area and can quickly reach a consensus on local needs and ambitions.

6. **Passion and commitment:** Successful collaboration is driven by the passion and commitment of individuals, often going above and beyond to make things happen locally. Our collective approach should value local leadership and support them.
7. **Focus on coalitions of the willing:** We should focus on coalitions of the willing, building momentum and engagement as we go, while ensuring partnerships are inclusive and representative. Consensus won't happen, and time can be wasted trying to force everyone to agree.
8. **Greater equity:** LYPs should enable and support greater equity locally and nationally, ensuring that all young people and community organisations are engaged, and national opportunities are available to all.
9. **Long-term investment:** Successful collaboration is hard, takes time and resources, and should not be rushed. Over time, LYPs will provide the right foundations for growth and should be supported and resourced in the long term.
10. **Collaboration over competition:** Limited resources don't need to lead to competition. This work directly challenges the narrative that competition is healthy and leads to an increase in quality. Each of our 10 pilots is seeking to focus on collaboration, not competition, as a route to increasing outcomes for young people.
11. **Local leadership for scaling up:** Scaling up local work must be led locally, and LYPs can be a mechanism to 'scale' interventions to regional and national levels, ensuring that local needs and ambitions are met.



We thank DCMS for supporting this work and investing in Local Youth Partnerships as part of developing an ambitious and effective offer for all children and young people in England. The LYP Capacity Building Pilot Project is the beginning of a long-term, collective approach to supporting partnerships in local areas for children and young people. We look forward to further developing this work with DCMS and partners in the coming year.

# 3 Project Overview



## Purpose of the Report

This report aims to provide an overview of the LYP Capacity Building Project led by YPF Trust, which took place from September 2022 to March 2023. We are pleased to report on a highly successful delivery period during which we rapidly engaged areas, invested in creating the conditions for collaboration, and supported the growth of Local Youth Partnerships (LYPs) that will in turn, deliver increased outcomes for children and young people.

In addition to demonstrating the value of the pilot and progress towards agreed objectives, this report seeks to provide a set of recommendations for future work in this area, which will support the development and growth of collaboration across the youth sector (locally, regionally, and nationally). These recommendations are not exclusively for colleagues at DCMS or for government more broadly but are collective challenges to everyone working with and for children and young people. We strongly believe that the work on LYPs is critical to the future sustainability of the sector and ultimately our ability to deliver outcomes for children and young people.

This report and the accompanying recommendations are a collaborative effort and concentrate on a set of key messages that we believe will resonate throughout the sector.

The report has been written by Justin Watson and Suzie Yassin at YPF Trust, with support from the following colleagues:

- Imogen Gregg-Auriac and Emma Sims – Young Manchester
- Kevin Franks and David McCreedy – Youth Focus North East
- Tim Leaman – YMCA George Williams College

Additional contributions are from:

- Liz Harding (on the Role of Regional)
- Ralph Hartley (on the Funder View of Partnership)
- John Hitchin at Renaisi (on connecting National to Local)
- Stuart Dunne at Youth Focus North West and Sharon Long at Partnership for Young London (on Youth Voice and Partnership)



In developing this report, we have also engaged with key sector partners, including National Youth Agency, UK Youth and the Local Government Association.

## Background

YPF Trust is a national charity that focuses on **supporting collaboration in place** for children and young people. We support a growing network of over 25 areas across England by providing tools, resources, advice, enthusiasm, and challenge to established, emerging and completely new partnerships.

At the heart of our work is the development of, and support to, Local Youth Partnerships (LYPs) - **locally established, cross-sectoral organisations that seek to sustain delivery for children and young people in a specific area**, shaped by local needs and ambitions. In practice, they convene and coordinate local services, building the sector's capacity and increasing and shaping investment.

The YPF Trust originated from work initiated in Brent in 2014/15, supported by John Lyon's Charity. In response to significant changes in local funding and the role of the local authority, John Lyon's Charity invested in local collaboration to sustain and increase investment, maximise resources, and enhance quality and impact. Since the establishment of Young Brent Foundation, an additional seven Young People's Foundations (YPFs) have been established in North and West London. This approach has gained traction in other regions, including Manchester, Dorset, and Kirklees.

Young People's Foundations represent one approach to Local Youth Partnerships, which prioritise local needs. The YPF Trust does not aim to implement a uniform model but supports any region as it explores and develops local partnership initiatives.

We work in partnership with local, regional and national organisations to provide the following functions:

- **Support:** we offer training, shared functionality, tools, and resources to help develop and strengthen Local Youth Partnerships
- **Quality Assurance:** we provide quality mark accreditation, partnership framework, YPF in a Box and support for new and existing LYPs to ensure high standards of service delivery
- **Advocacy:** we promote the partnership approach through research, campaigning, and advocacy efforts
- **Collaboration:** we facilitate collaboration and partnership between LYPs and wider stakeholders, such as Local Authorities, businesses, and national/regional bodies and funders.
- **Generation:** we support fundraising efforts, both for and with LYPs, to enable them to secure the resources needed to sustain high-quality services for children and young people in their area.

## Project summary

The LYP Capacity Building Project is a pilot project to support the development of Local Youth Partnerships within the youth sector in England. YPF Trust is supporting 10 areas across England to develop their partnership practice and structures. These local partnerships will enable successful engagement and application of resources and support in their areas.

The project is delivered in partnership by the YPF Trust, the YPF Network, the Network of Regional Youth Work Units and the YMCA George Williams College.

In September 2022, we outlined that the project will:

1. **Support 8-10 areas** through a bespoke locally led journey towards further collaboration, focused on meeting local needs
2. Use the established **set of tools, guidance and resources** to enable formal partnerships locally
3. Connect new local partnerships to a **growing network** of place-based partnerships
4. Enable local areas to fully engage with and take advantage of regional and national support available through formal **connections to regional and national bodies**
5. Establish an **outcomes framework for LYPs** to demonstrate their impact, with a focus on securing further support and investment alongside increasing outcomes for children and young people
6. Showcase the **value and impact of LYPs in the successful delivery of YIF** and in meeting local need
7. Provide a **business case for support of LYPs** at a local, regional and national level
8. **Connect LYPs into wider investments** in children and young people across government (e.g. Family Hubs, Community Safety, SEND, supplementary education)

## Support framework

During the pilot, areas received a bespoke package of support, developed through the co-production of a Local Area Support Plan, which is shaped by local needs and ambitions.

Key elements of these plans included:

- Provision of **resources and tool kits** to support development (YPF in a Box, Quality Mark)
- **121 support** – providing additional information, support and capacity locally (from the trust and/or partners)

- Access to **workshops** to support development (including 'Vision and Purpose', 'Strategy and Tactics', 'Governance and Leadership', and 'Youth Voice Engagement')
- Specific support from the YMCA George Williams College on **impact and outcomes**, including a workshop to support the development of a local Theory of Change and outcomes framework
- **Peer support** through the YPF Network, connecting to CEOs (inc. CEO leadership group), specialists and Network groups (e.g. fundraising, communications, membership), as well as informal engagement through social activities
- Peer support through **regional networks** focusing on bringing together and supporting local partnerships, supported by the Regional Youth Work Units and relevant YPFs
- A **development grant** of up to £10,000 – to be invested by the local area in support of their development.



# 4

## Defining 'Local Youth Partnerships'

We recognise the complexity of the youth sector, as highlighted in further sections below, (including Renaisi's work on connecting national to local) and strive to ensure that the trust's work promotes greater clarity and consistency at all levels.

To this end, we propose that all key stakeholders adopt a shared understanding and agreed definition of Local Youth Partnerships, which would be beneficial in informing future work in this area.

Our proposed definition is:

*Local Youth Partnerships (LYPs) are cross-sectoral partnerships that are established and led at the local level with the goal of convening, supporting, and sustaining youth work delivery in a specific area. LYPs can be initiated by various local organisations, including charities, voluntary organisations, local authorities, and housing associations, among others. Regardless of who initiates the partnership, it is essential to ensure that the diversity of stakeholders and agencies in the local area are represented in the partnership.*

*LYPs may take various forms, ranging from informal collaborations to formal partnerships or legally constituted organisations. By collaborating under a shared vision informed by local insight, needs, and ambitions, LYPs improve outcomes for children and young people by expanding and shaping local provision, securing new resources, providing training and capacity, and creating spaces for leaders, youth workers, and groups and organisations to come together.*

*An 'effective' LYP is one that takes collaborative action to improve outcomes for children and young people by enabling access to high-quality provision locally.*

At YPF Trust, we strongly advocate for the partnership approach to be shaped locally, recognising that it may take different forms in different areas. While LYPs can benefit from learning and resources from YPF Trust and Young People's Foundations, we also believe in the importance of shared principles and approaches that directly inform LYPs and contribute to high-quality delivery.

To this end, YPF Trust and YMCA George Williams College have developed a framework to support effective partnerships in the youth sector. This framework provides LYPs with a means to benchmark progress and identify further actions, while aligning with wider tools and resources, including a quality mark and toolkit. We encourage the adoption of these shared principles and approaches across the sector to promote greater consistency and quality in LYP delivery.

Our proposed approach is outlined in Section 8 – A Framework for Partnership.

# 5 Objectives

Below is an overview of the progress and outcomes achieved against the objectives agreed upon in September 2023, with explicit reference to the agreed pilot milestones. We are delighted to report that the pilot project has successfully met its objectives and made significant progress in a short period of time. Any further details provided in another section, such as area profiles or key findings, have been duly referenced.

## **Objective 1. Increase the number of functioning Local Youth Partnerships by 8-10.**

Since September 2022 the YPF Trust has supported the development and establishment of ten Local Youth Partnerships:

- Blackburn with Darwen – Young Blackburn with Darwen
- Cornwall – Young Cornwall Foundation
- East Riding – in development
- Medway – Young Medway
- Peterborough – Young Peterborough
- Southampton – Young Southampton
- Stockton – Youth United Stockton
- Sunderland - Sunderland All Together Consortium
- Warrington – in development
- Wiltshire – in development

Key progress has been made against the following indicators:

- 8-10 local areas have committed to formally establishing a Local Youth Partnership
- 8-10 areas have developed and are implementing detailed plans for the development and growth of their Local Youth Partnership

Two areas (Sunderland and Medway) in the pilot are established constituted organisations – support during the pilot phase has included work on governance best practice and organisational structure.

A further four areas (Blackburn with Darwen, Peterborough, Cornwall and Southampton) have committed to, and are making progress towards, becoming constituted organisations. This includes development of constitutions and governing documents and supporting structures.

Stockton are an established alliance, supported by a revised Terms of Reference and new partnership strategy.

Warrington, Wiltshire and East Riding are in the initial stages of partnership development and are exploring governance structures.

Six areas (Blackburn with Darwen, Cornwall, Medway, Peterborough, Southampton and Sunderland) had Local Area Support Plans in place by November 2022.

Engagement with East Riding, Warrington, Wiltshire and Stockton began in January 2023 with each area having an agreed plan in place covering January 2023 to March 2023, and now with plans in place for April 2023 onwards.

Key learning in delivering this objective has included:

### **The importance of formalising partnerships**

Formalising partnerships has been a key area of learning for the pilot. It has been observed that adding some formality to local networks and structures can increase the stability, predictability, and strength of a network, allowing for progression to increased collective working and a destination in sometimes otherwise unstable times.

Therefore, the YPF Trust recommends that each partnership be formalised and ideally constituted, although the approach may vary by area. This involves creating a collective agreement on what the LYP is, who it serves, and what it does in practice, for example, through a strategy, Terms of Reference, Theory of Change, Action Plan, shared governance arrangements, or a combination of these.

Examples of our work with specific areas include:

- Sunderland: we provided support and guidance on governance and membership to help them establish a formal Local Youth Partnership.
- Blackburn with Darwen: we worked with them to develop a constitution and governance arrangements as they transitioned from an informal partnership to a formal Local Youth Partnership using the CIO model.
- Medway: we worked with the board to develop governance structures and finalise policies and procedures.

### **Distance travelled is key**

In delivering support across diverse local contexts, we have come to recognise the importance of considering the distance travelled by each area as a reflective practice. Some areas were starting from scratch, while others had already made progress in establishing partnerships. For instance:

- Our support for Cornwall and Southampton focused on the initial phases of partnership development, including creating a shared vision and principles, as neither area had a partnership or network in place in September 2022.
- In the case of Sunderland, which already had an established CIO, our work has partly focused on supporting best practice on governance and membership.



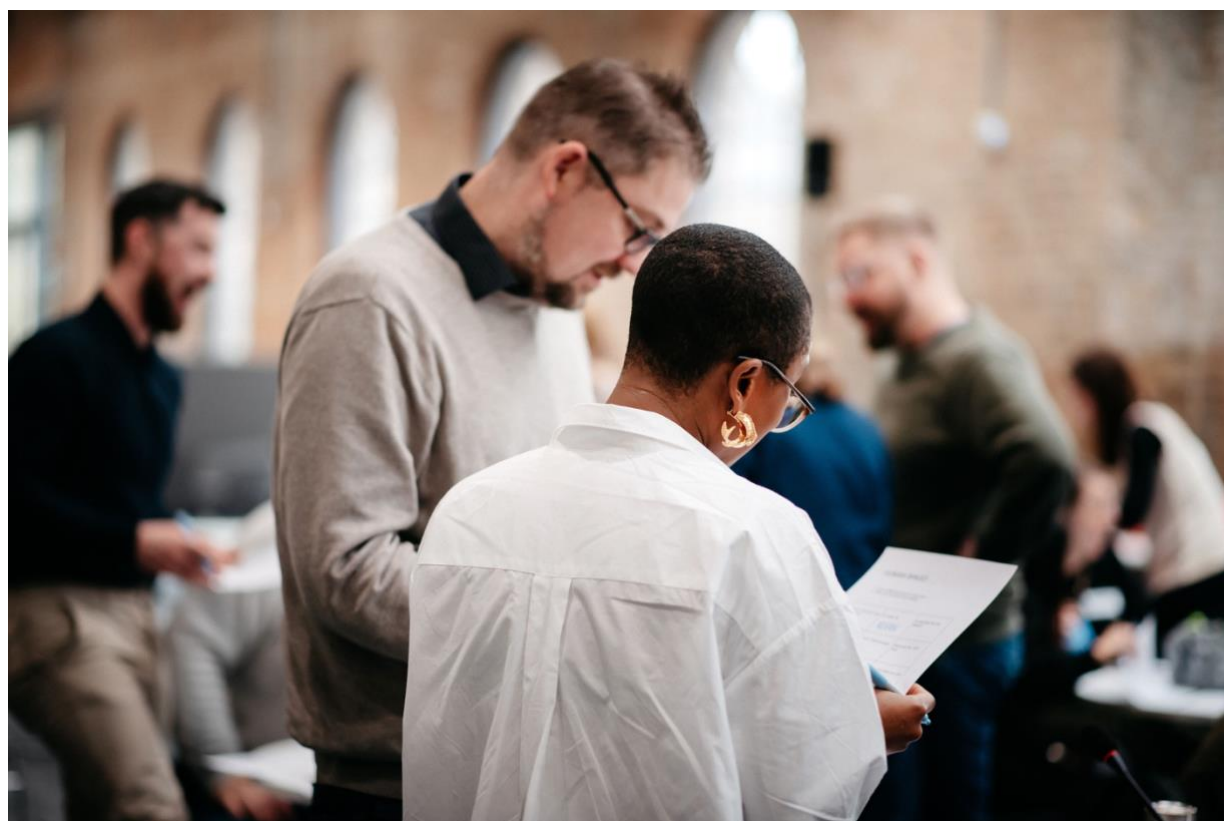
## The usefulness of the LYP model

The Local Youth Partnership (LYP) approach has proven to be highly useful in promoting independence, equity, and income generation across the network, as evidenced by successful implementation beyond just this pilot. By fostering neutrality and providing a platform for all partners, the LYP approach supports those who are most marginalised and in need of support. Additionally, the LYP approach enables investment and distribution of funds in a transparent way, promoting income generation for the partnership and its members.

While formalising the partnership through an independent, constituted organisation is ideal, progress towards this should not be rushed, and must reflect local buy-in, capacity, and resources. Our approach seeks to maintain local decision-making based on need, while providing appropriate guidance on options for formalising the partnership. We recognise the concerns raised by some areas regarding the added value of investment in the partnership for its members and will work to ensure that any investment aligns with local needs and priorities.

**Key reflection:** Overall, it is crucial to support areas in progressing towards formalising their partnership, while ensuring that the process reflects the unique context and resources of each locality.

More detailed progress of each area is available in the Area Profiles, included as Supporting Document A to this report.



## **Objective 2. Foster coherent partnership approaches in support of sustaining local investment, including YIF (Youth Investment Fund)**

Key progress has been made against the following indicators:

- 8-10 areas have established effective partnership approaches to engaging with relevant funding opportunities.

The LYP project has been successful in fostering coherent partnership approaches that support local investment, including the Youth Investment Fund (YIF). One of the key drivers of partnership development during the pilot has been generating and mobilising income and support for the area.

As part of this process, each area has made progress towards identifying and securing funding opportunities. Throughout the pilot, areas have focused on engaging with and influencing funders to support their partnerships and related work.

Some of the funding opportunities that areas are exploring or have secured include:

- Warrington is exploring the possibility of securing Youth Endowment Funding.
- Sunderland is working closely with the local authority on core funding and applying to the National Lottery Community Fund.
- Cornwall has secured a further £40,000 to support the partnership.
- Wiltshire has been mapping funding across Wiltshire and Swindon, supported by Wiltshire Community Foundation, with a view to building a case for further investment.
- Peterborough has submitted an ICS bid in partnership with the council

For some areas, such as Southampton, it is still early in the partnership's journey, and the focus is on building strong foundations for future engagement with funders and funding opportunities.

Overall, the LYP project has demonstrated the potential for partnership approaches to generate income and support that can benefit the area and its young people.

Key learning in delivering this objective has included the following.

## Youth Investment Fund

All ten areas in the pilot are YIF areas, and have been engaging in YIF, with a number of partners submitting EOIs and going through the application process.

With a number of partnerships currently in development, the pilot has also provided an opportunity to engage with organisations applying for YIF and support them to join LYPs.

- In Peterborough, the partnership supported a successful £4.5m YIF bid and is now working with them to facilitate face-to-face discussions in a series of planned workshops with the sector. The partnership will provide connections, knowledge, and peer support as the organisation develops its youth work plan.
- Organisations applying in Blackburn with Darwen were supported throughout the YIF application process by the partnership infrastructure. As they begin to engage with the Refurbishment Grants round, they are relying on the newly established YPF to ensure equitable engagement and delivery across the region.

LYPs can play a crucial role in supporting the long-term sustainability of funding, including YIF. Therefore, we are working closely with SIB and NYA to explore how local areas that received YIF investment can be supported to make the most of the funding and maximise government investment through establishing an LYP. In 2023/24, we aim to identify and offer support to areas that can benefit from partnership work, both where there is significant activity across a local area, including YIF investment, and where delivery is sparse within an area, and YIF investment can act as a catalyst not only for increased youth provision and outcomes but also wider growth of the sector and opportunities for young people.

However, a key challenge remains around securing investment in partnership work, and in youth work more broadly. Looking across the work of the pilot and our wider work, we must continue to address this challenge and ensure that investment is available to support the long-term sustainability of youth provision and partnership work.

**Key reflection:** LYPs can, and should be, a mechanism for investment in their local area, and once established (e.g. like Young Harrow Foundation or Young Manchester) can be critical in both securing and distributing new money to an area.

## How we effectively fund 'local'

Through engagement with local areas and individual community-led organisations during the pilot, our understanding of the challenges faced at a local level has increased significantly, namely the challenges in accessing long-term, sustainable funding at the local level. National funding programmes often prioritise large, established organisations, leaving smaller community-led organisations and partnerships at a disadvantage. This limits the capacity of the sector to engage in large-scale programmes and secure investment.

To address this issue, the focus should be on shaping national investment to meet local needs and building the capacity of the sector to engage in and take advantage of opportunities. Local Youth Partnerships (LYPs) can be a vehicle for this, as evidenced through work by YPFs

in North and West London. Investment in local infrastructure can lead to increased engagement and investment.

To ensure equity in engagement in large national funding programs, it is necessary to invest in building the capacity of community-led organisations and partnerships to participate effectively. For example, in relation to capital funding, there is a gap in sector expertise and also in actual assets. Collaboration across an area can only be successful if conditions to take on capital investment are present, including sector knowledge, private sector connections, public sector buy-in, availability of assets, and low rents.

Investment in the youth sector should prioritise the ability of community-led organisations to engage in national funding programmes, and LYPs can be a mechanism for investment in their local area. This will require a closer alignment between the ambitions of LYPs and large-scale funding programmes, as well as investment in resources and support to remove barriers to engagement.

Despite the progress made during the pilot and wider work, securing investment in partnership work and youth work remains a key challenge. This is explored further in Section 9 of this report, specifically:

- Section 9 – Further Findings and Reflections (The Funder View of Partnership).
- Section 9 – Further Findings and Reflections (Empowering Local).

**Key reflections:** LYPs can be a mechanism for investment in the local area, and investment should focus on enabling LYPs to establish their own processes and supporting funders to see LYPs as a solution to investing money effectively in the local area. Building the capacity of the sector to engage in national funding programmes is also critical to ensuring equity in engagement and long-term sustainability.

### **Objective 3. Increase the knowledge, skills and resources of the sector in support of local partnership working**

The investment from DCMS has had a direct impact on our ability to enhance the knowledge, skills, and resources of the youth sector in support of local partnership working. We are pleased to note that this objective has already extended beyond the pilot sites.

Key progress has been made against the following indicators:

- A set of tools and resources are established to support the development and delivery of effective Local Youth Partnerships
- 8-10 areas engage in a package of support and training and are actively using tools and resources to further their development
- Local, regional and national activity has supported the dissemination of learning and increased awareness
- A scalable package of regional support to local partnerships is established.

Our approach has been centred around equipping local areas with the necessary tools and resources to support the development of effective partnerships. This includes providing clear guidance, advice, and practical examples of best practices and lessons learned from other areas.

We recognise that the youth sector already has a variety of toolkits, quality marks, and training resources, and we aim to ensure that our work is aligned with and complements these existing resources. This is further discussed in Section 9 - Further Findings and Reflections - The Role of Partnership within a National Framework for Youth Work.

In collaboration with partners such as YMCA George Williams College, we have reviewed and refined the tools and resources used to support LYPs. Our main products include the Framework for Partnership (a new resource), YPF in a Box (revised during the pilot), and Quality Mark (revised during the pilot). These resources are designed to be accessible, user-friendly, and practical, supporting local areas in developing effective partnerships and delivering impactful youth work.

Working with partners, including YMCA George Williams College, we have reviewed and refined the tools and resources used to support LYPs. We have three main products:

- Framework for Partnership (a new resource)
- YPF in a Box (revised during the pilot)
- Quality Mark (revised during the pilot)

These three resources work together to guide and support areas as they develop their partnership. During the pilot we have observed that local areas use the tools and resources to meet their local needs rather than as a strict 'A to B' guide.

- For example, Sunderland have used YPF in a Box to support development of work around governance and membership, taking advantage of the learning from existing areas and examples of best practice.
- Cornwall have used the framework for partnership to reflect on their current status and aspirations for the future.

The Framework for Partnership is explored in detail in Section 8 of this report.

The latest versions of the YPF in a Box and Quality Mark are available for DCMS and partners upon request.

## What has worked locally?

The pilot has given us a deeper understanding of the support required by local areas in the initial development and longer-term sustainability of LYPs. Our approach has been intentional and focused on empowering local areas to develop partnerships that work for them. We have avoided prescribing a one-size-fits-all model and instead offer privileged guidance and advice. Our guidance, tools and resources aim to strike a balance between local autonomy and leveraging the trust and partners' learning and experience in the development of YPFs over the past decade.

As part of reviewing the pilot, we asked local areas to reflect on the last six months and what has worked for them – summaries are included as part of the Area Profiles.

Consistent themes across the local areas included:

- **Creating the right environment** – “Support was well-facilitated, relaxed and informal, but planned and structured, knowing what would happen next” (Sunderland)
- **Neutral and external support** (from outside of the area) – “I really feel you have helped not just with your knowledge and experience but by being a ‘Switzerland’ that’s allowed for a better working relationship between ourselves and partners”. (Warrington)
- **Widening the field of vision and learning from others** - “Being part of the LYP project with YPF Trust has been a fantastic opportunity to learn from and collaborate with other YPFs and people interested in youth work across the country” (Medway)
- **Promoting local first and diversity** (not rolling out one model) – “local determined needs are the most important thing, because there isn’t one formula” (Warrington)”
- **Supporting equal ownership and equity amongst peers (and removing barriers to engagement)** – “I have been supported by a family of peers who were able to provide confidence, energy and enthusiasm”.
- **Empowering passionate and committed local leaders** – “Everyone is on the same wavelength, with shared ambitions for the area” (Sunderland)
- **A focus on specialist expertise and resources** – “Experience, help, and guidance from YPF Trust have been invaluable in moving the charity forward.” - Medway

## Young People and Place

The Young People and Place Conference marked the end of the Local Youth Partnership Capacity Building Pilot and provided a platform for diverse stakeholders to explore the role of collaboration in place to increase impact for children and young people. The conference aimed to facilitate genuine debate, sharing of ideas, and challenge, both to each other and to YPF Trust's own assumptions about place.

The content of the day was led by twenty groups and individuals sharing their own expertise on themes such as how to meaningfully share power with young people and celebrating nomadic lives. It also explored systems and structures within the youth sector and the youth funding landscape, with sessions on Funders as Collaborators and exploring the communication and funding routes from National to Regional to Local and back again.

The conference was attended by 134 people from a range of sectors supporting young people, including housing associations and theatres. While the event was not specifically targeted at young people, it provided opportunities to hear directly from young people employed in leadership positions in the youth sector, offering real-life examples of how to embed youth voice in day-to-day practice.

The 'Celebrating Nomadic Lives' and 'In Conversation with Sam Remi-Akinwale and Claire Madzura' were particularly well received sessions, with attendees reflecting:

*"I had a great time yesterday. I know about the nomadic people, but I didn't know about the struggles and discrimination they face, hearing the stereotypes subjected to these people was sad ... As a society we need to read and learn about issues that matter, ignorance is not an excuse."*

- Reflection from attendee at 'Celebrating Nomadic Lives' Session

*"My takeaway was really thinking critically about our work with young people, in particular when we bring young people into adult spaces as well as being critical about what being youth led looks like."*

- Reflection from attendee at 'In Conversation with Sam Remi-Akinwale and Claire Madzura' Session

Many attendees shared practical actions they intend to implement following the conference, such as recruiting young trustees, convening partners locally to better support transient communities, and building connections between local, regional, and national organisations that didn't previously exist.

Facilitators reflected that the conference provided a welcome platform to explore something genuinely useful to their work, without a strict agenda. Some also expressed that this was the first national opportunity they had to explore their topic, and therefore felt like they were 'just getting started'. There is a clear appetite for a conference like this in the youth sector, where all attendees are recognised as bringing expertise, the agenda is created in partnership, and the content is relevant for representatives at local, regional, and national

levels. Further engagement and critical action are needed to build on the initial success of the conference.

Further milestones under this objective are explored in this report, including:

- Information on local engagement, use of development grants and implementation of local plans – see Area Profiles (Supporting Document A)
- Regional support systems and structures – see Section 9 – Further Findings and Reflections (The Role of Regional)
- Recommendations for further work and investment – see Executive Summary





## Objective 4. Support local strategies and plans informed by the needs and ambitions of local communities

In each area of the pilot, the needs and ambitions of children and young people have been placed at the centre of the development of their partnership. This commitment has been demonstrated in various ways, including explicit efforts such as incorporating youth leadership, as well as more implicit actions such as ensuring that the partnership's strategy reflects youth voice and participation work that has already been undertaken.

Key progress has been made against the following indicators:

- Children and young people have directly informed and shaped the services which seek to support them
- Local children and young people's sector have directly informed and shaped the partnership and the local offer for children and young people.

### Youth voice in practice

The pilot has enabled us to explore how to translate the commitment of "putting children and young people's voices at the heart of everything that we do" into practical action. We have learned that meaningful youth engagement requires ongoing effort and commitment to ensure that young people's voices are not just heard, but are acted upon and integrated into decision-making processes. Our approach has been guided by each local area, drawing on the expertise of local youth workers and community leaders, and supporting a range of approaches.

For example, in Southampton, the partnership made an early commitment to sharing power with young people by paying them to provide central partnership coordination and explore how they can be involved in the long term. The partnership also recognised the risk of tokenistic consultation and made efforts to ensure that young people's voices were heard throughout the partnership's work, such as through activities like the City of Culture video and Children-friendly cities development. This provides an opportunity for the partnership to:

- Collate and disseminate existing work on voice and lived experience
- Hold others accountable and ensure that consultation turns into commitment and action
- Move beyond consultation and ensure that they are sharing power with young people, drawing inspiration from the work of Young Manchester, who have a young Co-CEO and young Co-Chair.

Early engagement with the youth sector in Warrington included a dedicated session for young people, demonstrating the partnership's commitment to youth voice. One of the first collective projects that the partnership will undertake is an arts project called 'Authoring our Stories', which will support diverse young people in exploring their identities and experiences in Warrington. The insights gained from this project will inform and shape the partnership's work going forward.

In Blackburn with Darwen, the partnership recognised the importance of involving young people in shaping the creation of the partnership. To achieve this, they drew on the multitude of existing youth voice mechanisms across the area. Each partner organisation was provided with a set of questions to explore with their own young people, utilising their own youth voice structures. This approach ensured that young people's views and opinions were taken into account, and helped to ensure that the partnership was shaped in a way that reflected the needs and aspirations of the young people in the area.

## **Authentic and meaningful sector engagement**

Along with meeting the needs of young people and reflecting their lived experiences, it has been critical for each partnership to ensure that it is informed by the youth sector itself. In many cases, this has been the starting point, with initial 'kick off meetings' posing a number of questions:

- How have we got here?
- What has driven partners in the area to establish a partnership?
- What has this looked like to date?
- What does the youth offer currently look like in the area?
- Is there a shared vision for the future of the area for children and young people?
- Do we know what the sector thinks and wants?
- Do we know what children and young people want?
- Who is in the room? Who isn't and needs to be?

To ensure that each partnership is informed by the youth sector itself, local areas have used these initial prompts or provocations to explore the context of their area, their motivations for working together, and to gain a genuine understanding of what is happening and what people think is happening.

To further support local areas in ensuring that children and young people are at the heart of their partnerships, we have worked with the Network of Regional Youth Work Units to develop a guide.

In Warrington and Cornwall, engagement with grassroots organisations has been identified as critical to avoiding replication of existing power structures. Both areas have focused on building relationships with these organisations through personal, 1:1 conversations to broker engagement in collective efforts. In Blackburn with Darwen, tailored engagement events have been held for various stakeholders, including youth sector partners, funders, policy-makers, and businesses, providing opportunities for like-minded groups to shape the partnership's creation.

## Reflections and next steps on Youth Voice and Partnership

Ensuring that young people's voices are heard and their experiences are reflected in partnership work has been a central focus of the LYP Capacity Building Project. This priority is shared by existing YPFs, which have developed various approaches to engage young people in their work.

Examples include youth-led needs analysis (Young Harrow Foundation), co-design and delivery of grant programmes (Young Kensington and Chelsea), supporting young people into paid roles in teams (Young Camden Foundation), and sharing power with young people through leadership and governance (Young Manchester).

Drawing on this experience and wider participation practice in the sector, we have developed a guidance document in collaboration with the Network of Regional Youth Works. The guide focuses on methods to ensure that youth voice is at the core of the development of LYPs, and aims to:

- Reflect on the role of youth voice and lived experience in partnership work to date, including the work undertaken by Young People's Foundations and emerging LYPs.
- Profile resources and guides to youth voice and participation in partnership work, gathering learning and best practices that complement other guidance and resources developed as part of the LYP Capacity Building Project.

This guide is the beginning of an ongoing process, and we plan to work with local, regional, and national partners to further develop best practices of youth voice and partnerships in 2023/24.

The full guidance document is included as Supporting Document C to this report

## **5. Establish a business case for partnerships as a key element of the local youth sector ecosystem**

Please see Section 7 – The Business Case for Partnership

# 6 Area Profiles

Working in partnership with DCMS, the Intermediary Grant Maker (IGM) for YIF (SIB), Regional Youth Work Units and wider stakeholders, we identified suitable areas to focus on during the pilot phase.

The selection of areas aimed to reflect diversity in the following contexts:

- **Local partnership status** – the current status of local partnership arrangement, including emerging or not currently active, and current cross-sector representation and support
- **Geography** – a spread across governmental regions in England, and consideration for the impact of urban and rural settings
- **Local area readiness** – the ability of an area to take on YIF investment successfully and deliver sustainable capital projects

The final areas supported through the pilot were:

- Blackburn with Darwen (September 2022 to March 2023)
- Cornwall (September 2022 to March 2023)
- East Riding (January 2023 to March 2023)
- Medway (September 2022 to March 2023)
- Peterborough (September 2022 to March 2023)
- Southampton (September 2022 to March 2023)
- Stockton (January 2023 to March 2023)
- Sunderland (September 2022 to March 2023)
- Warrington (January 2023 to March 2023)
- Wiltshire and Swindon (January 2023 to March 2023)

To support this report, we have included a briefing on each area (Area Profile) which provides an overview of their work and progress made during the pilot. Further information, such as examples of work undertaken, Theories of Change, communications and branding materials, membership information, funder mapping, and constitution and governance work, is available upon request.

Additionally, several areas have developed or are developing local strategies, plans, and communication materials that can also be shared.

# 7 The Business Case for Partnership

## The context in which LYPs are operating

This report seeks to make the case for LYPs and for partnership as a driver across the youth sector, and that this is only possible with the right support and investment.

When supported effectively, LYPs can create independent systems, spaces, and mechanisms to maximise outcomes for young people, promote inclusion and equity by creating opportunities for everyone, and value and respect local knowledge and expertise. There is early indicative evidence that they can be a useful mechanism for funding that goes beyond individual organisations and help investment work and work hard for children and young people.

By prioritising local communities and young people, LYPs have the power to make a real difference in the lives of young people.

We acknowledge the challenges faced at all levels, across public and VCSE sectors, and are keen to see how the work of the trust, our partners and LYPs in local areas can play a critical role in meeting the significant need we see.

The challenges currently faced by children and young people, as well as the sector that supports and works with them, are well documented. Numerous organisations, both locally and nationally, have demonstrated the need for support, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the current cost of living crisis.

Alongside work highlighting a range of challenges faced by young people and the youth sector, organisations have individually and collectively sought to shape government policy, funder practice, and how the sector works to support young people at all levels. For example on; cost of living, mental health and wellbeing, education and equity.

The youth sector faces a multitude of challenges that have a direct impact on the development and delivery of partnership working. The LYP Project and wider work have identified the key challenges as follows, as consistently highlighted by our partners:

- **Weak infrastructure** at the local level due to reduced investment, with concerns that infrastructure is always the first to be cut during difficult times. This in turn means that sometimes when funding arrives, there are not the mechanisms to ensure it can be effectively utilised
- **Historic under-investment**, both locally and nationally, with the youth sector failing to make a strong enough case for funding and support. This means that in an insufficient system it is hard to make impact at scale.
- **Extreme inequity**, which makes it harder for those who need support the most to engage in services, and for organisations to consistently and effectively support them.
- **A culture of competition**, fuelled by funding practices and a lack of financial resources in the sector. Competition diverts resources from organisations doing what they do best.
- **A lack of representation** and listening to young people and community voices, with local areas feeling far removed from the decisions that impact them and young people often over-consulted but under-listened to.

- **Increased demand and reduced resources**, especially regarding mental health and wellbeing and the cost of living.
- **A fragmented sector**, which can't meet increasing need and requires significant investment locally and coordination at a national level

These themes may not come as a surprise, but they are crucial challenges that the youth sector must address. We fully support the work of colleagues across the sector to bring attention to these challenges and propose effective and collective solutions. This work must be done in collaboration with local, regional, and national stakeholders, including the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), to ensure that we are all working towards the same goal of meeting the needs of children and young people.

## Why Local Youth Partnerships?

We are not, and do not intend to imply, that LYPs are the single answer – they will not fix the broad range of challenges outlined above and in numerous reports and campaigns alone. They may, however, create some of the conditions for collectively tackling some of the challenges and making better use of the resources and creating space for the relationships which help us to think beyond organisations and towards the sector.

Too often, we (as a sector) can attempt to position our individual work as a solution which inevitably means that funders and decision-makers have to make choices.

We don't support that approach, and we do not want to pit the work of the trust and our partners, or partnership work more broadly, against anyone else or other approaches to tackling the huge challenges we all face.

What we do want to see is that collaboration is right at the heart of our approach to meeting the needs of children and young people and the sector – and we believe that the learning from our work to date can add real value to a collective approach across government and the youth sector.

Through our work to date, we have seen that LYPs can:

1. Ensure need is understood and met
2. Shape and support local resources
3. Secure additional and new resources
4. Enable coordinated and consistent area-wide support for young people
5. Support inclusive and representative spaces
6. Increase quality of services and youth work delivery
7. Build trust and collaboration between public and VCSE sectors and the individuals that lead them

We strongly believe that through collaboration (locally, regionally and nationally) we can secure better outcomes for young people – this report, and our wider work, seeks to demonstrate this in practice.



## The economic benefit of LYPs

This report highlights the value that we have identified in the development of partnerships – many of the examples cited reflect the positive experiences of local partners in developing partnership work including bringing organisations closer together, establishing collective ambitions and strategies, engaging effectively with the public sector and raising profile and awareness.

Alongside these developmental outcomes, we have seen evidence that there is a direct economic benefit to supporting and investing in LYPs.

Evidence from our work to date demonstrates the financial benefit that LYPs can provide – through the network of partnerships, including areas involved in the LYP pilot, we have seen that investment (cash, time and other resources) directly led to:

- **New investment in a local area** that would not have reached that area otherwise, including trusts and public sector investment
- **Improved use of existing funds**, shaped to better meet local need through collaborative processes (e.g. co-design of commissioning, youth-led grant programmes).

We have seen the value of partnerships, following investment in their sustainability:

- For every pound invested in Young Westminster Foundation, a further £4 goes to the local community and youth sector, shaped by the work of the partnership
- Young Manchester has secured £2.7m of investment into Manchester via the #iwill Fund, matching funding public sector commissioning to secure money that would not have made it to Manchester's young people otherwise
- With a core investment of £200,000 a year in the partnership, Young Brent Foundation has secured over £1.7m a year of new money into Brent, beyond public sector funding

We are seeing early signs that this can be replicated in other areas, with the right support and investment in place.

For example partners in Sunderland have secured investment for their partnership from two local trusts and are exploring public sector support with the local authority. This investment will enable the partnership to invest directly in the strength of their partners (e.g. training, workforce development) as well as support them in making the case for further investment in local youth services (through a new strategy, theory of change and communications and engagement activity).

National initiatives on the economic value of youth work at a national level are also now being explored locally, including work by Youth United Stockton (YUS) informed by work by UK Youth.

UK Youth have promoted a methodology which enables the full economic value of that provision to be calculated. The methodology draws heavily on data and methods used by the Office for National Statistics when they produce monthly and annual data to show the strength of the economy, at regional and national level, and for over 100 industrial sectors.

Partners in Stockton report that that in 2021/22, the partner organisations received £45,329 to fund open access youth provision in Stockton-on-Tees. The methodology shows that a consequence of that investment is an additional contribution of £228,000 to the value of the local economy. It also calculates the economic value generated by the volunteers in the project, at around £14,000. This means that YUS generated £242,000 for the local economy in a single year.

## A collective approach

Alongside a clear economic case for LYPs, we want to be clear that the approach we take (locally, regionally and nationally) together is vital – success is only possible with a collective approach which prioritises outcomes for young people.

Our approach, together, should be framed by the following principles:

**Collaboration not competition** – we should support the clear message coming from local areas that collaboration must override competition, and our approach to supporting and funding youth provision should reflect this (e.g. through our grant programmes, our infrastructure support, our work on youth voice)

**Collective action across the VCSE sector** – a united and coordinated sector will lead to greater data, evidence and shared solutions. We fully support initiatives which privilege this approach and seek to put outcomes and impact ahead of individual organisational ambitions or publicity

**Cross Sector Collaboration:** collaboration and partnership between the voluntary youth sector and local authorities and the wider public sector as well as with local businesses and the corporate sector is vital

**Quality** – quality and impact must always be the driver of our work together, and we fully support specialist organisations who can provide expertise in this space (on partnerships and wider issues), including YMCA George Williams College and Renaisi

**Actions based on need and evidence** – the success of LYPs to date has been a firm grounding in need and evidence, through powerful and credible research (e.g. needs analysis work in Harrow and Westminster). We are keen to ensure that this is reflected in the development of the approach at a national level.

**Foregrounding lived experience, and following through with action** – LYPs provide a platform for collective approaches to putting young people's voices and lived experiences right at the heart of decision-making, funding and programme delivery.

**Locally driven solutions** – we want to see local areas supported, trusted and backed (with investment) to make decisions which work best for them, within a national framework which is robust and effective.

**Coordinated and aligned support** – A connected and effective approach to supporting youth services locally, regionally, nationally is critical to making a real difference in youth people’s lives. This should focus on local areas being empowered to understand, navigate, maximise and influence system for their benefit

## The role of YPF Trust

The YPF Trust is dedicated to ensuring that we are a valuable asset to local areas, our regional and national partners, and funders. We believe that Local Youth Partnerships (LYPs) can play a vital role in supporting the youth sector and improving outcomes for children and young people, especially those who are most disadvantaged.

We are not proposing a one-size-fits-all model for LYPs, nor do we seek to roll out a central program across England. Instead, we aim to support every local area to develop the right systems, structures, and resources that they need to articulate their needs to funders, decision-makers, and other stakeholders.

The YPF Trust, together with our partners, including Regional Youth Work Units and national infrastructure partners, can add real value by providing guidance, advice, and tailored support informed by best practice, guidance, and peer connections.

Our work in this area is not about us alone, but about contributing to a system that works for the sector at the local, regional, and national levels. As we continue to develop our work in this area, we will focus on providing the necessary support to local areas while always keeping in mind that this is a collaborative effort.

# 8 A Framework for Partnership

## A new sector resource to support partnership development

Central to the LYP Capacity Building Project has been exploring what makes a good partnership, and how we can support consistent approaches to LYPs across the country.

Working closely with YMCA George Williams College, we have established the first 'Framework for Partnership', a new resource which seeks to provide guidance to organisations and groups looking to explore partnership working, as well as established partnerships.

This framework can serve three purposes:

- Guidance in setting up a new Local Youth Partnership (LYP)
- Self-assessment and planning to establish or strengthen an LYP
- Evaluation of an existing LYP

It is designed to be a practical tool to help inform thinking right at the beginning of partnership development and inform development in more advanced partnership work. Research by YMCA George Williams College has led us to identify ten core domains that define the principles and features crucial to developing and maintaining effective Local Youth Partnerships.

1. **Power Sharing:** To what extent are all stakeholders involved in the partnership able to share power, and bring in new partners and influencers where relevant?
2. **Youth Voice:** To what extent are young people able to influence the partnership's development and its activities?
3. **System Vision:** To what extent has a shared vision been developed that prioritises outcomes for young people over outcomes for individual providers or partners?
4. **Partnership Systems:** What systems are in place to understand and communicate progress towards shared goals?
5. **Partnership Delivery:** To what extent are partners able to deliver effective shared projects?
6. **Demand Management:** To what extent does the partnership enable better meeting of demand for local youth provision?
7. **System Resilience:** How well can the partnership manage risk, apply learning, and bounce back after failures?
8. **Place-based Insight:** To what extent does the partnership provide better insights to make joined-up decisions and priorities?
9. **Partnership Leverage:** To what extent does the partnership unlock new funding and collaborations?
10. **Collaborative practice:** To what extent is collaboration and partnership-working modelled by leaders, encouraged and rewarded?

Equity, diversity, and inclusion are central to each of these domains and crucial to providing feedback that ensures full representation.

We will be working with local, regional and national partners to further develop this framework in the coming year, and our ultimate ambition is that it is adopted as a central resource by government, the youth sector and funders.

The full framework is included as Supporting Document B to this report.

## Theory of Change

To ensure that Local Youth Partnerships (LYPs) are equipped to create meaningful change for young people, we strongly encouraged them to prioritise developing a theory of change. By establishing a shared understanding of how change happens, why it matters, and each partner's role within it, LYPs can build a solid foundation for success. This approach, combined with other resources such as the Framework for Partnership, can support LYPs in creating effective engagement strategies to attract new members, as well as demonstrating the impact they have in their fundraising activities. With a clear and compelling theory of change, LYPs can amplify their collective impact and make a real difference in the lives of young people in their communities.

The YMCA George Williams College organised Theory of Change (ToC) workshops for LYP areas as part of a wider package of support, tailored to each area. The sessions aimed to cover introductory elements of ToC, such as 'What is a ToC?', 'Why Develop a ToC?' and 'How to Evaluate a ToC?'. The workshops were delivered face-to-face and used inclusive methodologies to ensure maximum engagement. They were held at times and venues determined by each local area.

The key components of the ToC were explored in each workshop, including **Context, Inputs, Activities, Outputs, Mechanisms of Change, Outcomes, Aims/Impact, and Accountability Line**. The importance of the aim/impact Statement and mechanisms of change was emphasised as they have the most significant influence on the effectiveness of the project's impact legacies. The workshops were adapted to suit different learning requirements, including young people, trustees, youth workers, and those with neurodiversity.

The local youth partnerships in Sunderland, Stockton, and Blackburn with Darwen, Southampton, Cornwall and Medway completed the workshops. They allowed each locality to negotiate what success looks like, what activities and priorities need to occur, and what mechanisms of change might be required for the impact legacy to be most effective.

At the end of the session, all delegates were able to:

- Relate their context and setting to the key components of a ToC.
- Map out their aims, outcomes, and mechanisms of change.
- Debate the flow and arrange these ideas into a coherent ToC.
- Recognise the impact data and MEL that may result from the activities chosen.

- Finalise the content.

Following the session, each area was challenged to write up their ToC into a more formal document with support from their area leads and to review it and share it with young people, other stakeholders, and the community before publishing.

The workshops had unintended benefits, as the ideas and original content evolved with the feedback from delegates and the wider principles shared with the next group. Other areas, including West Midlands RYWU network, Merton, and South East RYWU leadership, also heard about these events, and the training content was subsequently shared with other areas and networks.

The workshops were recorded as a generic session and are shared here

<https://ymcageorgewilliamscollege.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=c7087706-9a1b-4ece-8e28-afeb00d170a7> as an accessible resource to help shape and nurture new and existing Theories of Change in the future.

# 9

# Further Findings and Reflections



## National to Local

Renaisi has been an invaluable partner in our efforts to understand the ways in which local areas can effectively connect to national infrastructure and utilise available support. Through our collaboration, John Hitchin has authored a preliminary think piece based on discussions with prominent infrastructure partners such as NYA, UK Youth, GMCA George Williams College, and the Institute for Youth Work. This work is critical in helping us identify and develop best practices to support LYPs in maximising their impact and effectiveness.

Renaisi's introduction to the paper highlights a significant challenge facing local youth work organisations: often, these groups are required to focus heavily on programme delivery due to funding restrictions and community need, which can leave them with limited capacity to strengthen their overall offerings, attract additional funding, or sustain their presence in the long-term. National 'infrastructure' organisations have emerged to address this issue by leading the way in developing national standards for practice, offering support and guidance to local organisations, and advocating for the sector's needs on a broader scale.

However, there remains a risk that local organisations lack access to the national infrastructure's support and resources, which can lead to confusion and missed opportunities. To address this, Renaisi has proposed two hypotheses for further testing:

1. The current offer broadly works as well as is possible, and there will always be some grey between bodies, and it is not possible to resolve the consistent funding challenge without the government taking the lead.
2. The current offer isn't clear or relevant enough, and local organisations are not getting what they want/need from this, and either:
  - a. change has to start at national levels, with those organisations building better connections between them in service of local needs;
  - b. change should be made by strengthening regional infrastructure to work between national and local; or
  - c. change should be made by building clarity of local infrastructure to better understand the need for all to engage with.

This paper represents an initial step towards addressing these issues and will inform further engagement with the sector in early 2023/24. We are committed to working closely with government, national infrastructure organisations, and key funders, such as the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the 'Infrastructure Support in the Youth Sector' group, to explore potential solutions and ensure that local organisations receive the support they need to succeed.

The full briefing document is included as Supporting Document D to this report.

## The Role of Regional

The role of regional infrastructure is critical in connecting local and national efforts within the youth sector. We have worked closely with the Network of Regional Youth Work Units throughout the project, recognising the importance of their role in convening local partnerships and connecting them with national infrastructure. In collaboration with Youth Focus North East, Youth Focus North West, Youth Focus South East, and Yorkshire and

Humber Youth Work Unit, we have explored the best practices in connecting local and regional efforts and the establishment of regional networks of local partnerships.

The paper, *The Role of Regional* authored by Liz Harding, former CEO of Youth Focus North West, outlines the critical role that Regional Youth Work Units (RYWUs) play in the youth sector and provides the following recommendations on how to maximise their potential:

- **Clarity of role** – The roles of Regional Youth Work Units are clarified, agreed and clearly communicated to all key stakeholders
- **Respecting difference** – Regional Youth Work Units should remain focused on meeting need, with the right structures in place in each region to support that approach
- **Funding** – Core funding should be prioritised for Regional Youth Work Units, and support a core and minimum offer in each area
- **Constitution and governance** – Regional Youth Work Units should all work to shared standards on governance and management, including how they engage with and are shaped by local areas and young people
- **Independence** – Regional Youth Work Units should remain independent, from national partners and each other – to maintain neutrality and enable them to advocate for their regions and local partners
- **Network** – the Units should consider establishing formal mechanisms at a national level to support connection across the regions and support development of emerging units

The full briefing document is included as Supporting Document E to this report.

Throughout the project, we have closely collaborated with the Network of Regional Youth Work Units, recognising their critical role in bridging local to national and facilitating local partnerships at a regional level. Specifically, we have worked with the following units to support the pilot project:

**Youth Focus North East:** As the lead unit, YFNE worked closely with the trust in developing and implementing the pilot project. They also provided targeted support to Sunderland Stockton and will continue to offer support on critical sector challenges such as workforce development to LYPs in their areas.

**Youth Focus North West:** YFNW supported groups in the North West to engage in the pilot and provided additional support to Warrington. They also brought together local areas to explore partnerships and provided wider support through their regional networks, including impact and engagement in YIF.

**Youth Focus South East:** YFSE organised a regional conference that brought together organisations across the South East to explore partnership and collaboration at local and regional levels for the benefit of children and young people.

**Yorkshire and Humber Youth Work Unit:** They brought together partners and partnerships from across the region to establish a ‘regional network of local partnerships’ that shared practice, learning, and challenges.

RYWUs also played a significant role in shaping the national conference in March, leading workshops and shaping the event. Through reporting and a workshop in April 2023, we collected the units' thoughts and reflections, which included:

- *Partnership development takes time, and we need to give local groups time and space to develop partnerships, considering them as critical long-term parts of the system.*
- *Partnerships need resourcing, especially for inclusive and diverse partnerships, requiring core funding for partnerships and partner involvement in shaping them.*
- *Partners should have the freedom to develop their own models based on evidential learning and peer support, as demonstrated in the pilot.*
- *The development of LYPs should support and complement the role and function of RYWUs.*
- *The creation of spaces for LYPs' development has enabled critical and reflective thinking within the sector.*
- *LYPs need to address and tackle the challenges of partnership development, particularly with competitive practices encouraged by commissioners, creating pressure on local areas.*
- *Power dynamics remain a factor in partnership development between public and VCSE sectors, as well as within them.*

Based on the reflections and thoughts of the RYWUs, we recommend the following:

- Expanding and developing a national and regional offer for LYPs, building on the pilot's success.
- Defining and delivering a consistent regional role and offer for LYPs that clearly outlines the role of national infrastructure organisations in this space.

The Network of Regional Youth Work Units sees the YPF Trust playing the following role in partnership with the units:

- Influencing policy and practice on behalf of the sector and children and young people.
- Advocating, lobbying, and holding decision-makers and other national infrastructure organisations accountable.
- Collecting, analysing, and disseminating data and research to inform, develop, and support the sector.
- Enabling and supporting collaboration, income generation, and development.
- Championing youth voice across organisations and communities.

There is also a clear challenge to the YPF Trust to be experts in this space at a national level, providing support and resources while remaining focused and targeted in their work and prioritising local and grassroots organisations to ensure the money goes to them rather than a growing national infrastructure.

We will continue to work closely with the Network of Regional Youth Work Units, key funders, and government to maximise the potential of Regional Youth Work Units and ensure that every local area has the right systems, structures, and resources needed to articulate their needs and work collaboratively towards better outcomes for young people.



## Empowering Local

Empowering Local is a growing group of local, regional, and national funders and infrastructure organisations committed to supporting place-based funding of the VCSE sector which meets the needs of children, young people, and communities.

In 2022, the group commissioned YMCA George Williams College to conduct research on the role of funders in youth place-based funding, with the aim of enhancing our understanding of how funders can best support place-based approaches to funding youth provision. The report presents the research findings and offers nine evidence-based recommendations for funders and small trusts looking to strengthen their place-based funding strategies in the youth sector.

The research has two core areas of focus:

- **Impact:** what is known about the role of funding/funders in place-based approaches/initiatives, and how does this contribute to positive change?
- **Process:** what are the mechanisms and conditions (e.g. readiness) that make place-based funding effective, (in particular embedding youth voice in decision-making and engagement with local, regional, and national organisations)?

There are nine recommendations for funders:

1. Dedicate resources to support communities to build infrastructure so that more organisations working in place have the capacity to receive funding.
2. Take the time to build trusting relationships in places before administering funds.
3. Ensure your funding mechanisms promote collaboration between organisations and identify opportunities to collaborate with other funders
4. Listen and respond to the needs of the community; align funding to local strategy.
5. Be willing to take risks and support a learning culture.
6. Provide unrestricted, long-term funding opportunities.
7. Ensure that reporting requirements are proportional to the capacity of organisations.
8. Help build skills and capacity in the local ecosystem.
9. Embed youth voice at all levels of decision-making. The case studies in the main body of this report provide a range of examples of how funders can do this.

The report's findings are familiar and resonate with other work in this area. The aim of this piece of work is to draw funders' attention to the significance of impact-driven work in the youth sector and encourage them to prioritise it in their funding strategies.

In the upcoming year, we plan to utilise the insights gathered from this research to facilitate more extensive engagement with funders. This includes exploring ways in which funders can provide greater support to LYPs and their members through a place-based approach to funding.

The full report is included as Supporting Document F to this report.

## **The Funder View of Partnership**

The trust recognises the critical role of partnerships in achieving meaningful impact for young people and commissioned fundraising consultant Ralph Hartley to explore how funders perceive and approach partnership in their funding decisions.

Many individual funders, and individuals within funders, are already convinced of the case for partnership but funding systems and cultures have not yet caught up. Despite examples of improved practice from funders, much of it spurred by the experiences of greater collaboration during Covid-19; the current funding system continues to promote competition over collaboration; partnership at a local level is under resourced; and funding for local infrastructure is limited meaning there is little provision of some of the key support and services that local organisations need to maximise the impact they make for young people.

There is therefore a need for youth sector partners and funders to work collaboratively to build the conditions under which partnership working can be more consistently and more effectively funded.

The recommendations that Ralph outlines in the report include:

1. Build a **sustainable, collective youth work strategy** between government and independent funders – basing this on a thorough analysis of existing funding sources in relation to current and future demand and the needs of young people
2. Ensure that any general or targeted funding for partnerships **includes funding for partnership development**
3. **Open up the process of programme and strategy design to the sector** to allow a longer lead in time for partnerships to develop in line with funder priorities
4. Continue the **shift to unrestricted, core and long-term funding** and for funders who have made this shift to actively advocate for this with their peers
5. **Nurture collaboration skills** in the sector by making training available which specifically builds relevant skills and knowledge

In conjunction with other key findings from the LYP Project and supporting work (such as Empowering Local), we are developing a comprehensive understanding of the funding landscape for local community-led organisations and local partnerships. In the coming year, we intend to focus heavily on making a case for investment in partnerships, building on the lessons learned to date from the 10 pilot areas and our research.

The full briefing document is included as Supporting Document G to this report.

## **LYPs and a national framework for youth work**

While it's important to provide guidance and frameworks for the youth sector, we recognise that it can also add complexity to an already complex system. Therefore, we are committed to ensuring that the work of the trust and the development of LYPs align with a sector-wide system that works for everyone. Renaisi's 'national to local' work will inform our understanding of how local areas view and utilise the available national infrastructure. Moving forward, we are eager to collaborate with DCMS and national partners on the next phase of this research.

The YPF Trust has engaged with key national infrastructure organisations, such as NYA, UK Youth, YMCA George Williams College, and the Local Government Association, as part of the pilot review. Moving forward, the group will ensure that the development of LYPs aligns with the broader youth sector and supports the following:

- Providing space for sector expertise and specialist organisations, such as YPF Trust
- Contributing to a collective understanding of the youth sector through shared and coordinated data and research, such as the census
- Ensuring that guidance and toolkits align with and support relevant tools and resources in the sector, both locally and nationally
- Contributing to collective and aligned strategies for youth work and advocating for coherent asks of government and funders.

We are committed to ensuring that the development of LYPs is aligned with a range of initiatives and programmes aimed at making a positive impact on young people's lives, across both the public and VCSE sectors. One such initiative is #BeeWell in Greater Manchester, which has significant potential not only for improving the wellbeing of children and young people but also for highlighting the role of the youth sector and its funding. Through our partnership with Young Manchester, we have worked closely with #BeeWell in Greater Manchester and are also supporting engagement in Southampton as part of the second pilot area for the national programme.



## The challenges of partnership

As one of our national funding partners put it “Collaboration is hard”.

Partnership working can be challenging, and we do not underestimate the difficulties of developing and sustaining collaborations, particularly when resources are limited. The pilot has highlighted some key themes, further reinforced by our experiences of partnership development with the YPF Network.

**Time:** Building genuine and sustainable partnerships takes time to develop and requires all partners to meaningfully engage and feel ownership. While the pilot has resulted in some early successes, LYPs should be seen as long-term investments by funders.

**Space:** The right spaces are critical to partnership development and need to be well-facilitated and supported to ensure that they are not shaped by power dynamics or history. Independent actors have proved to be invaluable during the pilot, and external support and facilitation can add real benefits.

**Capacity:** Collaborative processes risk privileging those who have the time and capacity to be involved, which often excludes those who most need support. LYPs need to ensure equitable engagement and support to ensure that the right people are in the room.

**Competition:** Competition can get in the way of genuine collaboration and often leads to conflict or disengagement. LYPs must convene equitably and be built on the principles outlined in our Framework for Partnership. Competition should be acknowledged and discussed.

**Backing:** Partnerships need support, including trust from local authorities, funders, and regional and national partners. With backing and trust comes greater engagement and enthusiasm, making collaboration easier.

**History and baggage:** Past events shape how individuals and organisations interact, sometimes leading to a breakdown of relationships and a lack of trust. The past must be acknowledged and addressed, and the focus should be on the future. LYPs provide a new space and, if supported effectively, can help areas overcome history and shape a new vision for the future.

**Local leadership and passionate people:** Passionate individuals drive each local area and go above and beyond for young people. Local leaders are the lifeblood of the youth sector and should be protected and supported at all costs.

**Money** is, of course, a central theme. This work requires investment from a range of local, regional, and national funders and partners to thrive. If funding is secured, it provides a platform to address other challenges with the right support and framework in place.

Funders like John Lyon’s Charity in London and The Ballinger Charitable Trust in the North East have shown that if this work is backed, it can thrive, with both giving long-term support and placing a strong emphasis on trusting local community leaders to know what is needed.



# 10 Budget

Activity	DCMS	YPF Trust	In-kind	Total
Development grants	£81,978	£2,482		£84,460
Project team	£48,627	£23,104		£71,731
Learning partner	£20,000			£20,000
Local and regional partners	£32,048		£3,500	£35,548
Communications	£21,470	£101		£21,571
Engagement and events	£22,300	£93	£7,465	£29,858
On-costs (5%)	£11,321			£11,321
<b>Total</b>	<b>£237,744</b>	<b>£25,780</b>	<b>£10,965</b>	<b>£274,489</b>

Further to the budget outlined above, YPF Trust is committing a further £15,000 to support a bridging period between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023, to ensure continuity of support to local areas and further development of the learning and recommendations outlined in this report.

11

# Supporting Documents

The following supporting documents are shared alongside this report, as referenced above:

- LYP Area Profiles (summaries of each local area, and progress made)
- YPF Trust resources: Partnership Framework (with YMCA George Williams College)
- YPF Trust resources: Youth Voice and Partnership (by Network of Regional Youth Work Units)
- Full report – National to Local (by Renaisi)
- Full report – Role of Regional (by Liz Harding)
- Full report – Empowering Local (by GMCA George Williams College)
- Full report – Funder view of partnership (by Ralph Hartley)

Further information, resources and examples (e.g. of local work) are available to share.

# People Partnership and Place

[ypftrust.org.uk](http://ypftrust.org.uk)

