



**Youth Programme
Quality Intervention
(YPQI):
The youth work policy
and practice context in
Scotland**

YouthLink Scotland

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Youth Programme Quality Intervention (YPQI): The youth work policy and practice context in Scotland

Introduction

This briefing supports the UK-wide pilot of the Youth Programme Quality Intervention (YPQI) led by the Centre for Youth Impact, and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

The YPQI is a ground-breaking quality improvement process designed for and tested with youth organisations. Developed in the US, extensive research has demonstrated its effectiveness in improving outcomes for young people, promoting a sustainable and supportive culture of organisational reflection and improvement, and refocusing evaluation on the quality of relationships within different settings.

The Centre's pilot programme covers England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and runs until September 2021. The overall aims for the pilot are to test, adapt and embed the YPQI within youth organisations across the UK, establish the infrastructure required to train and support these organisations, and build the evidence base of the correlation between quality of provision and positive outcomes for young people.

From the outset, it has been clear that the potential benefits of the YPQI will only be realised in the UK if we work in close partnership and collaboration with the sector – practitioners, infrastructure bodies, commissioners, funders and policy-makers – to ensure that the process aligns with, and is complementary to, existing policy and practice at both local and national levels. In order for the process to be adopted and sustained over the long term, it must be suitably adapted and refined for practitioners across the four countries of the UK, as well as understood and endorsed by those who support and resource them.

This document is a key contribution to the achievement of this objective. It sets out the policy and practice context for youth work in Scotland, and provides a summary of how the YPQI process fits within and could support that context. It also highlights some of the key opportunities and challenges for the Centre and its partners as we proceed through the pilot. This briefing is part of a series written by our partners in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England.

In what Kevin has set out below, we are both heartened by the strong alignment and connections between the YPQI and the youth sector in Scotland, and committed to engaging positively with the potential barriers. We will use the publication of this briefing as a spur to patient, practical work to build meaningful, effective partnerships, with a shared focus on supporting continuous quality improvement across the whole UK youth sector.

This matters to us because, ultimately, the Centre's vision is that all young people, across the UK, have the opportunity to access high quality youth work and provision that supports their social and emotional development. In this pilot, and across all of the rest of our work, we know we can along achieve our goal by working with and through others. If you support our vision, we hope you find much to encourage you in what follows.

For more information on the YPQI pilot, including how to get involved, please visit [our website](#).

1. Key findings and recommendations

- YPQI is a potentially useful addition to youth work in Scotland, because evidence suggests it can improve outcomes for young people, create a sustainable and supportive culture of organisational reflection and improvement and refocus evaluation on the quality of relationships and setting.
- The opportunity for teams participating in the YPQI to receive training and coaching to develop specific areas of their practice with young people is a particularly appealing aspect of what the YPQI could contribute to the youth work sector in Scotland, complementing existing youth work training.
- For the YPQI to fit within the Scottish context it would also need to recognise and be adapted to reflect the significance of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within the policy landscape in Scotland. This includes our youth work strategy, and the National Youth Work Outcomes, both of which are underpinned by the UNCRC.
- It is evident that the four domains of quality (safety, support, interaction, engagement) covered by the YPQI complement several of Scotland's National Youth Work Outcomes.
- The Outcomes Model in Scotland has a Plan → Do → Improve → Review cycle which is similar to the Assess → Plan → Improve cycle utilised in the YPQI approach.
- The Outcomes Model in Scotland aligns with the YPQI in regards to emphasising a low-stakes commitment to accountability in its approach to quality improvement with an emphasis on reflective practice and self-evaluation.
- As there are similarities between the YPQI model and the framework already in place in Scotland, it is recommended that there be an in-depth assessment of what degree of additional value could be provided by implementing YPQI and whether this value offsets any increase in resources and workload for youth work staff which would be incurred as a result of its implementation. This is a key challenge to work through.
- Another key challenge in Scotland would be the potential impact any implementation of YPQI might have on our National Youth Work Strategy and in particular, on the integrity of the National Youth Work Outcomes (NYWO), which are deeply embedded in the wider policy landscape in Scotland and crucial for communicating the value of investment in youth work. The NYWO also contributes to national policy and frameworks such as the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework, Curriculum for Excellence and Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC).
- If it was assessed that the introduction of YPQI could have a significant impact on our National Youth Work Strategy and/or the National Youth Work Outcomes then there would need to be sector-wide consultation on the implementation of YPQI.

2. Youth policy and practice in Scotland

Scotland's youth work sector consists of 80,000 youth work practitioners (including both paid youth workers and volunteers) reaching in excess of 380,000 young people in youth work opportunities each week¹. Youth work takes place in a range of settings, such as in school, youth centres, or outdoors, and is delivered by youth workers, many of whom are volunteers. Youth work has made a major difference to the lives of over 450,000 people in Scotland today (over 13% of the Scottish population²).

*The Nature and Purpose of Youth Work*³ states that youth work in Scotland is characterised by three essential and definitive features: young people choose to participate; youth work must build from where young people are and youth work recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process.

Youth work in Scotland is deeply embedded within the national policy landscape. The Scottish Government values the significant contribution that youth work makes towards its focus on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), prevention, early intervention and improving outcomes for children and young people. Improving life chances for young people is part of this bigger picture and is the focus of the National Youth Work Strategy (2014-2019).

National Youth Work Strategy

The National Youth Work Strategy 2014-19⁴ is a Scottish Government, Education Scotland and YouthLink Scotland joint publication. There are five key ambitions in the youth work strategy. Two of these relate specifically to outcomes for Scotland's young people. In achieving outcomes for young people through youth work, there is an expectation that the youth work sector can contribute to these ambitions. The Scottish Government has expressed its commitment to a new National Youth Work Strategy (2020-2025), building upon the 2014-2019 strategy, to be co-produced by children and young people and the youth work sector and overseen by the strategic partnership of YouthLink Scotland, Education Scotland and The Scottish Government.

¹ YouthLink Scotland (2016) *Youth Work Changes Lives – A Prospectus*. Edinburgh: YouthLink Scotland

² Hall Aitken, *Social and economic value of youth work in Scotland: initial assessment*, January 2016, <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/1254/full-report-social-and-economic-value-of-youth-work-in-scotland.pdf>.

³

<https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/1255/statementonthenatureandpurposeofyouthwork.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/1111/national-youth-work-strategy-2014-15.pdf>

Youth Work Outcomes

In Scotland, there are seven youth work outcomes for young people. These outcomes have been developed by and for the youth work sector in Scotland. They are independent of Government and of funders, with YouthLink Scotland facilitating their development⁵. These outcomes can be achieved in a range of youth work contexts and practices. They are:

- **Outcome 1:** Young people are confident, resilient and optimistic for the future
- **Outcome 2:** Young people manage personal, social and formal relationships
- **Outcome 3:** Young people create, describe and apply their learning and skills
- **Outcome 4:** Young people participate safely and effectively in groups
- **Outcome 5:** Young people consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control
- **Outcome 6:** Young people express their voice and demonstrate social commitment
- **Outcome 7:** Young people broaden their perspectives through new experiences and thinking

Each outcome also contains a set of indicators that help youth workers and young people understand the difference youth work is making and how well young people are progressing towards the outcome. These indicators also advance quality through being designed to support reflective practice, self-evaluation and improvement of youth work services. Within each indicator, there are suggestions of how it can be measured, although it is not an exhaustive list. The full list of indicators for each outcome is available to download⁶.

The Youth Work Outcomes Logic Model

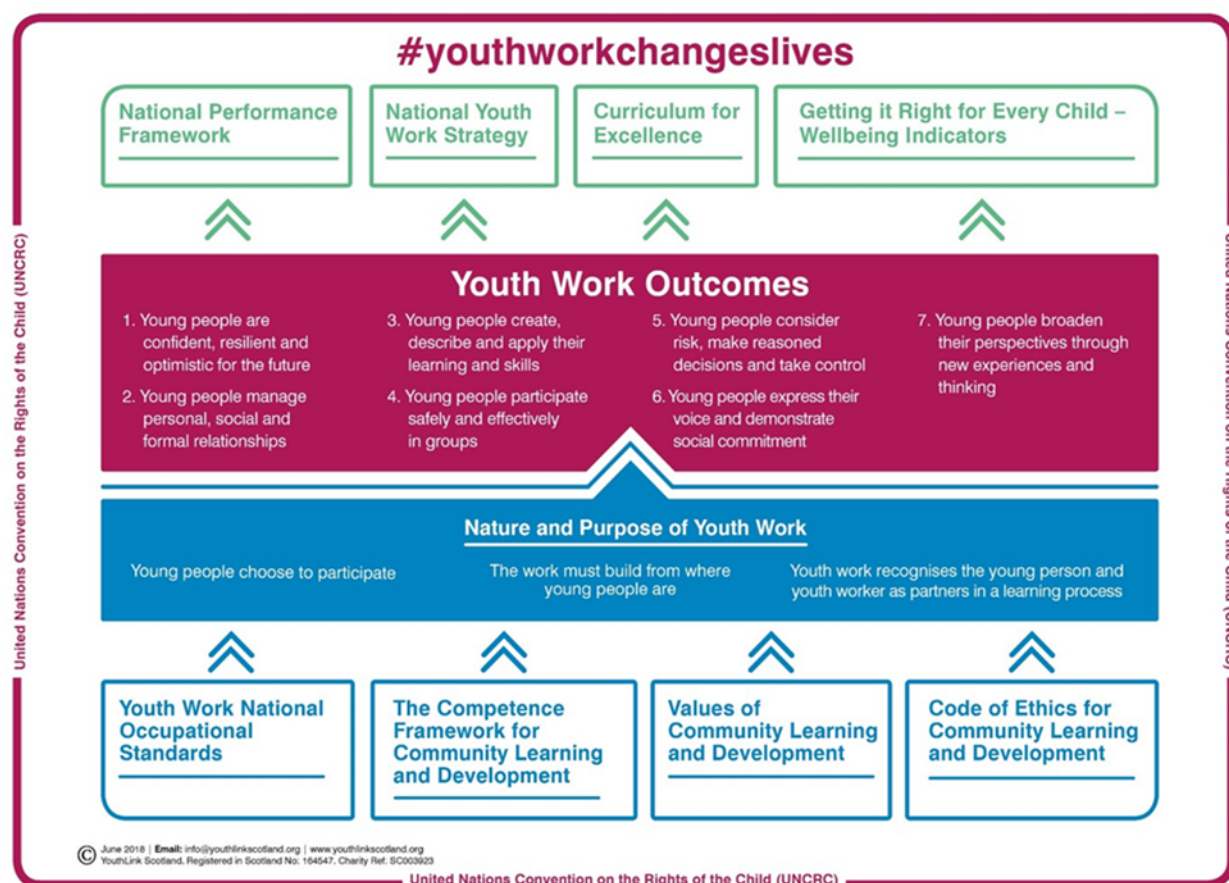
Scotland's Youth Work Outcomes are the result of a significant amount of energy and resources, and partnership working across the sector. In June 2015, the outcomes were agreed by the members of YouthLink Scotland and approved by YouthLink Scotland's board. In January 2016, YouthLink Scotland formally launched the Youth Work Outcomes Model. The development of the Outcome Model was sector-led, building upon the *Statement on the Nature and Purpose of Youth Work*. An initial draft of an Outcomes Model was created following a workshop that included representatives

⁵ The development of Youth Work Outcomes emerged from an initial discussion at a meeting of Local Authority Youth Work Managers (LAYWM) and National Voluntary Youth Work Organisations Scotland (NVYOS) in June 2014, about the need for 'shared outcomes' for Scotland's youth work sector. The development of the Outcome Model was sector-led, building upon the Statement on the Nature and Purpose of Youth Work. An initial draft of an Outcomes Model was created following a workshop that included representatives from LAYWM, NVYOS, and the YouthLink Scotland Policy Forum. In June 2015, the outcomes were agreed by the members of YouthLink Scotland and approved by YouthLink Scotland's board. Since then the youth work sector has led development and testing of a set of indicators which support the model.

⁶ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/3059/youth-work-outcomes-and-indicators.pdf>

from Local Authority Youth Work Managers and National Voluntary Youthwork Organisations and the YouthLink Scotland Policy Forum. Since then the youth work sector has led development and testing of a set of indicators which support the model and the development of an online toolkit.

The Outcomes Model is founded on youth work practice, including the nature and purpose of youth work, youth work's National Occupational Standards, CLD competences, ethics and values. The Model shows how the Youth Work Outcomes contribute to national outcomes, policies and strategy. This includes the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework⁷, the National Youth Work Strategy⁸, Curriculum for Excellence⁹ and Getting It Right For Every Child¹⁰ (GIRFEC). These policies do not direct or inform the youth work outcomes; the outcomes exist irrespective of national policy drivers. Underpinning the entire model is the UNCRC. This is the glue that binds the model together.



⁷ <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>

⁸ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/1111/national-youth-work-strategy-2014-15.pdf>

⁹ <https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/Broad%20general%20education>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>

Community Learning and Development (CLD) Competences and National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Youth Work

The Competences¹¹ describe the practical skills, knowledge and understanding that should be demonstrated by CLD practitioners, including youth workers, underpinned by the Values of CLD¹² and the Code of Ethics¹³. They were developed in consultation with the sector and are applied across community learning and development contexts. The NOS for Youth Work¹⁴ also detail the knowledge and understanding, skills and behaviours that a youth worker should be able to demonstrate. They are UK wide and specifically for youth workers. Youth workers able to work to these standards and competences are well equipped to support young people to achieve the outcomes noted above. These standards are also well aligned with the YPQI: **Annex A** below provides a mapping of both the 2012 and newly updated NOS against the YPQI Domains of Practice.

The youth work sector in Scotland has also developed a checklist of topics that should be covered during induction training for youth workers. The National Youth Work Induction Checklist¹⁵ is facilitated by YouthLink Scotland's Youth Work Training Forum, and should ensure inductions give a good sense of the values, principles, approaches and skills needed to deliver youth work as well as practical considerations. These topics help practitioners to meet the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work and the Competences for Community Learning and Development.

Youth Work Outcome Indicator Testing

YouthLink Scotland and Northern Star worked in partnership to develop and deliver the youth work outcome indicator testing programme in 2017. Following the development and launch of the youth work outcomes and indicators, local authorities and voluntary organisations across Scotland embarked on a programme of testing to understand how well the indicators worked in practice and whether the outcomes and indicators actually supported self-evaluation and improvement of practice. Organisations were asked to pilot the indicators within existing youth work practice. Feedback from participants about the outcomes and indicators was positive. Organisations could see how they would use them for self-evaluation. Participation in the testing had been a catalyst for a period of reflection on practice and an opportunity for organisations to develop new data

¹¹ <http://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/resources/the-competences/>

¹² <http://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/resources/values-of-cld/>

¹³ <http://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/resources/code-of-ethics/>

¹⁴ <http://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/resources/standards-and-benchmarks/national-occupational-standards/>

¹⁵ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/3180/national-youth-work-induction-checklist-september-2018-designed.pdf>

collection tools or review how they currently gather and use evaluation data. They can also be used for self-evaluation and improvement.

The outcomes and indicators are designed to be used across the range of youth work settings in Scotland and as such are deliberately broad and general. In order to meaningfully support local self-evaluation, an organisation needs to translate or adapt the outcomes and indicators to understand what they mean in the context of their work. This process of adaptation or translation prevents the outcomes and indicators from being too general and becoming a tick-box exercise.

The youth work outcomes and indicators can be used for planning (embedded into organisational strategy, forming the basis for long-term strategic goals) and can also be used for specific youth work programme or project planning or for session/specific activities planning; for self-evaluation and improvement, for communicating the value of youth work and for working in partnership with other youth work providers.

HMIE Self Evaluation and Inspection Quality Frameworks

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education, housed within Education Scotland inspects Community Learning and Development services in Scotland, which include youth work provision. These inspections are a statutory requirement and are carried out in all 32 local authorities in Scotland, as with inspection of school, colleges, and education authorities.

The frameworks are designed to be used for self-evaluation by managers and teams as well as HM Inspection using the same quality indicators and performance measures. There are two key frameworks that are applicable to the youth work sector in Scotland:

1. **'How Good is the Learning and Development in our Community?'**

The last round of statutory inspections, in which CLD services provided by local authorities and their voluntary and community sector partnerships are inspected used this framework. At the heart of the document is a set of quality indicators and performance measures which will help practitioners identify the strengths in their practice and where further development is required.

2. **'How Good is Our Third Sector Organisation?'**

The other framework available to youth work is a self-evaluation resource created to support the third sector to evaluate their performance and to identify priorities for action. It is designed to support third sector organisations of all sizes, from small to large, local to national. It can also be used in cross-sector partnerships.

A peer evaluation process and toolkit based on 'How Good is the Learning and Development in Our Community?' has been piloted and published to support local authorities and other organisations to undertake mutual peer evaluation for improvement.

Having recently completed a round of inspection, the quality frameworks and models of self evaluation and inspection are currently being reviewed and refreshed by HMIE.

3. The YPQI in context

It is evident the four domains of quality (safety, support, interaction, engagement) covered by the YPQI complement several of Scotland's National Youth Work Outcomes. For example, "interactive environment" emphasises teamwork, leadership and empathy, which aligns with NYWO Outcome 4 (Young people participate safely and effectively in groups) and Outcome 5 (Young people consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control). Engaging Environment within the YPQI, with its emphasis on learning, connects with Outcome 3 (Young people create, describe and apply their learning and skills) and Outcome 7 (Young people broaden their perspectives through new experiences and thinking).

It is noted the Programme Quality Assessment (PQA), the self-assessment tool that lies at the heart of the YPQI process, uses the concept of *learning* to signify effective youth development practice based on empirical theory whereby "*the effects of any intervention are short-lived unless they set in motion an upward cycle of culturally valued behaviors that are linked to incentives for more successful behaviour*" (Berrueta- Clement et al., 1984; Schweinhart et al., 2005). Specifically, *if young people learn how to be good learners, they are more likely to be able to adapt to new circumstances when life demands it (to be resilient) and to be rewarded by formal and informal learning systems. In High/Scope's longitudinal studies of both preschool children and adolescents that informed the development of the YPQI, participatory learning interventions led to success in subsequent schooling experiences, which in turn led to longer term effects (Oden, Kelly, & Weikart, 1992; Schweinhart et al., 2005)¹⁶*. This aligns with the current approach to the nature and value of youth work in Scotland, which recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process. Resilience is also a component of Outcome 1 in the NYWO. The policy approach in Scotland fully recognises the value of youth work in giving young people the social and emotional skills they need to make informed decisions and make positive changes to their lives, and that this can lead to longer term outcomes (extrinsic/social outcomes) – this mirrors the theoretical and practical foundations of the YPQI.

The YPQI's four domains of quality also align with the Scottish Government's Curriculum for Excellence and Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC). GIRFEC¹⁷ is the national approach in Scotland to improving outcomes and supporting the wellbeing of our children and young people by offering the right help at the right time from the right people. The approach supports children and young people so that they can grow up feeling loved, safe and respected and can realise their full

¹⁶ Smith, C. and Hohmann, C. (2005) "*Full Findings From the Youth PQA Validation Study*", pp14.

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>

potential. At home, in school or the wider community, every child and young person should be: safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. They are wellbeing indicators that help make it easier for children and families and the people working with them to discuss how a child or young person is doing at any given point in time, and if there is a need for support. The Table below maps where the NYWO, GIRFEC and the YPQI are complementary:

Table 1: Mapping NYW Outcome, GIRFEC areas and YPQI Domains of Practice¹⁸

		YPQI Domains of Practice			
Scottish NYWO	GIRFEC Areas	Safe Space*	Supportive environment	Interactive Environment	Engaging Environment
Young people are confident, resilient and optimistic for the future	Safe, Achieving, Responsible	X	X	X	X
Young people manage personal, social and formal relationships	Safe, Healthy, Active, Included	X	X	X	
Young people create, describe and apply their learning and skills	Safe, Achieving, Responsible	X	X	X	X
Young people participate safely and effectively in groups	Safe, Healthy, Included	X		X	
Young people consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control	Safe, Active, Responsible	X	X	X	
Young people express their voice and demonstrate social commitment	Safe, Nurtured, Active, Respected	X		X	
Young people broaden their perspectives through new experiences and thinking	Safe, Achieving, Active	X	X		X

¹⁸ Mapping of the YPQI to the Youth Work National Occupational Standards (2019) is available as an appendix document to this and each of the UK country context briefings.

*Safe space has been selected as complementary to each outcome, because it is a fundamental foundational requirement for young people to feel they are in a safe space if they are to be able to work towards the other outcomes.

As can be seen from the table above, the YPQI's four domains of practice would allow youth work practitioners to effectively promote, support and safeguard the wellbeing of young people in Scotland in line with the GIRFEC principles. Effective contributors, responsible citizens, confident individuals and successful learners clearly reflects the YPQI four domains of practice which emphasises engaging, interactive and supportive environments which foster leadership, further learning, encourage teamwork, responsibility, growth mindset and supporting plans and goals.

Challenges in Implementing YPQI

If the YPQI is to fit within the Scottish context then it is essential that it can adapt to the significance of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In Scotland, public bodies (including local authorities) must report every three years on how they furthered the UNCRC, the first of which will happen in 2020. Scottish Ministers must keep the UNCRC within their consideration when making decisions and they must promote public awareness and understanding of the rights of children. The Scottish Government have developed a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment¹⁹ and steps are being taken to potentially incorporate the UNCRC fully into Scots Law. Our youth work strategy and the National Youth Work Outcomes are also underpinned by the UNCRC and they help us and the Government to meet our related responsibilities. Youth work is a rights-promoting and rights-protecting practice, and this would need to be reflected in the utilisation of the YPQI. While more work is required to cross-reference in detail, the YPQI is broadly in line with the principles of this rights-based approach.

A key challenge in Scotland would be the potential impact any implementation of YPQI might have on our National Youth Work Strategy and in particular, on the integrity of the National Youth Work Outcomes (NYWO) which are deeply embedded in the wider policy landscape and are an integral part of the youth work sector in Scotland. The NYWO in Scotland help the sector to demonstrate the value of youth work which in turn strengthens the case for investment in youth work.

Scotland differs from other countries within the UK in that Scotland has a National Youth Work Strategy that is supported by the Scottish Government and, as detailed throughout this brief, the youth work sector in Scotland has established National Youth Work Outcomes, which are deeply

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/childrens-rights-wellbeing-impact-assessments-crwia-guidance/>

embedded within the wider policy landscape in Scotland. Scotland's National Youth Work Outcomes contribute to national policy and frameworks, and impact on local, national and international policies, strategies and legislation. This includes the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework, the National Youth Work Strategy, Curriculum for Excellence and Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC).

The funding situation in Scotland is also different from elsewhere in the UK since the youth sector receives a large component of funding through local authority youth work budgets. This means it is crucial for the youth work sector to communicate the value of youth work as this justifies continued investment in youth work. The National Youth Work Outcomes are a key tool in respect of this process. The outcomes enable the youth work sector to clearly and consistently explain the value of youth work and the difference between youth work and other services for young people. For communications purposes, it can be useful to use all seven outcomes together to help paint the picture of the range of youth work impacts. The importance of local authority youth work and their statutory obligation to undergo inspection also raises a consideration as the way that YPQI would relate to, and potentially complement, inspection frameworks and processes must be explored.

Additionally, the Christie Commission²⁰ report called for increased preventative spending in Scotland, estimating that as much as 40 per cent of all spending on public services is accounted for by interventions that could have been avoided by prioritising a preventative approach. Youth work contributes significant preventative action and reduces 'failure demand'. The Christie Commission states all aspects of public services must prioritise and build in action which has the effect of reducing demand for services in the longer run. Therefore the National Youth Work outcomes help to demonstrate youth work provides crucial preventative measures, which in turn demonstrates the value to Government of continuing to invest in youth work. The Youth Work Outcomes play a crucial role in communicating the value of youth work, therefore if the introduction of the YPQI would lead to a move away from measuring outcomes then this could be problematic for the framework in Scotland.

If it was assessed that the introduction of YPQI could have a significant impact on the National Youth Work Strategy and/or the National Youth Work Outcomes (or that this could become the case at some point in the future) then there would need to be sector wide consultation on the implementation of YPQI with the youth work sector in Scotland.

Using the PQA intends to *"empower individuals and organisations to envision optimal quality, to develop a shared language of practice and decision making, and to produce reliable and valid ratings*

²⁰ Christie Commission/Scottish Government, Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services, 29 June 2011 - <https://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/352649/0118638.pdf/>

*for evaluation and comparison over time*²¹”. In Scotland, a shared language of practice and decision making is already in place through the Youth Work Outcomes and their associated indicators. These can also be used by organisations to self-evaluate and improve the quality of their programmes and activities over time. The outcomes and indicators provide a common language and basis for partnership working or commissioning youth work, providing a common purpose and clarity about what they are trying to achieve whilst allowing for, and celebrating, the diversity within Scotland’s youth work sector. Therefore what the YPQI can offer in terms of this may well already be available in Scotland under our current framework.

The broader YPQI process *“promotes the creation of environments that tap the most important resource for any youth-serving organisation — a young person’s motivation to attend and engage. The PQA is based on a multidimensional construct of program quality at the point of service where youth, adults, and resources come together to coproduce relational, learning, and adaptive experiences*²²”. This is similar to the ethos already utilised in Scotland, with the *Nature and Purpose of Youth Work* recognising that outcomes for individual young people come as a result of a negotiated process between the young person and youth workers as partners in a learning process. Scotland’s youth work outcomes and indicators were designed to be appropriate and accessible for use with young people and can easily be turned into questions to use with young people to reflect on experience and learning. Consistent use of the Youth Work Outcomes across the youth work sector means that young people can track and reflect on their journey travelled across all of their youth work experiences.

The YPQI is designed *“to support the equity effects of accountability systems because it increases the likelihood that all children who enrol will have access to key developmental experiences*²³” — a counter to outcome based criteria that *“provide incentives to attract only high-performing children who will do well on individual measures*”. Youth work in Scotland is fortunate in already operating within a ‘low stakes’ approach to accountability. The outcomes and indicators are used in planning and practice in Scotland and the response from the sector has been positive. They are not imposed, there is no compulsion to utilise them and there is no national performance/measure based on these outcomes. Indeed we know that in Scotland, the youth work sector plays a crucial role in reaching young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and engaging with those young people effectively.

²¹ Ibid:8.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

The National Youth Work Outcomes help to drive up quality in the sector too, as they can be used for self-evaluation and improvement. The Outcomes Model in Scotland has a Plan → Do → Improve → Review cycle which is similar to the Assess → Plan → Improve cycle utilised in the YPQI approach. Effective evaluation is part of Scotland's youth work strategy. Improvement is about building the capacity of the workforce to carry out effective self-evaluation. Self-evaluation processes use the triangulation of evidence-based information and data, people's views and direct observation of practice to inform outcomes and measure impact on young people.

This is potentially where the YPQI could fit in and align with the existing strategy, and provide a beneficial approach to improving quality. For self-evaluation and improvement there are a number of established improvement models based on the planning and evaluation cycle already used within the sector, such as the LEAP Planning and Evaluation Cycle²⁴ and the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) Cycle²⁵ used by Scottish Government and healthcare as well as the CLD and Third Sector inspection frameworks. The outcomes and indicators underpin and are a critical part of the Plan-Do-Review-Improve model. The YPQI would need to fit within this cycle and provide additional value over and above what already exists with the Plan → do → review → improve approach to evaluation and quality improvement. However, if the PQA could be shown to fit well within this cycle then there would be added incentive for teams participating in the process to receive training and coaching to develop specific areas of their practice with young people.

However, an important factor to consider would be whether YPQI would complement the National Youth Work Outcomes by working alongside them rather than undermining them. With reference to England, the Centre states that there has been “an over-focus on the measurement of outcomes in isolation in an effort to *prove* impact at the expense of *improving* services²⁶”. However, in Scotland, the Outcomes Model is also used as a method to improve quality of youth services, so outcomes are not focused on at the expense of quality. The National Youth Work Outcomes and their associated indicators are designed to support self-evaluation and quality improvement so youth work is the best it can be for young people. Education Scotland and YouthLink Scotland work with national and regional youth work organisations and youth work providers to build capacity, embed self-evaluation and improve the measurement of outcomes and impact for all young people. Using the outcomes and indicators helps youth workers to understand where they are making a difference and where they need to improve. Evaluating using the Youth Work Outcomes and Indicators can support improved reporting to funders, higher-quality experiences for young people

²⁴ <https://www.scdc.org.uk/what/leap/>

²⁵

<https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20180520172049/http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2005/11/04112142/21450>

²⁶ YPQI pilot information

and communicating your impact to other stakeholders. It appears the YPQI is designed to follow a similar process and produces similar results to the current framework used in Scotland since it involves self-assessment as an important component for driving up quality in programmes.

Policy-level performance standards for continuous improvement and instruction in the YPQI model are “*low stakes*” – sites are not penalised if they fail to attain a certain level of quality. This approach is similar to that utilised with the National Youth Work Outcomes in Scotland, which is also low stakes and which aims for practitioners to feel empowered to explore applying the outcomes to their practice and may result in improved quality of youth work practice - as well as supporting reflection and self-evaluation.

In Scotland, local authorities and voluntary organisations have to report and plan on funder-set or local outcomes/priorities as well as national inspection frameworks. During the Youth Work Outcome indicator testing programme in 2017, participants talked about the need to make sure that the youth work outcomes were not increasing the reporting workload, but rather, supporting organisations to better understand their work and communicate its impact. Identifying links between the youth work outcomes, key policy areas and funding streams should form part of any resources for the sector, funders, local and national government. This is an important factor to consider in relation to the YPQI, particularly given the intention stated by the Centre for Youth Impact that over the course of the UK Pilot, they will be building the case for funders in the UK to follow the situation in the US, where US funders ask that organisations they support commit to the YPQI. To address capacity concerns, the Centre for Youth Impact intends that any such requirement should be accompanied by additional resources to support organisations to implement the YPQI on an ongoing basis.

As there are a number of similarities between the YPQI model and the framework already in place in Scotland, it is recommended that there be an assessment of what degree of additional value could be provided by implementing YPQI and whether this value offsets any increase in resources and workload for youth work staff which would be incurred as a result of its implementation. A key challenge would be to demonstrate that the quality improvement offered by the YPQI offers more than what currently exists through the present Outcomes Model/indicators and the plan → do → improve → review model.

4. Summary and next steps

YPQI is a potentially useful addition to youth work in Scotland because of evidence that it can improve outcomes for young people, create a sustainable and supportive culture of organisational reflection and improvement and refocus evaluation on the quality of relationships and setting. The opportunity for teams participating in the YPQI to receive training and coaching to develop specific areas of their practice with young people is an appealing aspect of what the YPQI could contribute to the youth work sector in Scotland. It is evident the YPQI four domains of quality (safety, support, interaction, engagement) complement several of Scotland's National Youth Work Outcomes along with GIRFEC and the UNCRC.

As there are similarities between the YPQI model and the framework already in place in Scotland, it is recommended that the next step should be an in-depth assessment of what degree of additional value could be provided by implementing YPQI and whether this value offsets any increase in resources and workload for youth work staff which would be incurred as a result of its implementation.

A strategic assessment in relation to the YPQI would be helpful for Scotland because the existing structures and frameworks are both well aligned and well established, which is not as evident in other countries of the UK. An assessment would also examine the potential impact that any implementation of the YPQI might have on our National Youth Work Strategy, and on the integrity of the National Youth Work Outcomes: this would also avoid a situation where funders are requiring duplicative criteria.

About the author / organisation

YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work in Scotland. We are a membership organisation, representing over 100 regional and national youth organisations from both the voluntary and statutory sectors. We champion the role and value of youth work and represent the interests and aspirations of both the voluntary and statutory sector. Our vision is of a nation which values its young people and their contribution to society, where young people are supported to achieve their potential.

For more information about this context briefing, contact Policy and Research Manager at YouthLink Scotland on kkane@youthlinkscotland.org or the Director of Practice Development at the Centre for Youth Impact on ed.anderton@youthimpact.uk.

Appendix A – Mapping the YPQI Domains of Practice against National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Youth Work

nb Both the 2012 and 2019 NOS are included in the table below. The 2019 NOS have only recently been approved, and hence many training programmes and qualifications are still working from the 2012 NOS.

YPQI Domains of Practice	Youth Work NOS (2012)	Youth Work NOS (2019 Updated)
Safe environment Creating safe spaces	YW01 Initiate, build and maintain purposeful relationship with young people YW18 Explore with young people their well being YW20 Embed organisational policy for the protection and safeguarding of young people YW22 Ensure that youth work activities comply with legal, regulatory and ethical requirements.	YW01 Initiate, build and maintain relationships with young people YW03 Comply with legal, regulatory and ethical requirements when carrying out youth work YW16 Equip young people with safeguarding techniques YW17 Monitor and review your organisation's policy and practices for the protection and safeguarding of young people and self YW18 Engage with young people to promote their emotional wellbeing and mental health YW19 Develop a culture and ethos that promotes inclusion and values diversity
Supportive environment Emotional coaching Scaffolding learning Fostering growth mindset	YW06 Enable young people to work in groups YW14 Facilitate young people's exploration of their values and beliefs YW16 Enable young people access information to make decisions YW18 Explore with young people their wellbeing	YW02 Assist young people to learn and engage with the youth work process YW06 Explore the concept of values and beliefs with young people YW07 Apply youth work values and principles in group work YW08 Engage with and empower young people to make use of digital media in their daily lives YW13 Access information for and with young people to inform decision making YW15 Assist young people to assess risk and make informed choices in the management of their health and well being YW18 Engage with young people to promote their emotional wellbeing and mental health

Interaction Fostering teamwork Promoting responsibility and leadership Cultivating empathy	YW07 Encourage young people to broaden their horizons to become effective citizens YW15 Advocate on behalf of young people and enable them to represent themselves to others YW17 Work with young people in promoting their rights YW21 Develop a culture and systems that promote inclusion and value diversity YW27 Facilitate and engage young people in the strategic development and delivery of youth work.	YW07 Apply youth work values and principles in group work YW09 Support young people to become responsible citizens through active involvement in youth work YW11 Plan, prepare and facilitate learning activities with young people YW14 Assist young people to recognise, realise and defend their rights YW19 Develop a culture and ethos that promotes inclusion and values diversity. YW23 Engage young people in the strategic development of youth work
Engagement Furthering learning Supporting youth interests Supporting goals and plans	YW05 Enable young people to use their learning to enhance their future development YW11 Plan, prepare and facilitate activities with young people YW12 Work with young people to manage resources for youth work delivery YW13 Support young people in evaluating the impact of youth work activities	YW02 Assist young people to learn and engage with the youth work process YW05 Enable young people identify, reflect and use their learning to enhance their future development YW11 Plan, prepare and facilitate learning activities with young people YW12 Manage resources with young people for youth work activities YW23 Engage young people in the strategic development of youth work
Professional Learning	YW04 Develop and maintain productive working relationships in collaboration with colleagues and stakeholders to support youth work YW24 Influence and develop youth work strategies YW29 Monitor and evaluate the quality of youth work activities YW30 Work as an effective and reflective practitioner YW31 Provide youth work support to other workers	YW04 Develop and maintain productive working relationships in collaboration with colleagues, agencies and stakeholders for youth work YW22 Influence and develop youth work strategy YW24 Monitor and evaluate the impact of youth work strategy and delivery YW25 Work as an effective and critically reflective youth work practitioner YW26 Provide leadership to other youth work practitioners and volunteers

The Centre for Youth Impact is a community of organisations that work together to progress thinking and practice around impact measurement in youth work and services for young people. Our vision is for all young people to have access to high quality programmes and services that improve their life chances, by enabling embedded approaches to impact measurement that directly inform practice. Our work, therefore, is dedicated to three objectives, together with our expanded networks and other organisations from across the youth sector: curating the debate, building the movement and shaping the future.

Find out more about the Centre for Youth Impact at www.youthimpact.uk and follow us on @YouthImpactUK.

David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality

The YPQI was developed in the US, by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality. Extensive research has demonstrated its effectiveness in improving outcomes for young people, promoting a sustainable and supportive culture of organisational reflection and improvement, and refocusing evaluation on the quality of relationships within different settings. The Youth Programme Quality Intervention (YQPI) is the intellectual property of the David P Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality. The Centre for Youth Impact hereby acknowledges the Weikart Center's ownership of the YPQI, the Program Quality Assessment (PQA) tool, and associated materials.

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