Evaluation of the NYA Core Grant and Youth Worker Bursary Fund

Final report

June 2025

CFE research

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Contents

Glossary

BACP	British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CDI	Career Development Institute
CG	Core Grant
CPD	Continuing professional development
CYP	Children and young people
DCMS	The Department for Culture, Media and Sport
EPA	End-point assessment
ETS	Education Training Standards
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
JNC	Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth and Community Workers
LA	Local authority
LES	Learner Evaluation Survey
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer / questioning, intersex, asexual, plus
MI	Management information
NCPS	National Counsellors and Psychotherapists Society
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
NYA	National Youth Agency
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
RYWU	Regional Youth Work Unit
SEND	Special educational needs and disabilities
VCSE	Voluntary, community and social enterprise
YW	Youth worker
YWB	Youth Worker Bursary
YWO	Youth work organisation

List of Figures and Tables

Please note that figures in the table and graphs may not always total 100% due to rounding. Statistics have been rounded to the nearest per cent.

Key findings

What has been delivered through the two DCMS grants?

Core Grant (CG) funding[1] has supported the delivery of: 1) written resources to guide the youth work curriculum, practice and occupational standards; 2) validations of youth work qualifications and training pathways; 3) the National Youth Sector Census (the Census); 4) the Youth Worker Register (the Register), 5) a Safeguarding and Risk Management Hub; and 6) short courses, webinars and roadshows. The Youth Worker Bursary (YWB) Fund has delivered training that has led to 1,500 youth workers achieving a professional youth work qualification since 2020.

The activities funded through the CG and YWB grants are perceived by those surveyed to be informative, supportive, practical, accessible, valuable, and relevant to everyday practice. There is a high level of engagement and support in principle for Census and Register. However, there is a lack of clarity about their purpose and value for youth work organisations (YWOs) and individual youth workers. The sector would welcome opportunities to access more of the intelligence to support the planning and delivery of services and training, at local and regional levels.

What supports bursary recipients in achieving qualifications?

The factors that help learners to achieve qualifications are: the financial support available through the bursary scheme; flexible modes of delivery, including online and in-person study; knowledgeable trainers; opportunities to network and share practice; support from employers (e.g. supervision and buddying); and the flexibility to extend learning and assessment periods. The barriers to completion and the reasons for drop out are less well understood but include competing time-related commitments; lack of supervision and support from line managers; and insufficient opportunities to collaborate with other practitioners.

How have the CG and YWB affected the skills and diversity of the youth workforce, and the safety and effectiveness of youth work services?

Evidence shows that the activities delivered through the grants contribute to safer youth services. Youth workers have strengthened healthy professional boundaries between themselves and the children and young people (CYP) they support; they feel more confident in spotting the signs of risky behaviour, abuse and neglect; they can employ techniques for effectively responding to young people's behaviour that may be challenging; and they can create safe environments for youth work. There is evidence that the training and qualifications delivered through the YWB Fund increase youth workers' theoretical knowledge of youth work and adolescents' development and skills. Youth workers draw on their learning to enhance their practice, which leads to more effective services that deliver positive outcomes for young people.

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[1] Proportion of total NYA funding represented by the CG was 39% in FY 22/23, 24% in FY 23/24 and 27% in 24/25. NYA supplements the CG funding with income generated through corporate contracts and its reserves. Proportion of total NYA funding represented by these sources was 26% and 9% in FY 22/23, 40% and 4% in FY 23/24 and 50% and 6% in 24/25 respectively.

Executive summary

This report presents an independent evaluation of activities funded by two grants awarded to the National Youth Agency (NYA) by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS): Core Grant (CG) funding and the Youth Worker Bursary (YWB) Fund. The findings draw on the analysis of management information collected by the NYA, and a consultation with stakeholders including Regional Youth Work Units (RYWUs), training providers, youth work organisations (YWOs), and youth workers, who were identified and engaged via NYA's networks.

What outputs have been achieved with CG and YWB funding?

Core Grant funding

A range of activities, in addition to validation of youth work qualifications and training pathways, have been delivered utilising CG funding.[2] Those in the scope of the evaluation are:

– written information and resources to guide the youth work curriculum, practice, and national occupational standards

– the National Youth Sector Census (the Census)

– the Youth Worker Register (the Register)

– a Safeguarding and Risk Management Hub (the Hub) for youth workers and YWOs

– short training courses, webinars and roadshows delivering continuing professional development (CPD) to the sector.

Youth Worker Bursary funding

Since 2020, the YWB fund has delivered:

– training leading to 1,500 youth workers achieving a professional youth work qualification

– training for another 1,000 youth workers who did not or have not yet achieved a youth work qualification.

Which resources funded by CG are accessed by youth workers and YWOs?

The leaders / managers of YWOs and youth workers regularly engage with NYA and perceive the resources and support to be useful.

Leaders / managers report regularly referring to NYA's written resources, including the youth work curriculum, practice and national occupational standards to support them in their work. These are used to update YWOs' policies and procedures; inform pedagogy and practice; plan youth work activities; and support staff training and development.

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[2] Proportion of total NYA funding represented by the CG was 39% in FY 22/23, 24% in FY 23/24 and 27% in 24/25. NYA supplements the CG funding with income generated through corporate contracts and its reserves. Proportion of total NYA funding represented by these sources was 26% and 9% in FY 22/23, 40% and 4% in FY 23/24 and 50% and 6% in 24/25 respectively.

There is good engagement with and a relatively high level of support for the Census and the Register. The Census is viewed as 'highly valuable' by 32% of leaders / managers who access it, and 'of some value' by another 56%. The Register is viewed as 'highly valuable' by 37% of leaders / managers who access it, and 'of some value' by another 54%. Youth workers who access the Register have slightly higher perceptions of value: 55% regard the Register as 'highly valuable', and another 40% rate it as 'of some value'. The benefits of the Register are perceived to be professional recognition of skills, improving professional standards, increasing the parity of youth work with other professions such as social work and teaching, and contributing to knowledge about the skills and qualifications of the sector.

The Safeguarding and Risk Management Hub is a valued resource. Almost all those who use the Hub describe the service as valuable – 99% of leaders / managers and 95% of youth workers. Amongst leaders / managers who had accessed the Hub, 64% perceive the service to be 'highly valuable', and another 34% say it is 'of some value.' Similarly, 60% of youth workers rate it as 'highly valuable', and another 35% as 'of some value.' The Hub supports practitioners in writing or updating policies and procedures; guides youth workers' interactions with young people; and, when needed, provides bespoke advice and consultancy on more complex issues.

Short courses, webinars and roadshows enable youth workers to undertake accessible bite-sized CPD. These in-person events are valued because they facilitate networking and the sharing of good practice.

What has been the impact of the bursary-funded qualifications?

Bursary-funded training has enabled more practitioners to achieve a recognised youth work qualification. Learners are very satisfied with the training; they rate trainers' knowledge and the pace of delivery consistently high. Learners report a range of learning and career outcomes, including: the opportunity to re-engage in learning, including as a stepping stone to higher education; clarity about which area of youth work to enter or specialise in; increased ability to secure a paid youth work role; enhanced performance in their current role; and opportunities to apply for promotions and leadership positions.

How effectively have activities been delivered?

What is working well?

The resources, support and training (short courses and qualifications) delivered through the CG are perceived to be informative, supportive, practical, accessible and useful. They are valued for their relevance and applicability to everyday practice.

The YWB's strengths are perceived to be the simple application process, positive working relationships between the NYA and the RYWUs, and the quality and efficacy of the training. Most learners who start a bursary-funded qualification complete it: six in ten achieve a qualification, and another one in ten extend their learning. The factors that maximise engagement with the qualifications are:

– **Broad eligibility criteria** – people working or volunteering with young people are eligible to apply if they do not hold a recognised youth work qualification, or if they wish to progress to Level 3 or 4 youth work qualifications.

– **Financial support** – 10 out of 26 recipients who responded to the survey would not have accessed training without the bursary.

- **Flexible delivery** – training is delivered online by the NYA Academy and in-person through a network of local training providers to ensure geographical location is not a barrier to access. There is also flexibility to extend learning and assessment beyond the formal training period.
- **Support from knowledgeable trainers and host YWOs / employers** in the form of supervision and buddying.
- **Opportunities to network and share practice** with other practitioners.

What is working less well?

The Register and Census

Despite the high level of engagement with and support for the Census, there is a lack of clarity about its purpose and opinion is divided on its value. Its value to the sector may be increased if perceived gaps in current information and coverage were addressed and if data were available at a more localised level to support YWOs with the planning and delivery of their provision and training.

One in six of the leaders / managers and one in five of the youth workers surveyed are aware of the Register. Half of respondents who were eligible to apply had done so. However, there is a call for greater clarity about the Register's purpose. Some of those consulted question whether it is a record of skills and qualifications, a safeguarding protocol, a badge of recognition, or a tool to uphold professional standards. There is also support for extending the Register to youth workers qualified below Level 6, practitioners with extensive experience and degrees in associated fields, and those with other youth work qualifications at Level 3 and above.

Activities funded through the YWB

Aspects of the YWB that could be improved include awareness of the scheme, the transparency of the process for allocating places, and the availability of assessors.

One in three learners withdraw or fail to achieve bursary-funded qualifications. There is limited data on the reasons for this, but evaluation evidence suggests the following can be barriers:

- competing time-related commitments, e.g. work and family responsibilities
- lack of supervision and support from line managers
- insufficient opportunities to work in collaboration with other practitioners.

Impact on skills, diversity, safety and effectiveness

The resources and training delivered through the two grants are equipping youth workers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to undertake their role effectively. Youth workers and leaders / managers of YWOs report increased knowledge and confidence after engaging with the Safeguarding and Risk Management Hub and the qualifications funded by the YWB. Changes to individual and organisational practice, informed by insights from NYA materials and training, have been implemented.

Since the YWB was introduced in 2019/2020, approximately 1,500 practitioners have achieved a youth work qualification, and a further c. 1,000 have engaged in the training without completing the assessment process. There is evidence that the bursary training is attracting diverse cohorts of learners, including those who are under-represented in youth work, such as young people, people from ethnic

minorities, people with disabilities, and those living in deprived areas. The scheme is also delivering qualifications to those who hold no prior youth work qualifications, especially those working in the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector.

Evidence suggests that the resources, training and support delivered through both funds are contributing to safer and more effective services, which contribute to improved outcomes for young people. Youth workers report that, following training funded by the YWB, they are:

- better able to establish healthy professional boundaries between themselves and the young people they support

- more confident in spotting the signs of risky behaviour, abuse and neglect, and initiating conversations with young people

- able to respond more effectively to young people's challenging behaviour

- able to create safer environments for youth work, e.g. by being clear on rules and expectations, correctly safeguarding sessions, and providing time for confidential chats.

There is evidence that the training and qualifications delivered through the YWB fund increase youth workers' theoretical knowledge of adolescent development and youth work, including different models and approaches. The training also equips youth workers with essential skills and the confidence to adapt their practice, enabling them to better respond to the needs of the young people and support them in achieving their goals and ambitions.

How is the Hub helping to improve safeguarding and risk management across the youth work sector?

Evidence shows that the resources and support delivered through the Hub are contributing to improved safeguarding and risk management. Supported by information, resources and the training courses available through the Hub, practitioners have:

- reviewed and updated policies and procedures, especially those relating to health and safety and safeguarding

- grown their confidence in preparing risk assessments

- increased their understanding of how to deal with and report safeguarding issues

- accessed bespoke support, where required.

How are the Census and Register helping to improve the safety and effectiveness of youth work?

Both the Register and the Census have the potential to enhance the safety and effectiveness of services by providing information on youth work providers, the qualifications and experience of those working in the sector, and data to inform training and service delivery. However, this potential is yet to be fully realised. Greater clarity on the purpose of the Register and Census is required, including their role in assuring the quality and safety of the services provided by individuals and organisations, to increase awareness and take-up across the sector.

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings from an independent evaluation of activities that were funded through two grants, awarded to the National Youth Agency (NYA) by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The first is Core Grant (CG) funding, and the second is the Youth Worker Bursary (YWB) Fund.

The NYA Core Grant and Youth Worker Bursary Fund

DCMS provided CG funding to the NYA for the period April 2022 to March 2025, to ensure the youth work workforce is equipped to deliver safe and effective services. The NYA utilises the CG funding[3] to:

– develop youth work qualifications and short courses to support continuing professional development (CPD)

– create information and resources that can be used by the sector, including national occupational standards and a youth work curriculum

– maintain a register of qualified youth workers (the Register) and youth services (the Census)

– improve safeguarding and risk management across the youth work sector through a dedicated Hub that supports youth workers in providing safe services, with robust risk-management processes in place.

In addition, the YWB was launched in 2019. It provides funding for those working in the youth work sector to study for a nationally recognised youth work qualification at Level 2 or 3. Since 2022, a portion of the fund has been used to train more assessors of youth work qualifications, and to pilot a Level 4 leadership and management programme. Groups that are currently under-represented in the workforce, including in leadership positions, are a particular focus of the YWB. The training is delivered through a network of training providers and the NYA Academy.

Evaluation aims and approach

The evaluation set out to explore the effectiveness and perceived impact of the following activities delivered by NYA, with funding from the two DCMS grants and other sources:

– youth work qualifications delivered through the YWB fund

– short training courses, events and regional roadshows

– national occupational standards for youth work and the youth work curriculum

– Census of youth work organisations

– Register of qualified youth workers

– Safeguarding and Risk Management Hub

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The evaluation captures insights into how these activities are being delivered and how successfully they are meeting their objectives. The evaluation's aims and objectives, along with the key research questions, are summarised in Table 1 on the next page.

The evaluation was delivered through a mixed-methods approach which captured evidence from a range of primary and secondary sources. The findings in this report are informed by:

– **A desk-based review** of current youth policy and existing research on the effectiveness and impact of bursaries and other workforce incentives and initiatives, including professional registers for youth workers operating in other parts of the UK and in similar sectors.

– **Analysis of management information** (MI) on the first four cohorts of YWB recipients, and learner feedback collected by NYA.

– **Online surveys** of 228 leaders and managers of youth work organisations (YWOs), and 245 youth workers, including paid employees and volunteers. The sampling frame for these surveys was generated from several sources, including: YWOs that had completed the Census in the two years prior to Spring 2023; youth workers on the Register; YWB recipients who had consented to further contact for research purposes; those who had completed the NYA workforce survey and had consented to participate in further research; and attendees from NYA's training events and regional roadshows who consented to receive a survey link. This sampling frame is biased towards organisations and individuals who have had prior contact with NYA. To maximise the reach and response rate for the surveys, the survey was also promoted on NYA's website and in the May and July 2024 editions of its newsletter, with a distribution list of around 8,100 people. A 'snowballing technique' was also implemented, whereby those who received the survey links were encouraged to forward them to other people and organisations in their networks, who were involved in delivering youth work services.

– **Follow-up interviews** with managers from 15 YWOs representing different types of service provision, and with 10 youth workers; they were identified using a recall question in the online surveys.

– **Key stakeholder interviews** with four representatives from the NYA, seven Regional Youth Work Units (RYWUs), and eight training providers commissioned by the RYWUs to deliver youth work qualifications to bursary recipients.

Further details on the methodology, sample characteristics and analytical approach are provided in Appendix 1.

Table 1: Summary of evaluation aims, objectives and key research questions.

Main aims	Objectives	Research questions
Identify the outputs achieved with CG and YWB funding	What activities have been delivered through the CG and YWB?	What was the rationale for developing each of the activities within the core strands of NYA's offer?
	Which elements of NYA's core offer are accessed by YWOs and YWs?	Which qualifications have been funded by YWBs? How many learners have started and completed / not completed qualifications? What is the demographic profile of those who complete / do not complete? What are learners' motivations for studying for a qualification? What are the reasons for not continuing?
		How many YWO and YWs have engaged with the Census and YW register? What are their reasons for engaging / not engaging? What might encourage more to engage?
		How many YWs have engaged with the Safeguarding and Risk Management Hub? What are the characteristics of those who have engaged with the Hub? What resources / support have been accessed?
Assess how effectively activities are delivered in practice	What is working well?	What factors underpin successful engagement with the sector? What factors underpin successful delivery?
	What is working less well?	What are the barriers to successful engagement with the sector? What are the barriers to successful delivery? How can they be overcome?
	How do YWOs and YWs use the training and resources in practice?	Why do YWOs and YWs engage with NYA's offer? How satisfied are YWOs and YWs with the offer? What other resources are accessed? How do these compare?

Main aims	Objectives	Research questions
Provide insight into the potential impact of the CG and YWB on the skills and diversity of the youth workforce and the safety and effectiveness of youth work services	To what extent do the curriculum, national standards and qualifications support the development of safe and effective practice?	What has been the impact of bursary-funded qualifications on the number and diversity of professionals in the youth sector workforce? To what extent are qualifications and CPD perceived to equip YWs with the knowledge, skills and confidence to undertake their role effectively? How could the offer be improved?
	How is the hub helping to improve safeguarding and risk management across the youth sector?	To what extent do the resources and training meet the needs of different sectors and settings? Are staff able to support a wider range of young people's needs as a result of engaging with the hub? How can the offer be improved?
	How are the Census and Register helping to improve the safety and effectiveness of youth work?	What is the level of support for or against the Census and Register? Why?

2. The youth work landscape

Changing nature of funding and provision

The youth work sector in England has undergone substantial change in recent decades. State-funded youth work has been in decline since the 1970s, with successive governments prioritising other services for children and young people, such as education and social work (Smith, 2013). In real terms, spending on local authority (LA) youth services in England fell by 73% between 2010/11 and 2022/23 (Local Government Association, 2024a), and the number of youth clubs almost halved over a similar period (SQW, 2024). There is now variation in the size and scope of youth services provided by LAs, and in the provision of youth services in different regions (Hobson et al., 2024).

As the volume of youth work delivered by LAs has diminished, there has been a corresponding increase in provision delivered by other organisations, particularly in the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector (NYA, 2024). These organisations draw on a range of income sources to fund their work, including grants, commercial activities, service user subscriptions, and fundraising (NYA, 2022). There has also been a shift away from traditional open-access delivery models towards more targeted services (Hobson et al., 2024).

Unfortunately, expertise has declined because of the changes in the youth work landscape. It is estimated that 4,500 youth work jobs were lost in the decade up to 2022 (Jones, 2022), and many skilled and qualified youth workers have moved into related sectors or retired (DCMS, 2024). Youth services are now more reliant on volunteers and sessional workers, who often lack formal youth work qualifications. However, the needs of the children and young people (CYP) they support are becoming increasingly complex. For example, mental health disorders have been rising over the last decade (NHS, 2023b), and it is estimated that 1.9 million CYP aged 0–25 years have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) (Public Accounts Committee, 2025). With demand for specialist services, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), outweighing current capacity (CQC, 2024), it is no surprise that youth workers are increasingly engaging with CYP who have more complex needs.

There is, therefore, a growing need for high-quality training and development for those who work and volunteer in the youth sector, to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to deliver safe and effective services. Access to youth workers has been shown to improve outcomes for young people. For instance, recent research concludes that participation in youth provision is strongly associated with short-term and long-term benefits in physical health and wellbeing, pro-social behaviours, and education (DCMS, 2024).

Commitment to increase the workforce

The changes in funding patterns for the youth work sector over recent decades indicate how the UK government has shifted its support for the sector and for young people. For example, in 2001, the Labour government established the Connexions Service for young people aged 13–19, aiming to reduce social exclusion (Smith, 2013). It was also estimated that DCMS spent over £1.1 billion on the youth sector between 2015 and 2021 (Hobson et al., 2024).

At the 2020 Spending Review, the Treasury announced a DCMS-led review of youth services. Over 6,000 young people and 170 YWOs identified three priorities: regular clubs and activities, adventures away from home, and volunteering opportunities. The Conservative government of the time responded with a £560m investment in the 'National Youth Guarantee', which had three strategic aims: to expand access to youth provision, support the youth sector workforce, and listen to young people's voices. The DCMS review also provided direction for how the youth sector workforce should be supported: this included bursaries for entry-level qualifications in youth work, and funding for the NYA to maintain and improve a complete set of national youth work qualifications, with a curriculum and workforce strategy, and an online learning platform (DCMS, 2022).

The CG and YWB funding awarded to NYA by the DCMS contributes to fulfilling the objectives set out within the National Youth Guarantee, by:

– **addressing skills gaps and shortages** through funding the development of information, resources, training and qualifications for youth sector workers

– **expanding and diversifying the workforce** by developing the capacity and infrastructure within the system, and addressing under-representation at all levels

– **professionalising the sector** by supporting the Census of YWOs and the Register of qualified youth workers

– **improving safeguarding and risk management** by supporting the establishment of a dedicated Hub.

Professionalisation of youth workers

The youth work sector in other parts of the UK, and other industry sectors, have implemented similar measures to upskill and professionalise their workforces with a view to enhancing the quality, safety and effectiveness of their services or provision. Evidence regarding the impact of two of these measures – bursaries and professional registers – on the development and professionalisation of workforces is explored in Appendix 2.

3. Delivery of training and development

Drivers of investment in training and development

Addressing skills gaps and shortages, and recognition of the need to re-professionalise the youth work workforce, are among the key drivers of investment in training and development that are identified by YWOs.

Skills gaps

The reduction in funding for youth work services has impacted the sector's ability to invest in the training and development of its staff. Training providers suggest this has led to the gradual loss of expertise over time and created skills gaps. In view of the changing demands on youth workers, addressing these gaps is perceived to be of paramount importance:

> We're just looking at our organisational challenges and how we can improve the quality of our youth workers. And training is a key aspect of that, because we recognise that people are not qualified, they haven't got the skills they need. Youth work has changed since the budget cuts in terms of quality, and we struggle to deliver to young people, stay current, and be what young people want, on a shoestring [budget].
>
> **Training provider**

Interviews with leaders of YWOs identify a wide range of skills gaps in the workforce, which are driving demand for training and development. Addressing gaps in youth workers' knowledge of the 'fundamentals' of youth work – such as building relationships, understanding voluntary engagement, and running group work with young people – is identified as a key priority. In addition, training providers identify that youth workers, particularly those who are relatively new to the profession, need to develop a greater understanding of what their role entails and the boundaries they should operate within. Training providers and YWOs also describe how youth work practitioners require training in reflective practice to encourage and develop self-awareness.

As the nature of youth work diversifies in response to the changing needs of young people in the 21st century, YWO leaders report that it is increasingly vital to train youth workers in areas such as mental health, trauma, and the youth justice system, including on how to identify issues and signposting young people to relevant organisations for help and specialist support. In the context of greater regulation, there is also growing demand for training in health and safety, and safeguarding tailored to the needs of the youth sector.

Skills shortages

Some YWOs perceive that, because of the decline in the number of youth clubs and the prevalence of part-time and volunteer roles, youth work is becoming less visible and less attractive as a career. Consequently, those who aspire to work with young people are perceived to be gravitating towards other professions, such as social work, where training and progression opportunities are more readily available.

> When I was a youth worker, I was always in post-16 [youth provision], so young people participated in youth work, and there was a natural progression that they

would then look at youth work as a national qualification. But, because young people aren't involved, they don't see it as a career pathway.

<div align="right">**Leader / manager in a YWO**</div>

Raising awareness of the career opportunities – along with the development of entry routes, nationally recognised qualifications, and progression pathways in youth work – are regarded as essential by training providers and YWOs alike. They perceive that these measures would help to professionalise the workforce and raise the status of the sector – which, in turn, would support the development of a talent pipeline to address prevailing skills shortages. Subsequent access to training and CPD is needed to maintain the professional status of youth workers and support retention, by making employees feel valued and equipped to undertake their role effectively. Furthermore, developing skills and knowledge can lead to greater insight into *why* youth workers do what they do. This, in turn, can increase youth workers' pride, confidence and self-efficacy, and thus improve the quality of services for young people.

Organisational support for workforce development

YWOs recognise the need for and importance of training and development and are committed to increasing the capacity and capabilities of their workforce. They have often been constrained in their ability to provide the full range of training and development needed, however, because of some (or all) of the following factors:

– lack of resources for training and qualifications

– lack of time or inability to release staff for training

– lack of accessible, locally provided training.

To overcome the lack of resources for training, where organisations can do so, YWOs access free provision provided by other charities and voluntary organisations in their area of work, or training provided by LAs. Youth workers delivering services within specialist, third sector and/or larger institutions – such as the NHS, SEND youth provision, and sports organisations – can often access in-house provision specific to their role. NYA currently offers around 600 YWBs per year for those working or volunteering in the youth sector, to complete Level 2 and 3 youth work qualifications. In addition, NYA provides a range of other online resources and free-to-access courses, such as the Intermediate Safeguarding training, and Introduction to Youth Participation, which support youth workers' professional development.

Current delivery of YWB qualifications

Youth work qualifications funded by the YWB are delivered online via the NYA Academy, and through Regional Youth Work Units (RYWUs) or other training providers. The NYA provides online training for the Level 3 Diploma and Level 4 course, in regions with no current infrastructure to deliver these courses. In addition, the NYA allocates funding for delivery of the YWBs in eight RYWUs; they subsequently deliver YWB training or allocate YWBs to other training providers within their region. The RYWUs currently deliver Level 2 courses and the Level 3 Certificate. The number of bursaries available in each region is dependent on the size of the population of young people aged 11–19 in the geographical area, and the type of organisations providing youth services. Levels of socioeconomic disadvantage and 'cold spots' in existing provision are also considered.

Strengths of the current delivery model

Training providers and RYWUs identify several key strengths of the current delivery model.

Training is accessible

The training is open to all those working within youth work, not just those in traditional youth worker roles. Bursary-funded qualifications are delivered online by the NYA Academy, which ensures location is not a barrier to participation. RYWUs and training providers also offer some online delivery, in addition to face-to-face provision, including as part of a blended approach. In addition to increasing geographical reach, this approach saves time and money, thus overcoming two further barriers to training identified by YWOs. It also helps training providers maximise the volume of training opportunities they can offer:

> Going online [to deliver training] means we can use the funding to the best advantage and provide more opportunities.
>
> **RYWU**

Responds to a variety of needs and learning styles

RYWUs and training providers seek to deliver training in a flexible, supportive and responsive way, in order to break down barriers for those who have had negative experiences of education and learning in the past, or who have SEND. This helps to widen access to youth work qualifications for a more diverse range of people, who reflect the characteristics of the young people they will work with.

> For certain cohorts we have done an in-person course because of their specific needs. We worked with a deaf organisation to train their youth work staff, and it wouldn't have worked online because of their needs and the necessity to have an interpreter.
>
> **RYWU**

Collaboration and partnership

Training providers work in collaboration to ensure an equitable spread of provision across their region. In most cases, training providers have developed strong relationships with RYWUs. They share information and work together to solve any delivery issues promptly.

> We've got a training and learning network with a learning and development officer – they gather intelligence through their networks and meetings and go out and meet people in their local areas. We also know that across geographical areas, there may be a few people that require training, so we will bring people together and organise the training through the training providers.
>
> **Leader / manager in a YWO**

Areas for improvement

Training providers and RYWUs identify several challenges associated with the current delivery model.

Ensuring qualifications are up to date

Most providers and YWO leaders regard the bursary-funded training as robust and fit for purpose. However, a minority of YWOs report that the current qualifications could include more discussion about the issues youth workers face when working with CYP. For example, one identifies a need for more information about how to approach discussions on gender identity, and another wants support with working with refugees and migrants.

The timing of training and qualifications

As noted above, most training providers operate flexible delivery models to ensure training is as accessible and learners can successfully complete their course. However, the way some courses are administered can present a barrier, such as if the training only takes place during office hours. Learners can also be deterred from engaging in training by long lead times between onboarding and starting the course. In response to these barriers, RYWUs are working to deliver courses more flexibly: for example, by offering different session times.

Gaps in geographical coverage

Not all learners live within a reasonable travelling distance of a training provider, and there is a lack of training provision in some areas. As such, it is not always feasible for learners to access training face-to-face. This delivery model is also perceived to be less cost-effective than online provision.

> In-person courses can limit who can come and travel, and so we had to do a lot of the programmes on evenings or weekends. We're moving towards putting everything online so people from anywhere in the region can come.
>
> **Training provider**

While online learning ensures that geography is not a barrier, some training providers perceive drawbacks to online learning. They take the view that face-to-face training is more effective for engaging learners; and in some cases, the online model can reduce course completion rates (see Chapter 4).

> Learners want online because it's quite convenient. But what it does is reinforce placid learning. They are kind of listening but doing something else at the same time. So, it reduces the pace that you can teach at. It's much slower online.
>
> **Training provider**

Most training providers and RYWUs accept that an online training offer ensures reaching the most learners, and some describe how this mode of delivery can also reflect the way many youth workers communicate with young people – for example, via online forums and chats.

Limited funded places or difficulty in securing a place

The number of YWB places available to each cohort of learners is limited, and demand often outstrips supply in many areas. Most training providers want to provide this training; it means they have a waiting list, so that they can allocate places as soon as they become available.

Availability of supervisors

Training providers identify challenges in being able to engage with the supervisors of the youth workers they are training, to ensure that trainees receive professional support and adequate time for reflection. They perceive that if supervisors do not give learners this time, it can hinder the pace and quality of their learning. Some have addressed this issue by engaging with supervisors much earlier in the process; one describes how they provide supervisors with handbooks, in order to more effectively support youth workers through their learning journey.

4. Experience of training and development

This chapter outlines the range of information, training and support accessed by youth work professionals to support their practice. The level of satisfaction with these current resources is also explored, comparing perceptions of NYA resources to those provided by other agencies supporting the sector. The findings come from two surveys: the first with leaders and managers of YWOs, and the second with youth workers (including those engaged in youth work support and volunteer roles).

Information, resources and support

Agencies consulted for information, resources and support

In their current role, nine out of ten (90%) leaders / managers and almost two-thirds (63%) of youth workers refer to agencies for information, resources and support with their professional practice. Reflecting the fact that the sample was drawn primarily from professionals who had engaged with the NYA, the most common sources of support used by leaders / managers and youth workers are NYA (87% of leaders / managers and 69% of youth workers) and UK Youth (57% of leaders / managers and 35% of youth workers). Other agencies that leaders and managers draw on are the Centre for Youth Impact at the YMCA George Williams College (32%), Youth Work One (28%), and the Institute of Youth Work (18%).

Youth workers search across a wide range of topics, with training and professional development (67%), the youth work curriculum (63%), targeted support (53%), and safeguarding (53%) being the most researched topics (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Topics youth workers search for information, resources and support on.
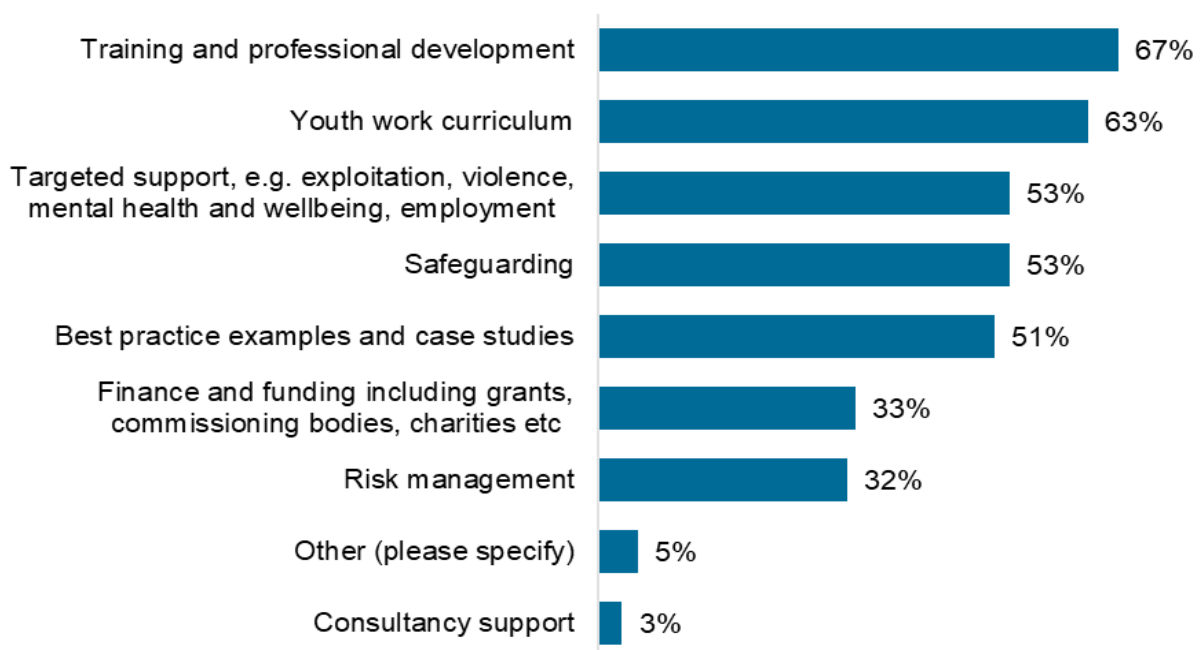
Source: Youth Worker Survey Base = 171

Survey question: *Which areas or topics do you typically search for information, resources and/or support on?* (Prompted)

Use of NYA information and resources

There is good engagement with the NYA's information and resources. Leaders / managers tend to this support more frequently than youth workers. Leaders / managers most commonly use online events and webinars (58%), Youth Work Practice Standards (51%), and the Census (51%). For youth workers, the most used NYA sources are the National Youth Work Curriculum (42%), short courses and CPD sessions (38%), and Occupational Standards for Youth Work (38%) (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Comparing the use of NYA resources between leaders / managers and youth workers.

Source: Youth Worker Survey Base = 229
Source: YWO Survey Base = 220
Survey question: Since 2020, which of the following NYA training, resources and support have you accessed?

Analysis shows that youth workers who are on the NYA Register or are in the process of applying are more likely to use NYA's resources, compared to those who are not on the Register. This also applies to leaders / managers who have one or more staff members on the NYA Register. Prior engagement with NYA's resources correlates with applying to the Register; therefore, one route to expanding the Register is to engage a greater proportion of the sector in using NYA resources.

The value of NYA information, training and resources

The majority of leaders / managers and youth workers who access NYA information, training and resources rate them as highly valuable. The most notable exceptions are for the Census and Register of youth workers (Figure 3). There are mixed opinions about the value of these resources, as is discussed further in Chapter 6.

Figure 3: Proportion of leaders / managers and youth workers who rate NYA sources 'highly valuable'
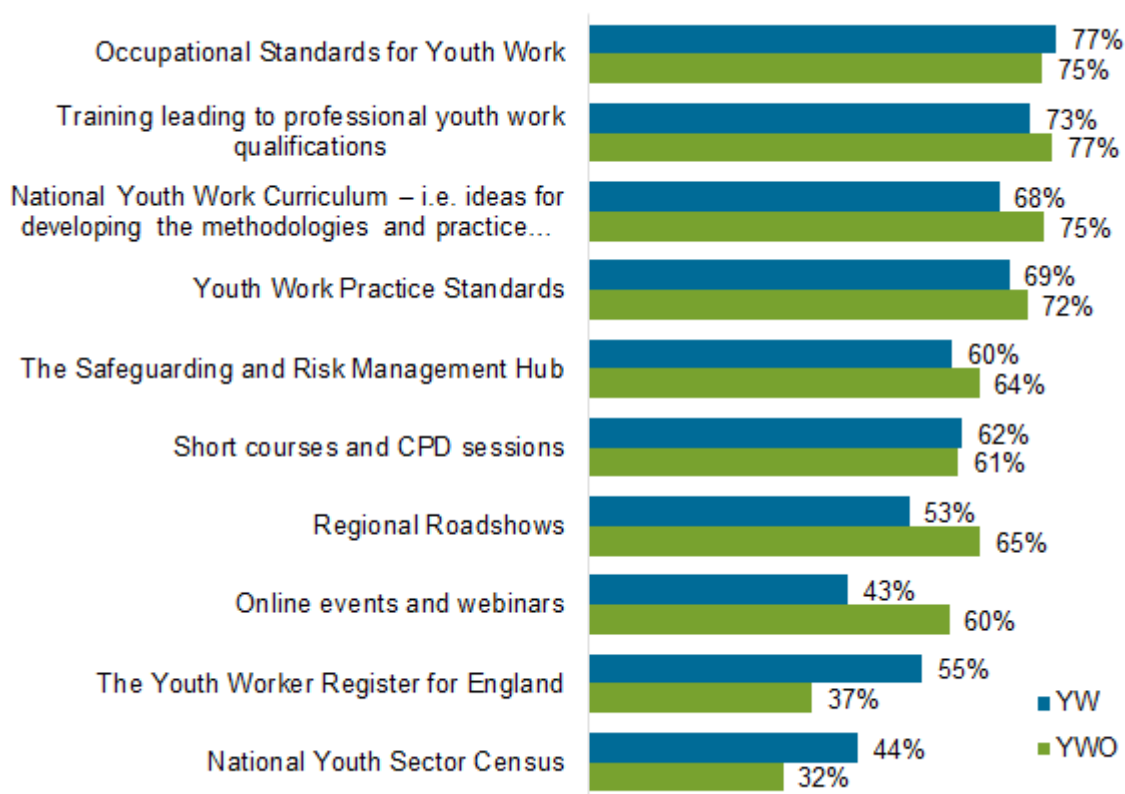
Source: Youth Worker Survey Responses range from 34 to 93
Source: YWO Survey Responses range from 57 to 126
Survey question: *How valuable do you find the NYA training, resources and support you / your organisation has accessed?*

The follow-up interviews provide insights into how NYA resources are used in daily practice. Written resources on the NYA website are typically the 'first port of call' when youth workers are looking for up-to-date information or require clarification on an issue. Resources that give practical examples of performing tasks, such as how to have conversations with young people about sensitive issues (e.g. mental health, grief, online safety), are perceived to be particularly helpful.

> We tap into their support and resource library quite a lot. Whenever I get a query from a youth worker, I always say, 'There is this information out there on the NYA website.'

<div align="right">**Leader / manager in a YWO**</div>

The Youth Work Curriculum and wider resources are especially valued by youth workers and other professionals working with young people in specialised settings such as the NHS or housing associations. They use these resources to help explain to colleagues what youth work is, and the remit of youth workers.

The NYA is viewed as highly responsive and produces high-quality and timely resources and webinars that have responded to societal issues including COVID-19, knife crime, and the riots of summer 2024. Although not all these resources were developed with CG funding, they are highly regarded by the sector.

Safeguarding and Risk Management Hub

How the youth work sector uses the Safeguarding and Risk Management Hub

The Hub provides guidance, support, advice and access to training for all organisations and individuals working with young people. Since its establishment in 2021, four in ten (41%) leaders / managers and one-quarter (24%) of youth workers have used the Hub. The most common way of interacting with the Hub is to access resources. Of those who access the Hub, 84% of leaders / managers and 69% of youth workers look at written materials and guidance documents, and 59% of leaders / managers and 43% of youth workers use the materials and/or advice to update safeguarding and risk management practices.

Around three in ten respondents who had accessed the Hub attended a safeguarding or risk management training course – 33% of leaders / managers and 28% of youth workers. Only a minority who had accessed the Hub (2% of leaders / managers and 6% of youth workers) received personalised advice.

The value of the Hub's information and resources

Almost all those who use the Hub describe the service as valuable – 99% of leaders / managers and 95% of youth workers. Amongst leaders / managers who had accessed the Hub, 64% perceive the service as 'highly valuable', and another 34% say it is 'of some value.' Similarly, 60% of youth workers rate it as 'highly valuable' and another 35% as 'of some value'.

Approximately two-thirds of leaders / managers (66%) and youth workers (69%) report that the 'safeguarding or risk management training *fully* met their needs', with another 31% of leaders / managers and 31% of youth workers adding that it met their needs *'to some extent'*. Almost three-fifths of leaders / managers (57%) state that the materials and advice they accessed to update safeguarding and risk management policies *fully* met their needs, and another 43% say they did *to some extent*. A similar proportion of leaders / managers feel the same way about the written materials and guidance documents, with 53% reporting that these resources *fully* met their needs, and another 47% *to some extent*.

The qualitative interviews reveal that the Hub is a valued resource, which enables YWOs to access resources that support the development of robust and consistent guidance for their youth workers; this helps to keep young people safe. Training providers actively promote the Hub, and it is a well-used resource by learners

studying for formal youth work qualifications. Some leaders and managers report that they are not familiar with all the resources available through the Hub, and that a menu or guide to the resources would be helpful. Additionally, some organisations, especially sports clubs, often rely more on their parent organisation's safeguarding resources: for instance, grassroots football clubs regularly refer to the Football Association.

> We push the NYA Hub and the information and the resources that are there, and the free training that is there, it's all accessible online. And we still do that, even when we're delivering our courses, say, if you're struggling with this or you need another way of looking at it, look at the NYA resource, look at the Safeguarding Hub, because they are brilliant.
>
> **Training provider**

YWB Fund

The NYA awarded 2,424 YWBs for people working and volunteering in 1,069 different organisations in England over the first four funding rounds (2020–2023), with approximately 600 bursaries awarded per round. Two-thirds (66%) of recipients were employed, just under one-fifth (18%) were volunteers, 1% were students, and data was not recorded for the remaining 15%. The numbers of bursaries awarded for each qualification, in each funding round, are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The number of bursaries awarded by qualification.

Bursary-Funded Qualification	Round One	Round Two	Round Three	Round Four	Total
Level 2 Award	255	278	326	264	**1,123**
Level 2 Certificate	18	70	55	46	**189**
Level 3 Certificate	172	153	143	133	**601**
Level 3 Diploma	113	89	110	117	**429**
Level 4 Certificate	0	0	0	82	**82**
Total	**558**	**590**	**634**	**642**	**2,424**

Source: YWB MI Data

Across the funding rounds, 54% of bursaries were awarded for Level 2 and 43% for Level 3 qualifications. The NYA Academy delivered training for 22% of the bursaries awarded, and a network of 50 training providers served the remainder (78%). The NYA Academy was the only training provider to deliver bursary-funded training in all four rounds. The number of bursaries awarded varies by region[4] (Table 3).

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[4] For learners studying with the NYA Academy, region is recorded based on the postcode of the organisation where the learner works or volunteers; or where this information is not available, their home postcode.

Table 3: The proportion of bursaries awarded by region based on recipients' work or home postcode (Rounds 1–4).

Region	Percentage of bursaries	Region	Percentage of bursaries
West Midlands	16%	South West	11%
South East	15%	East	9%
North West	15%	East Midlands	5%
Yorkshire and Humber	12%	North East	5%
London	12%		

Source: YWB MI Data

Applicants for YWBs

Analysis of the MI suggests that the YWB has enabled a diverse range of learners, including those from under-represented groups in youth work and from low socio-economic backgrounds to access bursary-funded training. Over half of bursaries have been awarded to learners living in the most deprived areas (Quintiles 1 and 2), as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (Figure 4).

Figure 4: IMD quintile (based on home postcode) of bursary recipients.

Quintile	Percentage
Quintile 1	34%
Quintile 2	22%
Quintile 3	19%
Quintile 4	14%
Quintile 5	11%
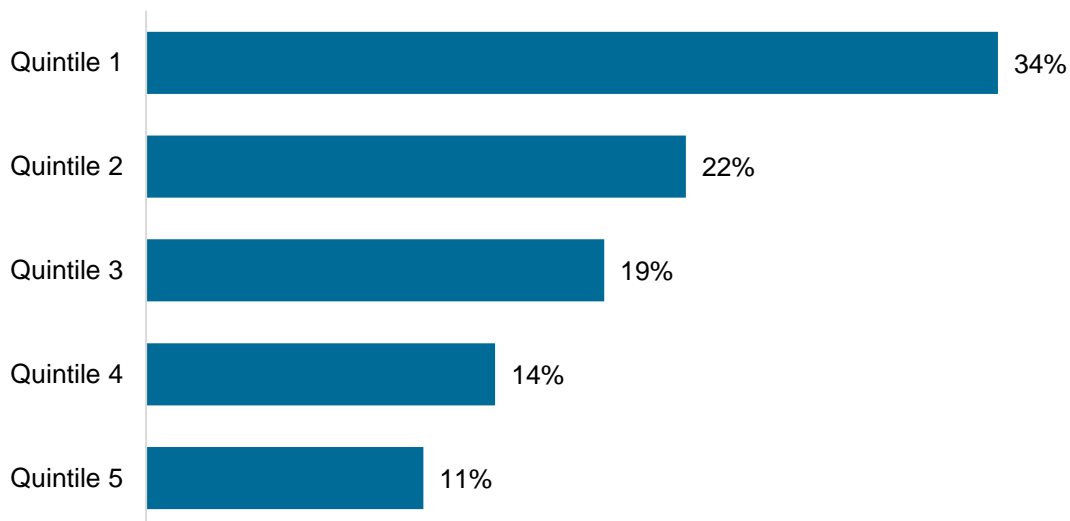
Source: YWB MI Data

Bursary recipients tend to be younger people, with almost six out of ten (58%) aged 35 or under. One in five (19%) are from ethnic minorities (Table 4). Six out of ten (60%) identify as female, 33% male,1% self-described, and 6% do not record their gender. One in eight (13%) disclose a disability.

Table 4: Ethnic minority groups of bursary recipients (Rounds 1–4).

Ethnic group	Percentage of bursaries
Asian or Asian British	6%
Black, African, Caribbean, or Black British	6%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	6%
Other ethnic group	1%
White	64%
Not recorded	17%

Source: YWB MI Data

MI data on prior youth work qualifications was collected for just under half (45%) of recipients. Of these, 79% have no prior youth work qualifications, and of those who do, most are qualified at Levels 1 or 2. This suggests the YWB is enabling people to access their first recognised youth work qualification, or to build upon prior achievement to progress to higher qualifications.

Four in ten (39%) bursary recipients were in part-time employment, and one-quarter (27%) were employed full-time. A further 18% were in a volunteer role, and 1% were students.[5] The high proportion of recipients in part-time and volunteer roles broadly reflects the current structure of the wider youth work workforce. Some training providers express concern that although the YWB may increase the number of qualified youth workers, there may not be a corresponding increase in the number of full-time positions for them to progress into:

> I can't go to my local provider and say, 'Yes, I'd love to take five learners,' because I can't pay five salaries, you know, there is no money in youth work, but that's a wider issue. There's a likelihood that quite a high percentage of workers that qualify are set up to fail, because they will never be able to get full-time jobs because there aren't enough out there. It's a part-time profession.
>
> **RYWU**

MI data was collected on the sectors that bursary recipients work or volunteer in. Bursaries are achieving a good reach into the VCSE sector, with 62% of bursary recipients performing youth work in this setting; this contrasts with 17% who are based in a LA setting. There is also some representation from the other sectors, including sports (8%), creative (7%), and housing (2%).

Motivations for applying for a YWB

Out of the 245 respondents to the youth worker survey, only 26 had received a YWB. This limits the conclusions that can be drawn about the influence of the bursary and other factors on the decision to apply to study for a formal qualification, based on the data.

Of the bursary recipients, 10 report that they would not have paid for training leading to a professional youth work qualification in the absence of the YWB – only one

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[5] Current status was not recorded for 15% of learners.

person would have definitely paid for it themself. Several factors influenced recipients' decision to undertake a youth work qualification, in addition to the funding. They were most motivated by a wish to have their existing skills and experience recognised and accredited (15 regard it as 'extremely influential'), and the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills that would be useful in their current role (15 find it 'extremely influential').

Among the leaders / managers who responded to the YWO survey, 68 report that they have staff members who have accessed the YWB. They also have mixed views about whether their organisation would have funded training leading to qualifications if the YWB had not been available. Only six report that they would have definitely funded it. Equal numbers (31) answer 'possibly' and 'no'. Thus, it can be concluded that the bursary's availability has led to the uptake of training that otherwise would not have been considered.

The qualitative research with training providers and those engaged in youth work provides additional insights into the enablers and motivations for studying for youth work qualifications. The interviews show that bursaries are a key enabler to the take-up of training leading to Level 2 and 3 qualifications. Within some organisations, the bursary scheme increases the number of people who can gain a recognised youth work qualification, with some funded through the bursary and others through a training budget. However, the YWB scheme is particularly impactful for organisations that do not have dedicated training budgets, or where budgets are limited to the provision of mandatory training only.

There is also a desire across the sector to professionalise youth work. For workers and volunteers with experience of youth work but no youth work qualifications, the bursary represents an opportunity to gain a qualification that validates existing skills and builds professional identity.

> I want the perception of youth work to change nationally, because it's a skilled profession and it takes training to recognise that. Many are very passionate about youth work and want to be seen as professionals.
>
> **Leader / manager**

For others, qualifications are sometimes necessary for keeping existing jobs, applying for new jobs, and for career progression.

> I am currently working for a council, and we are not sure if our jobs will be safe going forward; having completed the course, this will help me if I need to move into other youth service areas.
>
> **Youth worker**

> Now I've completed this course, I'm able to continue in my current role (this training was a requirement of my employment contract), I feel more confident to undertake further training in the subject and related fields and have a broader set of potential job opportunities as a result.
>
> **Youth worker**

A workforce with recognised youth work qualifications is often an essential or desirable requirement in tenders for funding. Leaders / managers are therefore also motivated to invest in training, to enhance their prospects of securing funding for their project or organisation.

YWB application process

Satisfaction levels with the application process are high. Leaders / managers in organisations where staff have accessed the bursary scheme tend to agree that 'the NYA Youth Worker Bursary was easy to access' – 29% 'strongly agree', and another 52% 'agree'.

Just over half (54%) of leaders / managers of staff who had accessed the bursary strongly agree, and 31% agree, that their organisation had a positive relationship with the NYA and/or the RYWU throughout the application and training period.

The qualitative interviews reveal that some leaders / managers are unsure of the eligibility criteria for allocating places when demand exceeds supply, however; they wonder whether preference is given to small organisations in the VCSE sector, ahead of larger organisations or LA services, or people in employment roles.

> The regional youth work units give it to our local voluntary and community sector. They allocate the bursaries to whoever they see fit for purpose, and we don't get them because it's the voluntary and community sector that are prioritised, and not the statutory [sector]. That's why I can't access bursaries. I have to pay separately, and it's £1,400, and I don't have a training budget.
>
> **Leader / manager**

> If the purpose is to build the workforce in terms of moving people through to becoming professional youth workers, then the people that get the bursaries have no intention of that. They're happy in their day job and they're just alright with their one night a week, so it's quite a big investment in volunteers, and there's no investment going into the people who actually want to take up youth work as a career.
>
> **Leader / manager**

Completion rates for bursary-funded qualifications

Across the four bursary rounds, six out of ten (59%) bursary recipients completed a qualification, and three in ten (30%) withdrew or failed. The MI did not distinguish between those who withdrew or failed. A further 11% were still active, having extended their study period to enable them to complete the qualification. These completion rates are consistent across the four funding rounds.

There is relatively little published data on completion rates for workplace bursaries leading to formal qualifications. Completion rates are often influenced by factors including the level and duration of the course, whether it is voluntary or mandatory, and learner characteristics such as prior educational attainment. Completion rates for bursary-funded teacher training are typically higher than for the YWB bursary scheme, at around 90% (DfE, 2018b). They are also higher for nursing, at approximately 75% (Buchan et al., 2019). In contrast, completion rates for apprenticeships are more comparable to the YWB at 54% (Guy et al., 2024). Further discussion of this comparative data can be found in Appendix 2.

There are some differences in who is more likely to complete, by demographic group:

- **Gender:** 61% of women complete, compared to 58% of men.
- **Ethnicity:** 65% of Asian / Asian British and 60% of those from White backgrounds complete, compared to 50% from Black, African, Caribbean, or Black British ethnic groups, and 56% from mixed or multiple ethnic groups.

– **Employment status:** 62% of those in full-time youth work employment and 63% of those in part-time youth work employment complete, compared to 48% of volunteers.

– **Qualification studied:** A similar proportion of learners complete qualifications at Level 2 (61%), the Level 3 Certificate (59%), and the Level 3 Diploma (56%). A lower proportion completes the Level 4 Certificate (45%), but this reflects a pilot year for this qualification.

– **Region:** The national average completion rate is 59%. Figure 5 demonstrates that completion rates in the North East, South West and North West are above average, and significantly higher than in the regions with the lowest completion rates: South East, Yorkshire and Humber, and East Midlands.[6]

Figure 5: The proportion of completed bursary-funded qualifications by region.
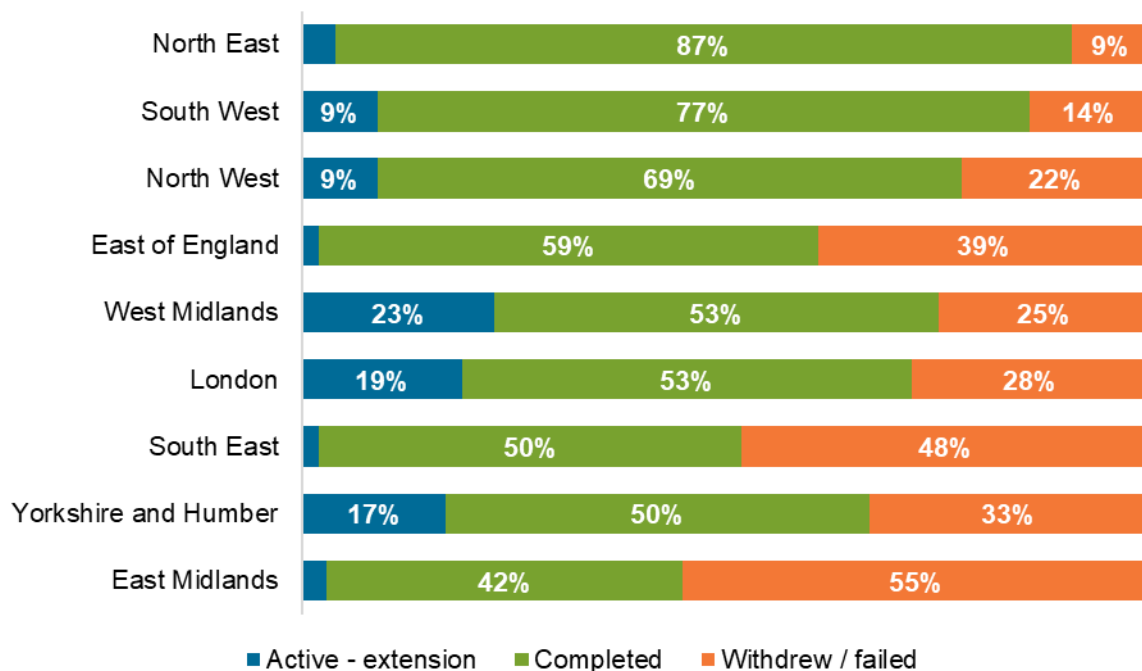
Source: YWB MI Data

Further analysis reveals that while some training partners achieve 100% completion for their learners, there are a handful with only a 25% completion rate. One limitation of the MI is that it cannot explain these differences and does not record whether the learning was delivered online, face-to-face, or through a blended approach. Additionally, the youth worker survey identified only three respondents who had dropped out of YWB-funded qualifications. In the qualitative research, some of the representatives from RYWUs reported variable quality amongst the network of training providers delivering the qualifications, which may partly account for these differences. However, the evaluation does not have enough evidence to draw firm conclusions on this aspect.

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[6] The RYWUs in these regions are the most recently established.

Some of the variation in completion rates may also be explained by differences in the delivery model. The NYA Academy has an exclusively online offer, whereas regional providers are more likely to deliver training face-to-face or through a hybrid approach. Those studying with a regional provider are more likely to complete (61%) than those who study through the NYA academy (50%). This difference is interesting, but there is insufficient evidence to determine whether the variation is due to different delivery models. Insight from the qualitative research suggests that learners value face-to-face training as it enables them to network with others who are working and volunteering in the youth sector. Providers and YWOs perceive that face-to-face delivery helps to keep learners motivated and engaged and facilitates the sharing of good practice. In the North East, which has the highest completion rate, all the training is delivered face-to-face in central locations, with occasional offerings in rural areas if there is demand. However, online learning is valued because it gives learners flexibility to study from home, and sometimes on demand.

Reasons for non-completion

There is limited data on the reasons for non-completion. The MI does not distinguish between recipients who fail and those who withdraw from courses, and the reasons for withdrawal are not captured by providers. Just three survey respondents had withdrawn from their qualification: one was not happy with the quality of the training, and another moved jobs and no longer required the qualification. The third respondent reports that the tutor left the course, and they received no further communication from the provider. Difficulties in combining study with other commitments may also be a contributing factor. Amongst leaders / managers whose staff had accessed the bursary scheme, 43% agree that their staff found it difficult to successfully combine work, study, and other commitments.

The qualitative research with training providers generated further insights into the factors that influence retention and completion. Factors which support learners in completing their courses are:

– high levels of support provided by a learner's employer, especially a line manager or supervisor

– flexible submission dates for assignments, including the opportunity to study over a longer period

– access to resources and ideas that youth workers can use in their sessions with young people.

Training providers identify several barriers that hinder learners' ability to complete qualifications, such as:

– lack of workplace support and supervision

– demands of youth work, such as a high volume of evening and weekend work, and the emotional resilience required for the job, including pastoral and emotional support

– reduced time for study in the context of other personal, family and work commitments

– a shortage of assessors.

> It is a challenge. You have to have the supervisor buy-in and say to them: 'You're part of this process, you need to be part of this process and the only way this learning will be bolstered and keep moving forward, is if you're part of that in the long-term, not just for the four months that they're on this course.'

<div align="right">

Leader / manager

</div>

To strengthen the body of quantitative evidence regarding non-completion, consideration could be given to distinguishing between those who fail and those who withdraw, and capturing the reasons for withdrawal in the provider MI.

Reasons for not accessing the YWB

Youth workers provide a range of reasons for not accessing the YWB, including lack of time and interest, and a preference for different types of training, especially shorter courses. A proportion of YWOs (15%) and some youth workers (6%) also obtained funding for qualifications from alternative sources, and therefore did not require a bursary.

However, the most common reason for not accessing the scheme is that youth workers already held a recognised youth work qualification (41%) and were therefore ineligible if they had achieved a qualification beyond a Level 3 (bursary rounds 1–3) or Level 4 (bursary round 4) or did not see the need to gain a higher qualification. The second most common reason is lack of awareness of the scheme amongst both youth workers (23%) and leaders / managers of YWOs (36%). However, insight from the follow-up interviews suggests that some youth workers and YWOs were not able to access the scheme because it was oversubscribed. Stimulating further demand through awareness-raising activities in the absence of additional bursary-funded places could exacerbate this.

Satisfaction with course delivery

NYA distributes the Learner Evaluation Survey (LES), via training providers, to course participants (including those who complete a qualification, extend their studies, or withdraw / fail). Across the four bursary rounds, 717 learners completed this survey (representing 30% of all those who received a bursary). The survey reviewed course satisfaction and impact on professional practice. The survey did not capture learners' completion status, however, therefore the data is limited in terms of comparing satisfaction and impact between those who completed qualifications and those who withdrew or failed.

Analysis of the LES demonstrates that most learners are satisfied with their course and find it useful. Consequently, most learners are likely to recommend the course to others (84% scoring 8, 9 or 10 out of 10).

Learners are asked to rate elements of the course on a 10-point scale, where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent. On average, learners rate trainers' knowledge at 9.3, the delivery of the course at 8.7, and pace of the course at 8.7. In bursary round 1, the content of the course was rated 8.7, but this data was not collected at subsequent rounds. Learners also find the bursary-funded qualifications useful, scoring 9.1 out of 10 on average. However, further analysis by qualification type and provider reveals some differences in satisfaction level.

Learners studying for Level 4 qualifications (introduced in bursary round 4) have lower levels of course satisfaction compared to those studying for Level 2 and Level 3 (Table 5); but it should be noted that Level 4 is a pilot course introduced in bursary

round 4. There are no statistically significant differences between the Level 2 Award or Certificate.

Table 5: Average course satisfaction level by qualification studied.

Aspect of the course	Level 4 Qualifications	Level 3 Qualifications	Level 2 Qualifications
Trainers' knowledge	8.0	9.5	9.4
Course delivery	6.3	8.8	8.7
Pace of course	6.0	8.9	8.7

Source: NYA Learner Evaluation Survey

Suggested improvements

RYWUs, training providers, YWOs and youth workers are largely satisfied with the training, in terms of leading to formal youth work qualifications and other training and resources funded by the CG (short courses, information and resources, and the Hub). The offer is perceived to be fit for purpose, and adaptive to changing circumstances in the youth work sector and the issues faced by young people. However, RYWU and training providers suggest some ways in which the YWB's training could be further strengthened:

– Promote pathways through the qualifications, including bursary-funded qualifications at Level 1 and Level 4.

– Develop guidance on prioritising who should be awarded a bursary-funded place (when the number of applications exceeds the number of available places).

– Consider changes to the assessment model, to include more observational work.

– Strengthen the supervision process (develop mentoring or buddying schemes in addition to formal workplace supervision), to ensure that learners receive more feedback on their work, and to prevent drop-out.

– Expand the CPD offer, e.g. information sources and short courses, to smaller YWOs, especially those in the VCSE sector, or for those who are unable to commit to longer courses.

5. Impact of training and development

This section draws on the MI, LES, and the primary surveys and interviews with youth workers and YWOs, in order to explore the training's impact on the youth work workforce and on service delivery.

Impact on the youth work workforce

Professionalisation and diversification of the workforce

Over the last four years, 1,431 learners have achieved professional youth work qualifications with support from the YWB. The scheme is perceived to have the most impact on paid staff, with 90% of leaders / managers agreeing that the YWB has enabled this group to gain a recognised qualification, compared with 34% who agree it has enabled volunteers to achieve the same. However, these percentages are based on low respondent numbers, and the differences may reflect the composition of the YWOs' workforces.[7]

Training providers emphasise the important role that training fulfils, in terms of promoting and embedding the national occupational standards for youth work, to ensure a greater degree of standardised practice.

> We have our national occupational standards. I think the bursary programme has been good because it's allowed us to recognise and present to a lot of people in the field that we have professional standards, and that youth work has not been de-professionalised.
>
> **Training provider**

Although it is not possible to measure change in the characteristics of the workforce based on current data, evidence gathered as part of the evaluation suggests that activity funded through the CG and YWB has a positive impact on the diversity of the qualified workforce. The MI (Chapter 4) suggests that a significant proportion of these learners are delivering youth work in the VCSE sector (62%); are achieving their first youth work qualification (79%); and are drawn from diverse communities, with representation amongst young people (58%), those living in deprived areas (34%), and those from ethnic minorities (19%).

Almost two-thirds (63%) of leaders / managers whose staff had accessed the YWB agree that it has helped to increase the diversity of their staff who have recognised youth work qualifications. According to training providers, this is because the scheme has widened access to people who work with young people on more specialised issues – such as SEND, housing, mental health, and LGBTQIA+ – as well as those from communities that are under-represented in the workforce.

> We've been going into the cities – talking to organisations and building trust. After five years, we have a big enough group of Asian practitioners who are willing to engage in a process of being qualified. I've got an amazing training provider there – none of the training is electronic because the women don't have access to any of the portals or devices. So, we've had to do everything

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[7] Analysis of the MI reveals that 66% of bursary recipients were in paid employment, 18% were volunteers, 1% were students, and 3% were recorded as 'other'. Employment status data was not gathered for the remaining 13%.

handwritten for people for whom English is not their first language, it might be their third or fourth. It's taken us five years to get a cohort together, but now, with the bursary I can say 'Come and do this training, look, this is how you would benefit.'

RYWU

YWB funding has also opened up a pathway into youth work for young people who have previously benefited from youth provision. Often, this cohort does not have any prior educational qualifications, and so the training helps them to gain these, alongside building a professional identity. In the longer term, the training is perceived to support progression into higher-level study, paid roles, and ultimately into leadership positions.

We're supporting young people that have come through youth provision. It's helping them make that transition to youth work. And I think having a qualification, having the volunteering scheme, has helped to develop that pathway for them.

Leader / manager in a YWO

Impact on knowledge

Almost three-quarters of leaders / managers of YWOs with staff who have undertaken bursary-funded training (72%) report its positive impact on their staff's knowledge, skills and performance. This is reflected in the findings from the youth worker survey. Almost all youth workers that had undertaken training (n = 26) report a high or moderate impact on their understanding of what youth work is. This understanding increases youth workers' confidence in explaining to others what they do and why they do it; YWOs report that this is important when bidding for funding to sustain projects and services.

Interviewees also state that their knowledge of safeguarding and risk management has also improved because of engaging with the NYA Safeguarding and Risk Management Hub. This knowledge contributes to the delivery of safer and more effective services:

I gained insights into safeguarding legislation, confidentiality requirements, and the importance of maintaining professional boundaries. This knowledge ensures that my practice as a youth worker is ethically sound and legally compliant.

Youth worker

I feel more aware of safeguarding and protecting the vulnerable. My confidence has grown when dealing with safeguarding issues – I know what the procedures are and who to report to.

Youth worker

Impact on skills and professional practice

The vast majority of respondents to the LES report that the bursary-funded training has had a very positive impact on their work (rated 9.1 out of 10 on average). Additionally, 94% agree that they feel more confident to carry out their role sufficiently.

Of the 26 bursary recipients who responded to the survey, most perceive that bursary-funded training had a high / moderate impact on:

- confidence to reflect on practice and make changes (n = 22)

- confidence in delivering youth work activities (n = 22)

- ability to expand practice into other areas of expertise (n = 20).

Training leads to the acquisition of new skills, which enables practitioners to take on more responsibility in their roles. In the qualitative interviews, youth workers report that they are now able to work more independently, including planning and leading activities. Others have developed a range of skills, such as people management, project management (including conducting risk assessments), and communication skills (including presentations, IT and social media).

> They've learnt the project management side of things and how to sustain our programme long term. It's more than two years with the trainer, and they've got an opportunity to shape the services that they engage with.

> **Leader / manager**

Career progression

The potential educational and career benefits of the bursary-funded qualifications for youth workers are captured in the LES. They were discussed further in the qualitative interviews, where the following key benefits are identified:

- opportunity to re-enter learning for those without five 'good' GCSEs

- opportunity to combine learning with work experience

- enhanced performance in workers' current role, especially independent working and posing challenges to existing ways of working

- clarity about which area of youth work to enter or specialise in, e.g. a pastoral role in education, hospital support work

- more opportunities to progress into a paid youth work role

- more opportunities to progress into higher education

- better opportunities to train and supervise other workers and volunteers

- opportunities to apply for promotions and leadership / management positions following Level 3 Diploma.

These impacts are also recognised by leaders / managers in YWOs:

> It's given young people and young adults a pathway for education that they would never have had, it's given them another opportunity to grow their education.

> **Leader / manager in a YWO**

Although the aim of the YWB is to train and professionalise the youth work workforce, the qualifications are perceived to have utility in other related sectors:

> The knowledge covered has really helped me and my youth work … and I also can take this qualification into any job working with young people.

> **Youth worker**

Confidence in their role

Drawing on data from the LES, almost all of those obtaining a qualification report improvements in their practice:

- 95% agree that 'I have a better understanding to support me to carry out my role with the young people I work with'.
- 94% agree that 'I am better able to meet the needs of the young people I work with'
- 94% agree that 'I am more confident in building professional relationships with young people'.

This standpoint is also reinforced in the youth worker survey: most of the 26 bursary recipients state that bursary-funded training has had a high or moderate impact across the following areas:

- My understanding of young people and their needs (n = 22)
- My ability to build meaningful relationships with young people (n = 22)
- My ability to support a young person to achieve their goals and ambitions (n = 21).

Youth workers draw on the learning and insight from the training to adapt the way they engage with young people. They are now more confident in dealing with challenging behaviour, and are subsequently seeing changes in how young people respond to them:

I have developed skills which enable me to communicate effectively with young people whilst establishing professional boundaries.

Youth worker

Impact on service delivery

The evaluation evidence suggests a correlation between CG and YWB-funded activity and positive impacts on service delivery in the youth work sector across four key areas: organisational capacity; coverage and inclusivity; quality and effectiveness; and safety and safeguarding.

Organisational capacity

Almost all of the leaders / managers whose staff have accessed bursary-funded qualifications agree that the bursary has expanded the skills and capacity of their workforce (55% strongly agree, 39% agree).

The qualitative interviews highlight that bursary-funded training has increased staff competency, with more staff now able to plan and deliver activities autonomously, which increases capacity for delivery.

Some YWOs are also providing consultancy services, drawing on the learning and insight they have gained through their own training and development. They are helping to develop the capacity of other YWOs by sharing knowledge, and reviewing policies and procedures for health and safety, risk management and safeguarding.

Coverage and inclusivity

Eight out of ten (82%) leaders / managers whose staff have accessed bursary-funded qualifications agree that the bursary has enabled staff in their organisation to offer a wider range of support to children and young people (39% strongly agree, 43% agree).

Since undertaking bursary-funded training, most of the 26 youth workers surveyed have started delivering or are now delivering more work in a number of areas ([Figure 6](#)).

Figure 6: Areas youth workers are working in as a result of undertaking bursary-funded qualifications. Figures shown are number of responses due to the small base.

Area	Number of responses
Supporting mental health and wellbeing	14
Supporting physical health and activities	8
Responding to safeguarding queries	7
None of the above	7
Identity based work	6
Youth employment, training, skills for work	6
Supporting young carers	4
Child criminal exploitation (CCE)	3
Child sexual exploitation (CSE)	3
Supporting care experienced CYP	3
Responding to violence and crime	3
Prefer not to say	2
Other (please specify)	1

Source: Youth worker survey

Number of responses = 26

Survey question: *Which, if any, of these areas of targeted youth work have you started delivering, or delivered more of, because of the skills and knowledge gained during your course?*

The interviews with leaders / managers and youth workers provide additional insights into how the YWB funded training has helped their organisation deliver more inclusive and accessible provision. This includes training on approaching hard-to-reach groups; how to communicate with young people and their families to ensure inclusivity; and developing youth voice, to ensure young people's views are heard and reflected in the design of provision.

> I learnt strategies to create inclusive environments, challenge discrimination, and celebrate differences. This outcome allows me to create an atmosphere of respect and acceptance where all young people feel valued and included.
>
> **Youth worker**

Quality and effectiveness

The youth work workforce and the organisations responsible for coordinating and delivering training articulate how the resources, training and qualifications contribute towards improving the quality and effectiveness of services.

Almost half (47%) of leaders / managers in organisations where staff have accessed bursary-funded training report that it has had a 'high impact' on the effectiveness of service delivery, with another 41% identifying a 'moderate' impact.

According to training providers, one of its benefits for service delivery is to give youth workers the skills and evidence, as well as the opportunity, to reflect on their practice.

> The more we can get people reflecting and talking about their practice, the better equipped they are. The bigger the toolbox that they can pull from, the more impact they will have on the young people's lives that they're working with.
>
> **Training provider**

Insight from the interviews with youth workers suggests that the bursary-funded training does indeed have a positive impact on their confidence to reflect on their practice and make changes to the way they approach their work.

> Qualifications give you the theory behind the practice. It certainly makes you pause and think, 'Am I doing this right? Should I be doing this? Do I need assistance? Is this a conversation I need to have with the wider team?' All those sorts of things, that's the value of it.
>
> **Youth worker**

This confidence, along with the knowledge and skills gained, is perceived to enhance the service that youth workers provide to young people:

> I can deliver sessions with more knowledge on the issues young people may be facing, allowing me to give better information and guidance to young people.
>
> **Youth worker**

> I really enjoyed learning about adolescence and how this period affects young people, their relationships and behaviours, and how we as youth workers are able to support them throughout this time. It has boosted my confidence and given me the knowledge to ensure I am doing my best to support the young people in my community.
>
> **Youth worker**

Training on the concept of youth-led services has enabled practitioners to develop strategies for active listening, and to create opportunities for young people to share their views on youth services. Youth workers and YWOs perceive that services are being enhanced by embedding the youth voice and youth participation into their work.

> I already had a broad knowledge of youth participation; however, following this [training], I have now further embedded this is my work.
>
> **Youth worker**

Safety and risk management

The evaluation evidence demonstrates that information and training is contributing to the development of safer services. Half (50%) of leaders / managers working in

YWOs where staff had accessed bursary-funded training believe the training has had a 'high impact' on 'improving the safety of service delivery', with another three in ten (31%) perceiving a moderate impact.

The qualitative research provides evidence of safer services, as youth workers adapt their practice. Examples of how practices have changed as a result of the training and resources include:

– reviewing and updating policies and procedures, especially those relating to health and safety and safeguarding

– preparing risk assessments

– establishing healthy professional boundaries between youth workers and young people

– feeling more confident in spotting the signs of risky behaviour, abuse and neglect, and how to initiate conversations on these topics with young people

– an increased understanding of how to respond to and report safeguarding issues

– implementing techniques for effectively responding to behaviour from young people which workers may find challenging

– creating safer environments for youth work, e.g. being clear on rules and expectations, better safeguarding of sessions, and providing space for confidential chats.

6. Mapping the youth sector and workforce

Census of YWOs

The Census is an annual national survey regarding the state of the youth work sector in England, funded through the CG. It collects data from organisations that deliver youth services across all parts of the youth sector (NYA, 2024a).

Launched in 2021, the Census was created to gain a better understanding of the sector, which was previously little-known (as discussed in Chapter 2). It is the only tool of its kind, and provides robust data and insights, to give stakeholders a knowledge of funding gaps and local priorities. The dataset is regularly shared with DCMS-funded stakeholders to inform a range of related research activity.

Respondents are asked to provide information on budgets and expenditure, sources of income, location and types of activities delivered; along with the characteristics of paid staff and volunteers, including qualification levels, among other elements. The Census is hosted on the NYA's Youth Work One website (NYA, 2024a).

The Census data is analysed by the NYA to inform a 'State of the Nation' report, which details the most common issues and topics YWOs are dealing with in any particular year. The NYA runs additional activities on the data, delivered independently of the CG. These include interactive digital maps, which are also hosted on Youth Work One. At the start of the evaluation period, there were 839 organisations in the Census. Since the inception of the Census in 2021, the NYA has received submissions from 2,300 organisations (NYA, 2024a).

Level of awareness and completion

Nearly three-quarters of the surveyed leaders / managers (72%) report that their organisation completed the Census; just 6% were not aware of it. The high level of awareness and engagement with the Census is likely to reflect the composition of the sampling frame which included all (n = 839) YWOs listed on the Census at that time. Nevertheless, it also indicates a willingness among these organisations to engage with the Census.

Over two-thirds (68%) of leaders / managers are in favour of the Census in principle, but there are mixed views about its value among both leaders / managers and youth workers. Only one in three (32%) leaders / managers who have engaged with the Census think it is 'highly valuable', with most (56%) saying it is 'of some value'. Only 10% believe the Census to be 'not very valuable'. Respondents from the youth worker survey rate the Census more favourably – 44% think it is 'highly valuable' and a further 46% perceive it is 'of some value', while 7% believe it is 'not very valuable' (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Perceptions of the value of the Census.
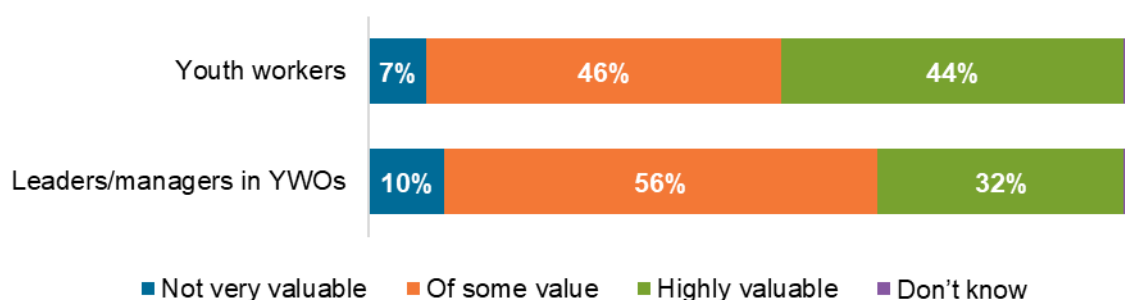
Source: YWO Survey Base = 112
Youth Worker Survey Base = 54
Survey question: *How valuable do you find the NYA training, resources and support your organisation has accessed?* (Census)

Benefits of engaging with the NYA Census

Interviewees perceive that the main benefit of the Census is that it contributes to an accurate picture of the youth work sector. With the proliferation and fragmentation of youth services, the Census enables the NYA to understand the size and composition of the sector. Interviewees note how they are part of the 'bigger picture', and choosing to engage with the Census helps to map out the opportunities and challenges the industry is facing.

There is also broad agreement among leaders and managers that the Census will benefit their organisation. Three-fifths (59%) think that the Census will provide insights to support policy and delivery, while slightly less than half (49%) believe that it will help them plan training and CPD. Widespread engagement enhances connections and networking, as local organisations understand what provision occurs within their counties and wider regions.

> The power of networks, communication. Checking in with partnerships, I think, is really valuable and important. We all know people that need to be better connected.

Leader / manager in YWO

Drawbacks to the Census

Insights from the qualitative interviews with those working in the sector suggest that some organisations do not understand the purpose of the Census and thus perceive it to be of limited use.

> I'm not sure what the purpose of it is at this moment in time. Is it a mapping exercise? Is it about understanding staffing? Is it about understanding product purchase? Is there a financial element to that?

Leader / manager

Lack of understanding about the Census is likely to deter YWOs from completing it, particularly when time and resources are limited, and other organisations are also asking organisations to provide similar information. Nearly half (47%) of leaders / managers report in the survey that their organisation has already provided similar information to other agencies, such as funding bodies, auditors, research companies and parent organisations.

Interviewees also perceive that there are gaps in the current information and coverage. For example, one leader states that questions within the Census are not relevant to their detached youth work focus. A lack of perceived relevance could also reduce motivation to keep the details up to date.

A further perceived drawback of the Census relates to the accessibility of information. Some stakeholders, including leaders and managers of YWOs, report that they are unable to access and use the data. Those who do use it note a lack of detail on what is happening within their local area. While the Census as it currently stands does allow national stakeholders to develop a general picture of the youth work sector, they perceive that its potential is not being fully realised – for example, in the planning of local provision and training.

> So, it was kind of like we're giving you this information, but we can't actually utilise it ourselves for the work we need to do. That was a real shame, it was a missed opportunity.
>
> **Leader / manager in YWO**

Youth Worker Register

One of the key objectives of the CG is to maintain the Register of qualified youth workers in England. As it stands, the Register is currently open to youth work professionals with a Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC)-recognised qualification at a Level 6 or above; this decision was taken at the time due to the CG's limited funding allocation to the Register. Those currently studying for their qualification are also accepted. There is an ambition for the Register to also be open to those who have a JNC-recognised Level 3 Certificate or Level 3 Diploma in the future (NYA, 2024b).

The Register is free for individuals in the youth work sector; a notable difference from other professional registers (see the comparison table in Appendix 3). To be accepted, youth workers must submit an image of their qualification and DBS certification, as well as details of two referees from their current or most recent employer. Members must ensure they record at least 30 hours of CPD or learning each year to maintain their registration. At the start of the evaluation period, there were 140 individuals on the Register. As of February 2025, there are 235 full members, and a further 446 in the process of applying.

Level of awareness of the Register

The survey findings suggest that awareness of the Register among youth workers is currently limited, with just under half (49%) reporting this knowledge. There is slightly greater awareness among leaders and managers, as nearly three-fifths (58%) note that their organisation is aware of the Register.
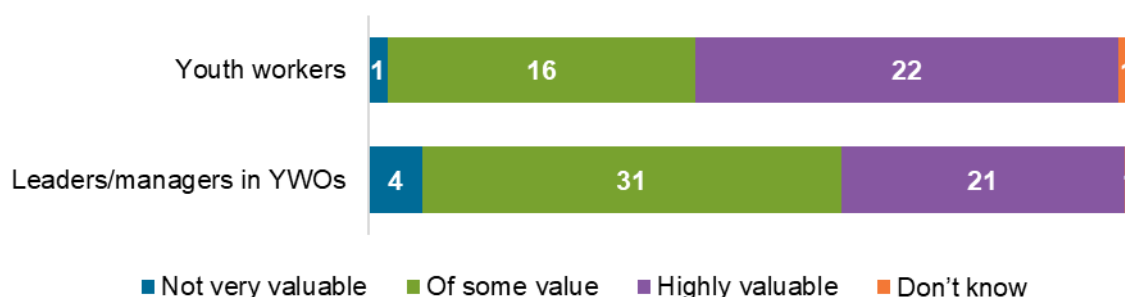
The fact that the Register is only for those who hold or are studying for a qualification recognised by the JNC at Level 6 or above could be limiting awareness among the wider workforce. Further analysis suggests high take-up among the target audience: of the 62 respondents who are qualified at Level 6 or 7 and therefore eligible to apply, 55 are either on the Register, in the process of applying, or intending to apply.

Perceived value of the Register

The Register is described as valuable by those who are aware of it. Of the 57 leaders or managers of organisations where at least one staff member is on or applying to the Register, 52 (91%) think it is of at least some value. Youth workers who have

engaged with Register have slightly more favourable opinions than leaders or managers, with over half perceiving it as 'highly valuable' (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Perceptions of the value of the Register. Figures shown are number of responses due to the small bases.

Legend: ■ Not very valuable ■ Of some value ■ Highly valuable ■ Don't know

Youth workers: 1 | 16 | 22 | 1
Leaders/managers in YWOs: 4 | 31 | 21 | 1

Source: YWO Survey Base = 57
Youth Worker Survey Base = 40
Survey question: *How valuable do you find the NYA training, resources and support your organisation has accessed?* (Register)

Benefits of the Register

A core benefit of the Register is perceived to be its potential to improve professional recognition and standards. Three-fifths of leaders and managers (59%) agree that the Register considers the professional recognition of youth workers' skills and competencies.

The most common reason youth workers give for applying or intending to apply to the Register is 'to recognise my professional identity' (49%). Many interviewees believe that formal registration will place them on a par with other professionals, such as social workers and teachers, by formalising their training and qualifications.

> I think it's a really good idea [to have a register]. It's something that I can't see a reason not to engage with it, whether that's through opportunities to network, through training and ongoing development, and to professionalise youth work, which historically maybe wasn't seen as being as professional as other sectors.
>
> **Youth worker**

The Register is perceived to contribute to the development of a more comprehensive picture of the level of skills and qualifications in the youth work sector across England. The data can help to identify where there might be a shortfall in skills and qualifications, to inform the targeting of funding and initiatives to raise or maintain professional standards.

Drawbacks of the Register

Interviewees most frequently cite the current eligibility criteria as the greatest drawback of the Register – in particular, the criterion that youth workers must have a JNC-recognised qualification at Level 6 or 7. Multiple interviewees note how there are many 'exceptional' youth workers with a wealth of experience, but who lack a Level 6 qualification; as a result, they are unable to be professionally recognised. There is some anxiety that those without a Level 6 qualification will be considered less 'professional'. Interviewees suggest that the qualification threshold should be reduced to Level 3, to enable greater numbers of youth workers to be registered, and

to develop a more accurate picture of the sector. As noted above, there are plans to enable those with a JNC Level 3 qualification or above to apply.

> The Register only allows for people to be on there who have qualifications. Our youth workers have years of experience, but no qualifications, but cannot apply to the Register. This seems wrong and so doesn't give a true picture of actual youth workers around the country.
>
> **Leader / manager in YWO**

There is also frustration that those with other qualifications (for example, degree-level qualifications in other subjects, such as youth justice) are also excluded from the Register.

> I think time-served youth workers with extensive experience and qualifications in other disciplines need to be considered in terms of the Youth Worker Register. The possibility of a conversion course, which is offered in other professions, could be an option. It would be a concern that these individuals may struggle to make progress in their careers if the Register is used for recruitment, meaning that a huge amount of skills and experience could leave the sector, if not addressed.
>
> **Leader / manager in YWO**

As with the Census, some people in the sector are unclear about the purpose of the Register and question its value as a result. Certain interviewees are unsure whether it is a badge of recognition, a vehicle for upholding professional standards, or a safeguarding protocol. This lack of clarity about its purpose plays a role in why some who are eligible have chosen not to apply.

> Nobody is using it as any form of currency – is it a driving test or a swimming badge? If you can't drive, they take your licence off you. If you drown, they don't take your swimming badge off you. Nobody is checking on tenders to say, 'Do you have JNC staff, are they registered with the NYA?' It has no teeth.
>
> **Leader / manager in YWO**

This has also led some, especially leaders and managers, to question whether it is needed. As a result, one interviewee describes it as 'another administration process'. The mixed response to the Register among interviewees is highlighted by the fact that only a small majority of both youth workers (59%) and leaders and managers (56%) agree they are 'in favour of the Register'.

7. Conclusion

The youth work sector in England has undergone a significant transformation over recent years, in the context of changes to the way youth work is funded and delivered. These changes have had implications for the size and composition of the workforce. YWOs are increasingly reliant on part-time and volunteer staff, who typically do not possess nationally recognised youth work qualifications, and budgets for training have been squeezed. Investment in training and development – including mechanisms to enable those working in or aspiring to a career in youth work to achieve relevant qualifications – are therefore essential to ensure that youth workers are equipped to deliver safe and effective services to young people, now and in the future.

CG and YWB funding from DCMS enable the NYA to work with RYWUs, training providers and other sector bodies, to support the development of a professional workforce for the youth work sector. Activities include:

– written information and resources to guide the youth work curriculum, practice, and occupational standards

– a specialist Safeguarding and Risk Management Hub

– short training courses, webinars and roadshows

– bursary-funded training.

Resources and training

The survey data highlights that NYA's resources compare favourably with those provided by other youth sector bodies. It is valued by YWOs and youth workers alike and regarded as useful by those who engage with it. YWOs draw on its resources, guidance and bespoke advice, particularly from the Hub, to ensure their policies and procedures are up to date and comply with the latest legislation, and their services are safe. The resources are also used to inform pedagogy and practice, plan youth work activities, and support internal staff training and development.

Since 2020, the YWB has enabled approximately 1,500 practitioners to achieve a recognised youth work qualification; a further 1,000 have benefited from access to some training, even if they did not complete the assessment process. Cost is identified as one of the main barriers to training, and many of those who received a bursary would not have undertaken the training without it. Although existing data on the characteristics of the youth work workforce is limited, insights from the evaluation suggest that groups that are under-represented in the sector are accessing the bursary; as a result, the qualified workforce is becoming more diverse and representative of the young people it supports.

The YWB and wider training offer is effectively equipping practitioners with the knowledge and skills needed to address gaps and shortages in the sector, by building practitioners' confidence and supporting them in developing networks and sharing good practice. There is evidence of youth workers making tangible changes to their practice as a direct result of the learning and insight from the training: for example, when dealing with challenging behaviour. These outcomes are all helping to increase the sector's capacity to deliver services that effectively respond to the

increasingly complex issues young people face. Safer and more effective services subsequently lead to improved outcomes for young people.

The qualifications and training are also supporting the development of clearer progression pathways into and through youth work. As such, the YWB and short courses have the potential to help attract and retain skilled youth workers over the longer term.

Although satisfaction with the current bursary model is high, and many aspects of the delivery are identified as working well, the evaluation has revealed some areas for further development. In relation to the YWB, the application process, relationships with NYA and the RYWUs, and the quality and efficacy are all rated highly. The flexible delivery model, including remote and hybrid approaches, is also effective for overcoming geographical barriers, although there is a strong preference for face-to-face delivery where possible. Stakeholders also identify scope to improve awareness of the YWB scheme and transparency regarding how places are allocated. Despite the investment in training to increase the number of assessors, the scheme's availability, as well as access to supervision for learners, remains a challenge. Improving access to supervision is important, as lack of supervision and support from line managers, along with competing priorities at work and at home, are the primary reasons why learners withdraw or fail.

The Census and Register

The Census and the Register are still gaining traction in the sector. Although there is a degree of support for both, the evidence suggests that more could be done to raise awareness of their purpose and value, in order to achieve greater engagement and buy-in. NYA colleagues feel that they could do more with the Census, if discrete funding beyond the proportion allocated from the CG was made available. Evidence from other sectors provides an indication of their potential, in terms of fostering a stronger professional identity and maintaining high professional standards for the youth work sector in the longer term. This is important, as those working in the sector believe that a strong professional identity is critical for developing the talent pipeline needed to sustain youth services and deliver positive outcomes for young people. Some within the sector believe that engagement with the Census, as well as its impact, would be enhanced if more nuanced, localised information about the types of youth work delivered was captured and shared with the sector, to inform planning. Similarly, there is support for extending eligibility for the Register – for example, to those with youth work qualifications below Level 6, and with degrees in associated fields.

Considerations

To further support the growth and development of the youth workforce, the following points could be considered:

– How to extend YWB so that unmet demand for funded qualifications can be met, and the capacity and the diversity of the workforce further increased.

– The ways in which volunteers can be encouraged and further supported to take up formal training or continue with qualifications, such as through accredited short courses, or a module-based approach to Level 2 and 3 qualifications.

– Further guidance for YWOs, to ensure that bursary recipients are suitably supported in their studies when applying principles directly to their work.

– Reviewing the performance of training providers who deliver youth work qualifications and offering further support to those with a completion rate of below 50%.

– Ways of sharing the intelligence gathered through the Census with regional and local networks, to support the planning of services and training.

– How to raise awareness, and clarify the purpose and benefits of the Census and Register, for the sector to achieve greater engagement and buy-in.

– Consider the feasibility of expanding the eligibility criteria for the Register, to include experienced professionals without qualifications, qualified professionals in related fields, and those with youth work qualifications at Level 3 and above.

Appendix 1: Evaluation methodology

This appendix sets out the methodology for the evaluation and reflects on the strengths and limitations of the approach.

Stage 1: Scoping and planning (December 2023 – March 2024)

To inform the planning and design of the evaluation, CFE undertook four scoping interviews with National Youth Agency (NYA) employees in strategic and operational roles, to further our understanding of the funded activities. Additionally, a desk-based review was undertaken, which included:

– a review of secondary data collected by NYA

– a rapid evidence assessment regarding the use and impact of workplace bursaries in the UK

– a review of selected UK industries that have implemented professional registers.

The scoping interviews and desk-based review informed the development of an evaluation plan, which helped to focus and further develop the research questions that were outlined in the Invitation to Tender. In consultation with the DCMS steering group, the evaluation plan was approved prior to the development of the primary research tools.

Review of secondary data

NYA collects management information (MI) for all learners who start a Youth Worker Bursary (YWB)-funded qualification in each annual funding round. The data fields include the demographic and occupational profile of the learner; the qualification applied for; the training provider delivering the training; and completion status. The quality of this dataset is high; data has been collected for every learner in receipt of a bursary since 2019, and most fields are complete. There is some missing data for the fields 'highest youth work qualification achieved' and 'type of employment'. Two regional providers submitted fewer returns than the others.

NYA designed and disseminated the LES, via training providers, to those who attended bursary-funded qualification courses. This survey has a good response rate, given that it is a paper-based survey distributed via the training providers; 30% of those participating in bursary-funded qualifications across rounds 1–4 completed this survey. The survey asks questions about course satisfaction and the impact of the qualification on skills and practice. A drawback of this survey is that it does not ask about course completion; thus, the survey responses cannot be analysed by whether the learner achieved a qualification, withdrew, failed, or extended their period of study. Another limitation of this survey is that it does not capture the mode of course delivery, such as face-to-face, online or blended.

Both the MI and LES datasets were made available to CFE to draw upon in the evaluation. These datasets were anonymised by NYA and then sent to CFE via DataSend, a system allowing the secure transfer of data.

Rapid evidence assessment

The rapid evidence assessment considered whether the availability of workplace bursaries in the UK leads to an uptake in training and the diversification of

workforces. The literature search focused on publicly available grey literature published since 2014. Search terms were developed to cover the specific research questions:

– How are bursaries used by different sectors to address recruitment, retention and workforce development challenges?

– Does the availability of industry-based bursaries influence the uptake of training?

– Does the availability of bursaries lead to the diversification of learners and practitioners?

The terms were refined after initial testing, to ensure the results were relevant and reliable. In addition, websites of relevant organisations were searched, including government departments, professional bodies, industry training boards, sector skills councils, and research agencies. The initial search identified 109 sources which were screened for relevance. The 20 most pertinent sources were then reviewed in depth.

The findings of this review are discussed in Appendix 2.

A review of selected UK industries that have implemented professional registers

The desk-based review investigated selected UK industries that have introduced professional registers, including the youth work sectors in Scotland and Wales. Other industries included scientists, careers advisers, and psychologists and psychotherapists.

The findings of this review are outlined in Appendix 3.

Stage 2: Primary Research (April – September 2024)

The primary research involved surveys and follow-up interviews with youth work organisations (YWOs) and youth workers, and qualitative research with programme delivery staff who were delivering youth work qualifications funded through the YWB scheme.

Survey research

Two surveys were developed: the **YWO survey** for leaders and managers working or volunteering in YWOs in England, and the **youth worker survey** for adults working or volunteering in the field of youth work in England. The surveys captured data about:

The organisation and individual. It was not possible to link the MI to the survey data because the correct permissions were not in place. The surveys therefore included demographic and organisational profiling questions, to enable differences in opinion to be explored in the data analysis. For the YWO survey this included their role; length of time in the youth work profession; sector worked in; the type of youth work engaged in, e.g. universal, targeted or detached; and the number of qualified and unqualified youth workers in the organisation. The youth worker survey included questions on age, gender, disability, and neurodiversity.

Knowledge and engagement with the NYA. The survey captured respondents' awareness, engagement with, and perceptions of the resources, training and support delivered across all the strands of activity funded by the Core Grant (CG) and YWB.

Motivations for investing in training and support, including the relative importance of fully funded training, were explored.

Usefulness of the support, qualifications and training received from NYA. To measure this, the survey questions included a bank of metrics related to knowledge, confidence, skills and capability.

Leaders / managers' and youth workers' confidence in their organisations' ability to deliver safe and effective youth work and to support the needs of young people. Questions were included to capture self-reported change in respondents' confidence in delivering safe and effective youth work services for young people since engaging with NYA, and changes in the profile and qualifications of their workforces since the introduction of bursary-funded qualifications.

Cognitive testing

To ensure data quality, both survey instruments underwent **cognitive tests** with users, to assess comprehension, recall and judgement. The evaluation team worked collaboratively with NYA to select a sample of **12 youth workers** and **8 YWOs** to assess the questionnaires. Respondents were incentivised with a £25 shopping voucher or donation to a chosen charity. Each participant completed the survey independently and then met online with a researcher using a shared screen, to explore participants' understanding of the questions and their interpretation of the response options. This was a useful process, and several survey questions were revised in response to the findings.

Survey sampling

CFE's proposal assumed that the two surveys would be disseminated to contacts on the Census and the Register). Based on information available at this time, the sample population was estimated to be c. 6,000. In Spring 2023, prior to the survey launch, the actual number of YWOs that had engaged with the Census in the last two years was 970, and the number of youth workers on the Register was 129. To ensure the surveys had the widest reach into the sector, the sampling frame was extended. Table 6 summarises the sources used to build the sampling frame. Once these lists were collated, duplicate email addresses were removed.

Table 6: Sampling frame for the YWO and youth worker surveys.

Source	Sampling frame size (after de-duplication)
National Youth Sector Census (key contacts from organisations engaged since 2021)	870
Youth Worker Register	129
YWB recipients who had consented to contact for research purposes	640
NYA Workforce Survey respondents who had consented to contact for research purposes	492
Roadshow / event participants who expressed interest in the research	35
Distribution list for the NYA monthly newsletter	c. 8,100*
Total sampling frame for YWO and YW surveys	**10,266**

* It is possible that this database contained individuals who were also included in the other data sources used.

Recipients of both surveys were encouraged to share the link with others in their networks, to further maximise their reach and the diversity of respondents.

Limitations of the data

Currently, there is no comprehensive data on the composition of the youth work sector; thus, it is not possible to assess whether the sample frame, or the sample achieved, are representative. However, because the sample frame consists almost exclusively of individuals who have had some form of prior engagement with NYA, an element of bias in the sample is likely. Those who engage with NYA regularly as a primary source of information, training and support may hold more positive views than those who choose to engage with other organisations, such as the Centre for Youth at the YMCA George Williams College, the National Association of Boys and Girls, National Youth Advocacy Service, and UK Youth. A snowballing sampling strategy was implemented to help reduce bias towards those who had engaged with NYA.

Despite efforts to maximise the response rate (see further details below), the achieved samples for both the YWO and YW surveys were relatively modest. Small bases for key sub-groups, such as YWB recipients, limited the validity and effectiveness of the statistical analysis. Bivariate analysis to identify differences in the perceptions, experiences and impacts by sub-group was not feasible, and as a result the findings are based on the sample as a whole.

Evidence of the impact of the CG and YWB is based on respondents' perceptions. The views of different stakeholders have been triangulated to strengthen this evidence. However, it is not possible to attribute impact or establish causality based on this data.

Survey dissemination

The surveys were programmed in Forsta, an online survey platform offering the required functions (progress bar and secure links) and features – such as different question types, survey routing, and customisation (e.g. use of logos) – that help to enhance response rates as well as data quality.

Permissions to share personal data with third-party research organisations were in place for those who had completed the National Youth Sector Census. Hence, CFE distributed the links to both the YWO and youth worker surveys to this group, attaching a research flyer to explain the purpose of the research and benefits of participation. For the other sources, permissions were not in place; thus, NYA distributed the survey links and flyers on CFE's behalf.

Both surveys included screening questions to ensure that the right organisations and individuals completed each survey. Clear definitions of youth work were built into these questions. Both surveys comprised predominantly closed questions, such as pre-coded single and multiple response questions and Likert scales, to minimise length.

The YWO survey was completed by leaders and managers with joint or shared responsibility for training and development. Leaders and managers were also eligible

to complete the youth worker survey, aimed at all paid workers and volunteers in the sector.

Fieldwork period

The surveys were conducted in the field between 21 May and 31 July 2024.

Boosting response rates

A communications campaign was developed to mitigate low response rates to the surveys.

In the weeks prior to survey launch, the survey was promoted at NYA events and roadshows using a research flyer, and the email addresses of 35 people interested in receiving the survey link were collated. A feature article about the surveys appeared in the May edition of the NYA monthly newsletter, to coincide with survey launch on 21 May.

The UK General Election was announced on May 22nd, the day after the survey launch. During the pre-election period (from May 22nd to July 4th), communications and survey reminders were paused at DCMS's request to ensure compliance with the Government's general election guidance for civil servants. Although survey responses were received during the period when communications were suspended, it is possible that pausing communications during the pre-election period had an effect on the overall response rates, which were lower than anticipated (Table 7).

After the election, CFE and NYA sent reminder emails directly to respondents in the sample frame, and NYA continued to promote the survey at events. The reminder email increased the number of survey responses, especially among youth workers.

Table 7: Survey response rates pre-and post-election

Survey	Surveys completed in first 24 hours after launch (prior to election announcement)	Surveys completed during pre-election period	Surveys completed in the post-election period	Total
YWO survey	85 (37%)	109 (48%)	34 (15%)	228 (100%)
YW survey	57 (23%)	96 (39%)	92 (38%)	245 (100%)

Follow-up interviews

A recall question in both surveys was used to identify a sample of **15 YWOs** and **10 youth workers** (including qualification drop-outs and bursary recipients) who would take part in **follow-up interviews** to explore the issues in more depth. The youth workers were incentivised with a £15 shopping voucher.

Sample profile

The characteristics of the sample suggest that the surveys had good reach into the youth work workforce, with organisations and individuals who represented a wide range of regions, sectors, types of youth work, and use of different agencies supporting the youth work sector.

Table 8: Survey response rates by region.

Region	YWO (Leaders / managers survey)	YW survey
East Midlands	4%	3%
East of England	8%	9%
London	11%	8%
North East	14%	11%
North West	14%	15%
South East	10%	13%
South West	17%	16%
West Midlands	7%	5%
Yorkshire & Humber	11%	19%
Prefer not to say	3%	1%

Table 9: Survey response rates by types of youth work delivered.

Type of youth work	YWO (Leaders / managers survey)	YW survey
Open access	76%	67%
Detached / street-based	53%	45%
Targeted group work	50%	34%
Targeted one-to-one casework	48%	44%
Training	32%	23%
Family support service	19%	20%
Consultancy	9%	4%

Table 10: Survey response rates by sectors worked in.

Sectors worked in (multiple response question)	YWO (Leaders / managers survey)	YW survey
Armed forces	2%	4%
Arts and cultural	11%	14%
Emergency services	2%	2%
Education	31%	25%
Faith	8%	7%
Family support / early help	22%	15%
Health	16%	13%
Housing	7%	5%
Local authority	25%	22%
Mental health and wellbeing	43%	32%
Open access youth work	53%	41%
Social action	23%	17%
Sports	18%	15%
Uniformed, e.g. Scouts	4%	6%
Voluntary or community	55%	44%
Youth justice and youth offending	14%	6%
Youth work training, lecturing or assessment	18%	13%
Other	9%	4%

The youth worker survey, open to all who were working or volunteering in youth work, was also completed by a significant proportion of those in leadership and management roles. Overall, across both surveys, there is strong representation from leaders and managers, which is advantageous in the sense that this group has insight into managing and developing workforces; however, this has resulted in fewer than anticipated youth workers and youth support workers in the sample. The evaluation has endeavoured to bolster the views of youth workers by drawing upon the MI data and LES datasets provided by NYA.

Consultation with programme delivery staff

CFE Research conducted qualitative research with several strategic and operational audiences: a focus group with **project leads (up to five regional youth work units);** in-depth interviews (individual or paired depending on the organisational structure) with staff from a sample of **5 YWB providers**; and consultations with **8 wider stakeholders**, such as content creators and providers of the qualifications and wider CPD. The invitation to participate was sent by NYA, co-signed by DCMS, to

assure respondents of the evaluation's legitimacy and independence. CFE Research sent follow-up emails to secure informed consent and arrange the appointments.

A series of semi-structured discussion guides were developed to capture insight into the design and implementation of services and support funded through the CG and YWB. All fieldwork was conducted online (via Teams) or by telephone. The Interviews lasted 45–60 minutes, were audio recorded with permission, and transcribed for quality assurance and analytical purposes.

The topic guides covered the following themes:

– **Design of qualifications and short CPD courses:** The effectiveness of the processes undertaken by stakeholders to design the qualifications and short courses, including agreeing the course content for each level and type of course; preparation of accompanying resources; structure of delivery; methods of assessment; pass thresholds; and alignment between qualification-based and short courses.

– **Promotion of the qualifications and short courses to the sector:** Including supply and demand for different courses, and the associated capacity to deliver; effectiveness of different methods of promoting courses, and the ways in which training providers encouraged YWOs to invest in training; the relative importance of bursary funds in the decision mix; the process for recruiting and signing-up learners.

– **Delivery methods:** Considering the effectiveness of different modes of course delivery, e.g. online, blended and in-person learning; pace of learning; flexibility afforded to learners; the processes that underpin effective management information, survey and reporting requirements, and any associated challenges with collecting this data; and capacity to assess learners' work.

– **Consideration of the extent to which qualifications and short CPD courses are 'fit for purpose':** Assessing how closely matched the course content is to the sector's needs; the ways in which courses enhance practitioners' ability to deliver safe and effective youth services and better meet young people's needs; discussion about how the course content can be developed to better meet the sectors' needs; and opportunities for progression between qualifications.

– **Factors influencing completion and withdrawal from qualification-based courses:** Exploring training providers' perceptions of the factors most closely associated with success, and the reasons behind withdrawal or failure to meet the pass threshold.

Stage 3: Analysis and reporting (October 2024 – March 2025)

Quantitative data analysis

The secondary data from NYA (MI and LES) was collated, cleaned and analysed to assess the reach of the programmes and the extent and nature of the outputs delivered. For the YWO and youth workers surveys, validation was built into the survey design to minimise logic errors and support data cleaning.

The primary and secondary survey datasets were exported into SPSS for checking, back-coding and analysis.

Correlational research investigated the relationship between two or more survey variables; this determined whether a statistical relationship exists between the variables and, if so, the strength and direction of that relationship. Bivariate analysis identified trends and differences between sub-groups of respondents.

Qualitative data analysis

Audio files of interviews were transcribed, and the transcripts were coded and analysed in NVivo. Respondent characteristics were appended to the data, to identify issues of consensus and disagreement by sub-group. The coding framework was informed by concepts in the research questions, and insights from the wider literature reviewed for the desk research.

Data protection and ethics

CFE is registered with the Information Commissioner and has been independently assessed against the Cyber Essentials Scheme Test Specification, having the necessary security technical controls in place to handle datasets. We are audited annually against ISO 27001, most recently in August 2024, and have been certified against this standard since June 2018.

Handling data controlled by NYA

When developing the sampling frame, CFE Research ensured that consent to re-contact for the purposes of research was in place prior to NYA disseminating survey links. Contact information for organisations on the Census will be stored for a period of 12 months after the evaluation contract ends.

CFE Research received pseudonymised MI about YWB recipients and LES respondents. Pseudonymisation means that personal data can no longer be attributed to a specific person, either directly or indirectly, and it limits data protection risks. The analysis of NYA data covered information held on qualifications undertaken and gained, support received, non-disclosive and special category data. We **did not** propose to match this information with any data we collected from surveys and interviews.

Collecting personal data through our surveys and interviews

As personal data was processed for the purposes of the evaluation, all respondents were signposted to **a bespoke privacy notice** to gain informed voluntary consent, and to ensure they understood what data would be collected, and how it would be used and stored.

CFE Research collected some limited personal data during surveys, including name and contact details, so we could re-contact those who agreed to follow-up interviews. This meant that respondents would be personally identifiable within the dataset *only where this data was provided*. This data was collected through surveys using Forsta, which is fully compliant with GDPR and meets the ISO 27001 standard. Forsta's functionality aligns with the Technology Code of Practice and the GDS style guide. Data was saved on CFE's secure, cloud-based platform.

CFE Research gained consent from all respondents to record interviews. Audio recordings were assigned a unique identity code before being uploaded to a secure portal for transcription by our partner, VerbitGo, which is accredited against ISO 27001 and 9001. VerbitGo stores uploaded files in an encrypted Amazon Web Services bucket; files are never downloaded or stored outside this system. VerbitGo

automatically deletes audio files three months after the project end date, and transcriptions after 12 months. The transcripts were saved securely on CFE's IT system on receipt from VerbitGo using the assigned unique identity code. Files were protected and only the assigned CFE evaluation team can access transcripts on our server.

Compliance with ethical guidelines for research

CFE adheres to the Market Research Society Code of Conduct and the Government Social Research Guidance in all aspects of its work, which includes ethical requirements when conducting research and evaluation. These are mostly covered above by ensuring the research should have a clear and defined public benefit (GSR Principle 1); that research should adhere to data protection regulations and the secure handling of personal data (Principle 3); and that participation is based on informed consent (Principle 4). We ensured that all respondents gave their full and informed consent to participate (irrespective of whether they consented to the processing of their personal data).

Appendix 2: Rapid evidence assessment

Bursaries

Bursaries are commonplace in a wide range of industries across the private and public sectors (e.g. teaching, journalism). Research suggests that bursaries can fulfil a vital and effective role in supporting recruitment and retention (See et al., 2020). Bursaries can also help individuals and organisations to overcome one of the main barriers to engagement in training and development: cost. However, research findings on the impact of bursaries for teachers suggests that they do not always lead to increased diversity in the profession: older workers and men are more likely to apply for teaching bursaries than other groups, such as those from historically minoritised ethnic backgrounds, who are under-represented within the education sector (Worth, 2022).

Engagement in training is also influenced by a range of other factors, such as time, workload pressures, salary level, and opportunities for progression. Evidence from the health and education sectors demonstrates that despite receiving a bursary, many staff still choose to leave their profession to achieve better outcomes, including higher salaries in other industries, and improved work–life balance (Maisuria et al., 2023). To maximise the impact of the YWB and achieve the programme's objectives for the youth work workforce in the longer term, it will be important to consider whether the wider conditions are in place to attract and retain staff.

A report by DfE (2018b) examines Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) outcomes among postgraduate bursary holders between 2008/09 and 2015/16. The data shows that higher-value bursaries do not always correspond to higher completion rates: in each of the four academic years from 2012/13 to 2015/16, the subjects with the lowest bursary values had higher completion rates, and vice versa. For example, in 2012/13 the completion rate was 93% among those who received bursaries between £5,000 and £9,999 (which included Computing, Biology, English, Geography and History) compared with the overall average of 88%; and 95% completion in 2013/14. When the bursary for Computing was increased in 2014/15 to between £15,000 and £19,999, the completion rate was 92%, and for bursaries between £20,000 and £24,99 it was 91%, compared with the average 93%. In summary, and in contradiction to what we might expect, this data shows that smaller bursaries are associated with higher rates of completion, and larger bursaries with lower rates. One possible interpretation is that bursaries attract a greater proportion of students who are less likely to complete a course.

In nursing, the attrition rate among UK nursing students has been static for a considerable period, at around one-quarter on average (25% in 2008 and 24% in 2017). However, there is wide variation between different universities, where drop-out rates range between 5% and 50% (Buchan et al., 2019, p.30). Drop-out rates for midwifery are similar, at 21% on average, varying from 4% to 42% at different providers.

Apprenticeships in the UK have a low rate of completion. Reforms to the apprenticeship system involved a transition from apprenticeship frameworks to occupational standards that include an end-point assessment (EPA). 'Currently, barely half (54%) of all apprentices reach EPA and complete their programme' (Guy et al., 2024, p.1). The single biggest barrier is the challenging level of functional skills

requirements; however, other factors that explain the low rates include EPA being considered less valuable than mandatory qualifications, and the use of apprenticeships for career development or skills add-ons where EPA attainment is not needed.

Similarly, a report on the achievement rates crisis in construction apprenticeships focuses on the drop-out rate of 47%, which is around 53% completion, just below the average of all apprenticeships in the previous report (Hasting-Evans & Shorter, 2024). The report also notes that the achievement rate for construction qualifications was 'above average' at 89% in 2021/22 (p.8).

Appendix 3: Professional registers

Several industry bodies in the UK have introduced professional registers. These include the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (BACP), the National Counsellors and Psychotherapists Society (NCPS), the Science Council, and the Career Development Institute (CDI), in addition to the bodies representing the youth work sectors in Scotland and Wales (see Appendix 2). The primary rationale for implementing registers of industry professionals is to ensure high standards of professional and ethical practice, and confidence amongst service users. Common criteria for being accepted onto a register include holding professionally recognised qualifications, actively practising in a profession, agreeing to adhere to occupational and ethical standards; and for continued registration, a commitment to undertake a stipulated number of hours of continuing professional development (CPD) per year.

The value of these professional registers is that they allow service users to search for practitioners and provide validation of their skills and experience, to ensure an element of public protection. It is paramount in the development of a professional register that its aims and purpose are clearly communicated, to achieve maximum buy-in among practising professionals.

Counselling and Therapists								
Name of organisation that oversees the register	**Motivations for developing a professional register**	**Qualifying criteria for admission to the register**	**Qualifying criteria for remaining on the register**	**Details of registration process**	**Cost of registration**	**How the register is promoted**	**Whether the register is searchable**	**Estimated number on the register**
British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (BACP)	Ensure the public can search for therapists they trust High standards of safe and ethical practice A sample of professional registers are audited every month Register is a member of Professional Standards Authority's Accredited Register programme	To register, individuals must: ● Hold individual membership with BACP ● Be in practice, or have practised within last three years ● Agree to terms and conditions, which include committing to Ethical Framework for Counselling Professions and Professional Conduct Procedure Individuals must also have either: ● Successfully completed and graduated from a BACP-accredited course ● Passed their certificate of proficiency	Every year, members must agree again to terms and conditions to renew their membership, which include: ● Keeping skills up to date through CPD (at least 30 hours per year) ● Recording CPD activities, an evidence log which shows how it has impacted practice ● Keep up-to-date record of supervision	Applicants must apply through the website or download an application form. They must: ● Provide a copy of graduation certificate ● Proof of address ● Information and documents to support disclosures ● Evidence of entitlement to use any academic titles ● Accept terms and conditions	£178 per year (2023 to 2024)	Through website	Yes	16,000 professional therapists on BACP register It is estimated that in 2021, there were 199,000 therapy professionals in the UK

National Counsellors and Psycho-therapists Society (NCPS)	Register is a member of Professional Standards Authority's Accredited Register programme To ensure quality in the field of counselling, with enhanced protection for the public seeking a registered councillor	To register, individuals must: ● Agree to the Society Code of Ethics, terms, and conditions ● Maintain annual insurance ● Do at least 30 hours of varied CPD in a 12-month period ● Agree to do 1hr, 30m supervision per month if in full-time practice ● Have completed Ofqual Level 4 diploma, or equivalent in Counselling or Psychotherapy practice Successful therapists who become on online directory are called 'registrants'	To remain on the register, individuals must: ● Agree to the Society Code of Ethics, terms, and conditions ● Maintain annual insurance ● Do at least 30 hours of varied CPD in 12-month period ● Agree to do 1hr, 30m supervision per month if in full-time practice ● Have completed Ofqual Level 4 diploma, or equivalent in Counselling or Psychotherapy practice	Applicants apply online, and provide: ● Photo ID and relevant qualifications or enrolments	£150 per year	Through website	Yes	N/A

Science								
Name of organisation that oversees the register	**Motivations for developing a professional register**	**Qualifying criteria for admission to register**	**Qualifying criteria for remaining on register**	**Details of registration process**	**Cost of registration**	**How register is promoted**	**Is register search able?**	**Estimated number on the register**
Science Council Three types of professional registration: Chartered Scientist (CSci) Registered Scientist (RSci) Registered Science Technician (RSciTech)	A global community of professional scientists, independent of discipline Recognition among peers, and shared values and ethical standards Provides an opportunity for scientists to be recognised	Applicants can register through the Science Council or through various professional bodies To be awarded registration, individuals must: ● Meet competencies, as set out by Science Council ● Meet academic requirements ● Sign up to a code of conduct, as dictated by licensed professional body ● Meet requirement for membership for one of the professional bodies ● Pay fee	Applicants must demonstrate they are maintaining or advancing skills through CPD. There are four standards, with a record submitted to the Science Council by the end of each year The four standards of CPD revalidation are as follows: ● Maintain a continuous, up-to-date, accurate and reflective record of CPD activities, with supporting evidence ● CPD activities must be a mixture of learning activities ● Registrant must ensure CPD has benefited their practice, and reflect upon this ● Registrant must ensure CPD has benefited users of their work (employee, student, customer, etc.)	Applicants can apply either through the Science Council Website or via a professional body	Costs are dependent on a number of factors, including application route, registration award, and chosen licensed body Application fee: Ranges from £20 to £45 Registration fee: £17.22 to £51.30 per annum There are also fees associated with becoming a member of associated professional bodies	Science Council website and via licensed professional bodies and universities	Yes	The Science Council and associated professional bodies represent 350,000 scientists There were estimated to be approximately 3 million people working within professional, scientific and technical activities in UK

Youth Work Sector (Wales)								
Name of organisation that oversees the register	**Motivations for developing a professional register**	**Qualifying criteria for admission to register**	**Qualifying criteria for remaining on register**	**Details of registration process**	**Cost of registration**	**How register is promoted**	**Whether register is searchable**	**Estimated number on the register**
Education Workforce Council (EWC)	Enhancement of the status and quality of services provided to children and young people Enhance professionalism within the sector and standardisation Provide greater recognition for youth workers	For Youth Support Workers, applicants need an accepted Level 3 qualification from home nations, listed here For Youth Workers, applicants need an accepted qualification (undergraduate degree or postgraduate diploma) from home nations, listed here	Renewal of registration occurs annually	Applicants must apply through EWC website	To register, applicants need to pay: ● £15 for Youth Support Workers ● £45 for Youth Workers To renew, individuals must us either: ● Pay a yearly fee directly to EWC ● Pay through their employer, with fee deducted from salary	Through EWC website	Yes	100% – the register is mandatory

Motivations for developing a professional register	Qualifying criteria for admission to register	Qualifying criteria for remaining on register	Details of registration process	Cost of registration	How register is promoted	Whether register is searchable	Estimated number on the register
To allow communities in Scotland to be served by competent and confident practitioners	Two types of registration: Registered Members: Practitioners with a Standards Council recognised qualification and a year's verified practice in a CLD setting Registered associate members: Full-time, part-time and voluntary practitioners in CLD who do not meet standards of registered members If an individual does not have recognised qualification, they can still become a member through Individual Recognition Process (IRP) (this route recognises experience and considers alternative qualifications) All applications must formally commit to CLDCS principles All members must undertake professional learning and development (the amount of professional learning needed is pro rata based on the average number of hours worked per week)	Members must renew their registration every three years	Applic-ants must apply online	Registration is free	CLDSC website	Yes The register is public because it: ● Declares that the profession is open, proud and happy to be recognised ● Consistent with regulatory bodies ● Helps individuals provide evidence of membership when applying for jobs ● Helps employers verify membership status of applicants	As of September 2022, there were 2,850 registered members of the CLDSC, although not all are from the youth sector

Carees Guidance								
Name of organisation that oversees the register	Motivations for developing a professional register	Qualifying criteria for admission to register	Qualifying criteria for remaining on register	Details of registration process	Cost of registration	How register is promoted	Whether register is searchable	Estimated number on the register
Career Develop-ment Institute (CDI)	To help professionalise the sector, develop common professional standards and a code of ethics To drive standards among careers professionals, with a commitment to CPD To be a national point of reference for ensuring and promoting the professional status of career professionals	To join the register, applicants must: ● Be an individual CDI member and abide by the CDI Code of Ethics ● Hold an approved qualification ● Undertake, record and reflect upon 25 hours' CPD per year, using the CDI online CPD diary ● Be practising in the sector	To remain on the register, individuals must: ● Be an individual CDI member and abide by the CDI Code of Ethics ● Hold an approved qualification ● Undertake, record, and reflect upon 25 hours' CPD per year, using the CDI online CPD diary ● Be practising in the sector	Applicants must apply online	£160 per year	Through the website	Yes	Unknown

Appendix 4: Youth work qualification descriptions

The following qualifications have been funded through the YWB Fund:

Level 2 Award in Youth Work Principles

The Level 2 Award in Youth Work Principles is an introductory accredited youth work qualification that builds confidence and skills.

The Level 2 Award is delivered in several ways. Local regions may offer it as either a face-to-face or a blended (online and face-to-face) course. Also available is a self-led version with access to tutor support, delivered through the NYA Academy's national programme.

Level 2 Certificate in Youth Work Practice

This qualification embraces the National Occupational Standards for youth work; it is Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) recognised, with endorsement by Education Training Standards (ETS) England and Wales. It supports the skills and knowledge that learners need to become a competent Assistant Youth Support Worker.

Level 3 Certificate in Youth Work Practice

Delivered over nine units, this course supports the skills and knowledge that learners need to become a competent Youth Support Worker. It embraces the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work and is JNC recognised, with endorsement by ETS England and Wales.

Level 3 Diploma in Youth Work Practice

Delivered over 13 units, this course supports the skills and knowledge that learners need to become a competent Youth Support Worker. It embraces the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work and is JNC recognised, with endorsement by ETS England and Wales.

Level 4 Certificate in Professional Development

This qualification is only available to those who have already completed a Level 3 qualification (or equivalent) in Youth Work or a related discipline. It is designed as professional development for those engaged directly in Youth Work or through multi-agency work and can be delivered in two variations. It is not JNC recognised.

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