

# Youth Strategy 2025 to 2027

## Our Ambition / Vision

‘To create a Youth Offer for Young People in Shropshire which will put their needs at the forefront, and prioritises their wellbeing by creating opportunities that will help them reach their full potential and live their best lives’

## Background Information / Context

Since 2011, Shropshire has seen a significant reduction in its Youth Services including dedicated spaces for young people to access.

In September 2023, new guidance was issued by the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) to support Local Authorities in meeting their [statutory duty](#) under Section 507b of the Education Act on Services and Activities to improve Young People’s Wellbeing and their Personal and Social development.

The purpose of the strategy is to make sure that young people in Shropshire have a fulfilled and balanced adolescence filled with opportunities, new experiences, and safe spaces to access. As a local authority we know that we need to collaborate with partners to enable us to meet this duty, Shropshire Council is fully committed to working with partners to deliver a co-ordinated approach to deliver youth services for young people based on their needs and interests and fully informed by their engagement and participation. We know that when young people feel heard and included in the decision-making process, it will lead to improved outcomes for them.

The landscape for young people has changed dramatically over the last 10 years. Social media has become a huge influence on how young people spend their social time, with young people often spending their free association/recreation time in their bedrooms on devices for gaming or accessing social media and other platforms to engage with their peers.

A survey undertaken by the Local Authority Youth Support Team in November 2023 highlighted that that young people in Shropshire would like

- more places to go.
- more access to outdoor facilities,
- spaces to meet their friends and access swimming pools.

What young people overwhelmingly said they don’t like about the community they live in is there:

- is nothing to do
- it’s boring and they feel isolated from their peers.
- They also don’t feel safe and are worried about crime and anti-social behaviour.

The same Youth Work Team are also concerned about the lack of young people using green spaces and parks to meet up with friends or enjoy social activities. The team also report that most groups they meet are vulnerable young people with Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) needs, have been excluded from school, involved in crime and anti-social behaviour identified as at risk of exploitation. Over 71% of young people in the survey said they don’t not leave the house in their free association time.

A recent report from the Local Authority Infrastructure support provider (SYA) states ‘young people’s deteriorating social emotional mental health (SEMH) is of concern, many young people don’t leave their bedrooms or homes in the evenings, and this is storing up problems for the future. To address this, we need more clubs that are easily accessible, offering activities that appeal to all. The voluntary sector as always attracted more junior clubs and younger adolescents. Where the real need is probably for senior clubs’

The National Youth Agency undertook a survey this year which some of the main themes highlighted are that young people are feeling disconnected from their community, with many – in the later teens – struggling with social anxiety.

However, we also must acknowledge that we are now living in a digital age and young people are living hybrid lives. This generation of ‘digital natives’ are now living a blended lifestyle of in person interactions and online interactions. A good Youth Offer will need to be a balance between meaningful face to face youth work and digital youth work.

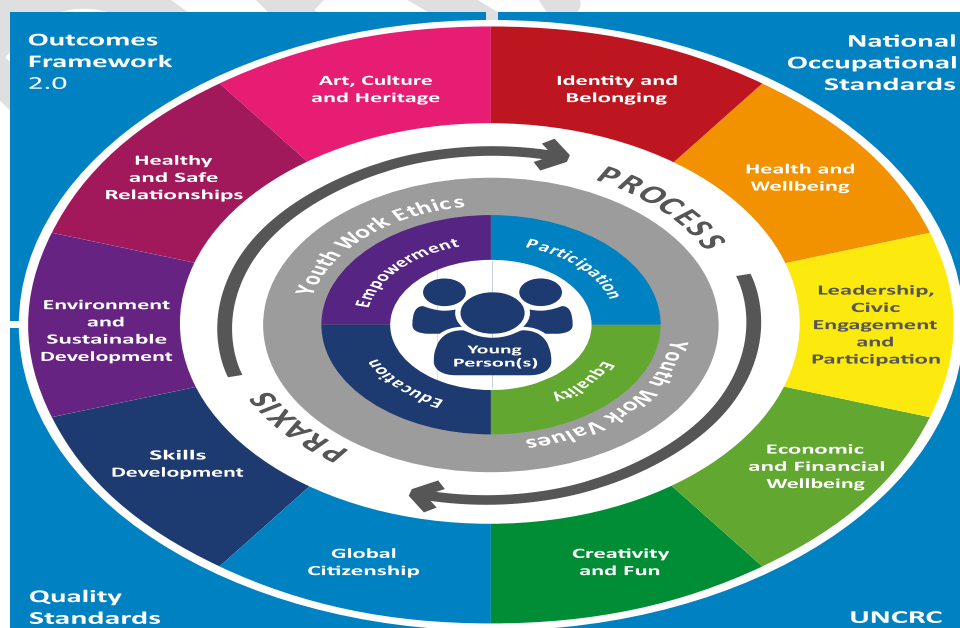
## What is Youth Work and its Curriculum?

The youth work curriculum is underpinned by the description of youth work articulated in the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work 2019: *Youth Work is:*

*‘Engaging with young people to facilitate their personal, social and educational development and enable them to gain a voice, influence and a place in society. Youth Workers help young people to engage with their local communities, taking account of cultural diversity. They support the young person to realise their potential and to address life’s challenges critically and creatively.*

*Youth workers build voluntary, trusted relationships with young people, away from many of the other pressures they may be facing in their lives. They usually work with young people aged between 11 and 19, but may support young adults up to the age of 25 depending on their needs. (NYA)*

### The Youth Work Curriculum



The above sets out the [youth work curriculum](#) framework for England. Its purpose is to enable a greater understanding of youth work practice, provide an educational framework and act as a reference tool to be used by decision makers, policy makers, commissioners, youth workers and young people.

## The Shropshire Plan

Shropshire Council have set out an ambitious plan which outlines its direction over the next 3 years.

The Youth Offer aligns with the priorities set out in the [Shropshire Plan](#).

The Shropshire Plan is underpinned by the 4 Healthies:

- Healthy People
- Healthy Environment
- Healthy Organisation
- Healthy Economy

Young people are an integral part of the Shropshire Plan and Youth Work can enable young people to live their best lives.

Mapping Youth Work to the Shropshire Plan

### Become.....Healthy People

Shropshire Plan	Youth Work
Tackle inequalities	Youth Work helps to break down barriers between communities, it supports the empowerment of individuals and helps to educate young people about discrimination and injustice.
Early Intervention	Youth Work provides essential support to young people within their local communities by providing Safe spaces and trusted adults. This stops young people being drawn into negative situations which can reduce demand for higher level services.
Partnerships	The Youth Partnership will establish bringing together partner across the system to work together to meet the statutory duty for Youth Work
Self-Responsibility	Youth Work enables young people to take responsibility for their learning and development. Youth work enables young people to develop coping strategies for problems they face, learn where to go for information or support and build positive and healthy routines.

### Live in a.....Healthy Environment

Shropshire Plan	Youth Work
Climate Change Strategy and Action	Youth work can help young people to consider the environment and sustainable development by: Enabling young people to consider their own impact on their environment.
Safer Communities	By taking a contextual safeguarding approach within Youth Work Practice we look at how we can best understand the risks posed to our young people and help to keep them safe, by

	listening to their experiences and working with them to meet their needs. We know when young people move towards adolescence they start spending time independently with friends, by creating safe spaces for young people to access and stay safe provides a safe community for those young people Living there.
Natural Environment	Youth work encourages and advocates the use of green/public spaces. We know increased levels of physical activity lower levels of obesity, and improvements in mental health and cognitive performance.

### Help create a.....Healthy Economy

Shropshire Plan	Youth Work
Skills and Employment	Youth Work increases confidence and independence and helps young people realise their goals and raise their aspirations. <a href="#">A framework of Outcomes for Young People 3.0</a>

### contribute to a.....Healthy Organisation

Shropshire Plan	Youth Work
Best Workforce	Internal Staff are all trained to JNC level 3 and above in Youth Work Practice. There is continuous professional development. Externally The voluntary and community sector are also enabled to gain qualification within the Youth Sector to support the delivery of a sufficient Youth Offer.
Align our resources	Local Authority Youth Workers will target their resources into the most deprived areas of the locality to make sure the Youth Offer is sufficient and Youth Work provision is developmental around the needs of local young people. We will work with the Voluntary and Community Sector to make sure our resources are targeted to enable us to meet our statutory duty by making sure our small rural communities also get good youth work provision.

## The Youth Offer (Statutory Duty)

This is an exciting time for Youth Work, the update of the statutory duty has been a long time coming and gives Local Authorities a clearer understanding of what a sufficient offer should look like for young people within their Local Authority Area.

Over 85% of a young person's waking hours are spent outside of school and formal education. Recreational and educational leisure-time activities provided during those hours can have a significant effect on young people's development and well-being. Those activities can:

- support them to build their skills
- improve trust and tolerance
- help them become active members of society
- champion their voice

Not securing such leisure-time activities can mean young people miss out on opportunities to reach their full potential. Those activities can act as a supportive measure that can prevent costly interventions later on. This is true for all young people but is particularly important for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people who might need specific, additional, or early support.

Young people's involvement in such activities can also make an important contribution to other objectives, such as economic, social and environmental improvements, community cohesion, safer and stronger neighbourhoods, better health and increased educational attainment and employment.

In 2022, a review of spending on out-of-school youth programmes [Youth Review](#) found that youth services are a vital part of the response to the current challenges young people face. That review, as well as direct feedback from young people, highlighted the importance of prioritising regular clubs and activities, adventures away from home, and volunteering opportunities.

Local authorities are uniquely placed to coordinate a 'local youth offer' that answers those priorities. They are in a position to:

- set a vision for young people across the local authority
- establish whether the available provision meets their needs
- help direct support where it is most needed

They also hold a crucial role in engaging young people, parents and carers, youth providers and practitioners, other providers of activities for young people, educational settings, communities, and neighbouring areas to enhance and sustain provision. In doing so, they can identify valuable links and contributions and where appropriate help build the capacity and provision of public, private and third sector organisations to improve the local youth offer.

## NYA

### The nine 'essential' in creating a Local Youth Offer



The Youth Offer will focus on quality Youth Work and providing safe environments for young people where they can socialise and make new friends and take part in activities that enables their personal growth and development.

## Creating a Youth Offer for Shropshire Young People

### We will (Strategic Priorities)

#### 1) Create a Local Youth Partnership

A locally established, cross sector organisation Local Youth Partnerships will be created for Shropshire that will seek to develop and sustain delivery of Youth Work provision over the County.

Shropshire Council is committed to the development of a local Youth Partnerships which will have oversight of the local youth offer within Shropshire to 'make sure' that there is a sufficient level of Youth Work in localities within Shropshire. This will be a collaboration of Youth Work Providers, wider Youth Sector, community and voluntary sector, Town and Parish Councils, business and Young People.

The Youth Partnership will share a set of principles (to be agreed by the partnership) that are based on the principles of youth work practice, these are .....

- **Youth Led** – Young people's voices are central to the provision being offered to them
- **Inclusivity, Equality and Diversity** – Young people feel included in their local area and can access the support they need as they progress towards adulthood.
- **Respect** – Young people are valued and respected as part of their community.
- **Quality, Safety and Wellbeing** – Good Quality Services are provided and underpinned by the NYA Safeguarding Standards and Practice Standards
- **Empowerment** Services empower young people to progress and engage in employment, education and training, and to take an active role within their community.
- **Positivity** – services are strength-based and focus on developing the skills and attributes of young people rather than attempting to 'fix a problem'

*(principles taken from Brighter Futures: our vision for youth services, six key principles of effective Youth Services)*

#### Ambition

Shropshire Council is committed to working with partners from the VCSA and Town and Parish Councils alongside our School Communities to make sure young people are actively involved in the process, development and maintenance of a local Youth Offer. For their local area.

The partnership will have a strategic group oversight, and a locality based working group; these could be in line with place plan area. This would need to be agreed by the partnership.

A joint commissioning plan that brings together Police, health, Local Authority, Town and Parish Councils and housing.

The partnership will look at local needs of young people to understand where best placed youth provision is situated.

## 2) Build the Workforce

Shropshire has historically and continues to have a strong and active voluntary sector that delivers Universal Youth Work Provision, alongside specialist youth work provision and targeted work.

Youth Work is mainly delivered by 3 organisations/sectors in Shropshire.

### **Shropshire Council**

The current model of Youth Support within the local authority focuses on a Detached Youth Work Model, Youth Drop in for older Teenagers and Targeted Group Work Interventions. The team currently works countywide and directs services to the higher areas of need through the use of data, intensive reconnaissance and needs assessment work within communities to understand the needs and the lives of the young people living in them. The Team consists of 10.5 FTE equivalent staff.

- Youth Support Team Manager (JNC Professional Youth Work Qualified)
- 3 Full-Time - Youth Work Area Leads (JNC Professional Youth Work Qualified)
- 3 Full-Time Youth Support Worker (minimum JNC – Level 3) in Youth Work Practice Qualified)
- 2.5 FTE Assistant Youth Workers (working towards a level 3 in Youth Work Practice)

### **Restructure**

The Youth Support Team are currently restructuring to focus their resource on the most deprived areas in Shropshire providing a locality Youth Worker for these areas, the Youth Workers will work closely with the Local Community, Young People and local businesses to create a developmental Youth Offer that will focus on a balance of universal and Targeted Youth Work Provision based on the identified needs, and in development with local young people. The team will then work with the VCFS and Town and Parish Councils to support the delivery of this Youth Offer and support/work with them to deliver the universal element of the Youth Offer

### **Town and Parish Councils**

Over the last 9 years, Town and Parish Councils have been integral to continuing universal Youth Provision, with the 2 largest Town Councils increasing their precept in the Council Tax to include funding for Youth Services. Our largest Town Council, Shrewsbury, has developed its own Youth Service which delivers Youth Clubs for primarily the 8–13-year-olds from different local community venues around the Town. Oswestry Town Council have set up their own Youth Partnership and they commission a local youth provider to deliver its Youth Clubs. Many other smaller Town and parish councils commission Youth Clubs from Youth Work Providers.

### **The VCSA**

**Infrastructure Support** The Local Authority currently contributes to SYA, who add this funding to their other resources to offer a comprehensive support package for youth clubs and organisations.

### **Youth Work Training**

SYA are the National Youth Agencies designated trainers for the bursary scheme in this area and also train others to grow the sector.

## **Ambition**

For Youth Work Training to be accessible to all providers delivering Youth Work including the Local Authority, Town and Parish Councils and the VCFS.

For the infrastructure support provider to work closely with the Youth Partnership to support local Youth Work Providers to develop their offer for the 13–19-year-olds (and up to 25 with SEND)

To create a network newsletter that is available to all the Youth Sector and promotes the National infrastructure organisation offering free training and resources to the Youth Sector.

To better promote the training offer via the Shropshire Community and Safeguarding Partnership. to the Voluntary and Community Sector.

Shropshire Council is committed to working closely with Youth Providers from the Voluntary, Community and Faith based sector and understands the importance of working closely with Town and Parish Councils that have local knowledge on their locality areas.

## **3. Make sure that Youth Voice and Participation is central to all decision making of the partnership ; by making sure young people and their needs are the priority of the creation of a Youth Offer**

Youth Voice, participation and engagement is a fundamental right included in the United Nations Convention of the right of the child

*The right to be heard. Article 12 says that every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.*

Section 507b of the education act requires councils to engage, listen to and involve young people to engage, be listened to and involved in service design. Young People are 'experts by experience' and uphold the best insight into what personal, social, political and economic issues affect them'.

Youth participation is a fundamental part of Youth Work practice. We know that by involving young people in the process of Youth Work it enables practitioners to be responsive to young people's needs, therefore, leading to better outcomes.

Involving young people in decision making is important to

- Create Fresh perspectives and creativity
- To build young people's skills and confidence
- To empower the next generation of young people to take ownership of their futures and foster a sense of responsibility for their communities and the world around them.
- Enhancing relevance and inclusivity. Young people's involvement ensures that decisions are relevant to their needs and aspirations.
- Fostering Civic Engagement. This encourages young people to be active participants in their communities and democratic processes.
- Bridging generational gaps. Collaborating between generations helps to build mutual understanding and respect, creating more inclusive and effective policies and strategies.



- Long Term Impact. Decision made today shape the future . Young People's participation ensures that their long-term interests are considered, leading to sustainable and forward-thinking solutions.

By involving young people in decision making, societies can harness their energy and innovation while ensuring decisions are equitable and inclusive.

The local Authority is currently working towards developing a Children and Young People's Participation Strategy.

### **Ambition**

For the Local Authority to work alongside, SYA on the UK Youth Parliament Programme. This will embed the elected Members of Youth Parliament within the local government structure. The elected members of Youth Parliament represent their peers from within a certain geographical area. They represent their peers at a local level by campaigning on their behalf on issues that affect them.

For the Youth Partnership to become accountable to young people in Shropshire . This will be done through local youth forums that sit within the local Authority and outside of the Local Authority, for example, Shrewsbury Town Council Youth Committee.

To have a streamlined young people's participation structure that allows young people to be involved in local decision making.

## **The ambition over the next 3 years is to.....**

- Create a Youth Partnership Board to oversee the Statutory Duty which reports to the Early Help Partnership Board and Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Have a robust Youth Offer Plan that outlines how we are going to get to a 'sufficient' level of Youth Services as collective group of services invested in the wellbeing of Shropshire Young People.
- A Participation Structure which allows a diverse range of young people to be involved with the development of the Youth Offer
- A Website and Social Media presence which advertises the Local Youth Offer to Young People in Shropshire.

### **Other strategies that support the development of youth services and provision**

Local Strategies that impact or influence services and provision for young people are:

- [Early Help Strategy 2023-2025](#)
- [Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2027](#)

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