



UK Youth's Annual Network Survey

Results from our 2023 Network Survey and how we've been responding

UK Youth's Network Survey

In 2023, UK Youth conducted its very first annual Network Survey. The aim of the Survey was to unpack the experience of being within UK Youth's network as a youth organisation, to better understand youth organisations' preferences for support and identify ways to increase our impact across the youth sector and, most importantly, with young people.

Over 300 youth organisations responded to the online survey, achieving an 11% representation of UK Youth's network. The results told us about the needs and preferences of the youth sector and our network's perceptions of UK Youth's support. The responses have informed -and continue to inform- the support UK Youth offers to the youth sector and other sectors. Here, we briefly outline our key findings and how they have informed UK Youth's offer.

Results from the 2023 Network Survey

Feedback on UK Youth's Offer

High satisfaction with UK Youth's offer

Overall, members of our network were satisfied with the opportunities provided by UK Youth as demonstrated by a high Net Promoter Score (NPS) of +46. This positive score indicates that, across a range of support offers, members of our network would recommend UK Youth's offer(s) to other organisations.

Youth organisations reported increased confidence in a number of areas

As a result of UK Youth's support, youth organisations reported higher confidence in their ability to embed innovative solutions (51%), connect and collaborate with other youth workers/organisations on local issues (51%) and secure funding (47%). Furthermore:

- 78% of those that had received support for youth leadership felt more comfortable embedding youth voice into service design, delivery and evaluation.
- 62% of those who had received access to tried and test youth work practice, curricula, training and professional development reported having an increase in confidence to scale interventions and activities.
- 80% reported increased confidence in developing /improving services and embedding solutions.
- 62% of those who received access to tried and test youth work practice, curricula, training



and professional development reported being more confident in scaling interventions and activities and 80% developing/improving services and embedding solutions.

Signposting, funding, resource sharing and training were amongst the core reasons for joining the network

59% of survey respondents identified signposting, funding, resources and training opportunities amongst the top reasons for joining UK Youth's network.

Funding and information sharing opportunities

The survey asked organisations which of UK Youth's offers they had taken up or engaged with over the previous year. Over 40% had engaged with our Newsletters and accessed grants and funding to deliver programmes.

The youth sector's challenges and emerging support needs

The most common challenges identified by those responding to the survey were:

- Funding and sustainability of the sector (93%)
- Workforce recruitment and development (59%)
- Managing data and demonstrating impact (42%)

Youth organisations stated that support is required to help youth workers and practitioners to increase their confidence and engagement levels in the following areas:

- Opportunities to connect with other youth workers/youth organisations and other sectors
- Access to tried and tested youth work practice and curricula
- Training and professional development opportunities
- Further support for bedding in youth leadership
- Support to access outdoor learning opportunities

78% would like more support with funding or support to access funding. Network members were experiencing rising costs, reduced funding and increased demand for current and additional services. Respondents recommended that to better support them the majority (78%) would like support with funding or support to access funding. This could include resources, signposting to funding opportunities and training on how to access funding in the future.

Opportunities to connect with and work collaboratively with other sectors was identified as a key gap and need. Survey respondents highlighted the need for further support, information, signposting and development opportunities such as training and residencies to support them to build stronger collaborative ways of working with other sectors. They also requested local and regional examples of cross-sector practice and for UK Youth to facilitate introductions with

contacts in other sectors.

Members of our network also highlighted a number of areas where they wanted to see an enhanced offer or more of a presence from UK Youth:

- **Advocacy and influencing**

The network would like UK Youth to do more on leading and supporting them with sector advocacy and influencing work - advocating for the value of youth work with government, funders and other sectors supporting young people. However, members of the network did identify that they had built confidence in this area.

- **Making outdoor learning experiences more accessible for young people**

32% of respondents were providing some form of outdoor learning provision but only 7% stated that they had accessed support from UK Youth relating to outdoor learning in the last year.

- **Better tailored and targeted support**

The network also suggested developing more targeted and specific resources for youth organisations working with particular marginalised groups and older age groups (18+). Members identified a need to improve access to support across the UK, across the four nations.

How UK Youth has been responding

1. **The availability of funding for youth organisations**

UK Youth has been distributing grants to youth organisations and cross-sector partnerships as well as upskilling youth organisations in how to apply for and access funding. However, we know that, with local authority spending on youth provision having been cut by 73% since 2010/11, it is the policies of central government that can truly change the fate and build the strength of youth organisations over the coming years – we have been working closely with political stakeholders from across the political spectrum to ensure that youth work gets the recognition and investment it needs.

2. **Tried and tested youth work practice and curricula**

Over the last year, UK Youth has launched new programmes and engaged local organisations as key delivery partners. For example, our new Summer Jobs programme is being piloted in Summer 2024 – we’re assessing the feasibility of this programme with an intention to scale it up over the next two years. Through our evaluations, we test our youth development programming and share tried and tested models with our network through curricula and toolkits – check out EmpowHER as one example of this.

3. **Network development**



Network development activity at UK Youth is increasingly focussed on convening cross-sector professionals and young people to solve issues and scale effective solutions – we know that the youth sector can't solve the biggest issues facing young people on its own. We do this through linking up cross-sector organisations in our network, by building understanding of youth work's value to other sectors (e.g. education, health, criminal justice, business, etc) and by finding and sharing best practice in cross-sector working. One example is the [Education and Enrichment](#): How partnerships between the education and youth sectors can improve the accessibility, quality and impact of enrichment activities research; conducted in partnership with NCS Trust, Duke of Edinburgh's Award and Centre for Education and Youth.

In 2024/25, we will be kicking off the Joined Up Institute – an exciting new programme of carefully curated cross-sector learning, engagement and convening that we believe can be a game-changer for a wide range of professionals working with young people across the UK. We have also revamped our network newsletter and other communication channels to keep our network informed and signposted.

4. Workforce recruitment and development

Linked to the Joined Up Institute, UK Youth is currently designing a new entry level graduate career development programme with and for the youth sector. We're already securing investment to pilot it in 2024/25 and we expect to scale the initiative in future. We know that big changes are needed in how youth workers are recognised and supported and we'll keep pushing for policy change, collaborating with allied partners like the National Youth Agency and directly supporting practitioners ourselves.

5. Thought-leadership and investment in outdoor learning

Following the success of [Adventures Away From Home in 2022/23](#), the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) increased its support for UK Youth in 2023/24. Over the Winter, we've delivered a scaled up Adventures Away from Home 2, engaging 83 outdoor learning providers in the programme and providing fully-funded outdoor learning places to 12,793 young people who face barriers to accessing outdoor experiences away from home. We've seen the hugely positive impact of these experiences, with young people developing socio-emotional skills and youth practitioners developing skills that they take away and apply to their own provision and practice. The evaluation is due to be published in June 2024.

6. Investing in youth leadership

Young people are central to much what we do at UK Youth – they support and critique our research; co-design programmes and campaigns with us; join us on engagement visits with political stakeholders and so much more. Through our coordination of the [#iwill](#) movement (in partnership with Volunteering Matters), we're not just supporting young people ([#iwill Ambassadors](#)) to take the lead on the issues that affect them, we're conducting [research to understand the conditions that enable youth social action to thrive](#). We need organisations beyond the youth sector to give young people a stronger voice.

7. Proving and improving the value of youth work through data



UK Youth is an instrumental partner in a number of collaborative initiatives that are seeking to improve and standardise how the youth sector measures and articulates impact. For example, we are working with government and other national youth sector organisations through a Back Youth Alliance ‘data standards’ initiative, ensuring that organisations align on the data they are collecting to build a stronger, collective evidence base. We’re also working with infrastructure organisations and funders through the new [Youth Work Evidence Alliance](#) and refining UK Youth’s own Impact Framework to ensure that we (and the organisations that we support and partner with) are measuring impact in the most efficient, effective and dynamic ways.

8. Demonstrating the value of youth work to policy-makers

UK Youth’s research has received strong recognition in recent years. Most notably, our [#Untapped](#) research explored the economic value of youth work. More recently, we’ve published [government-funded research](#) looking at the impact of youth centre closures and longitudinal analysis exploring how the positive impact of regular youth provision is sustained into later life.

Alongside our programme of research, UK Youth is heavily involved in setting the policy agenda. We work closely with other national youth organisations through the Back Youth Alliance to put national solutions to the Government. Our policy team has a [busy programme of political engagements throughout the year](#), supports the youth sector to understand the political landscape and works with other organisations to [give young people the strongest possible voice](#) in decision-making, particularly [in this election year](#).

9. Working across the four Nations

UK Youth is of course a UK-wide organisation and it’s important for us to work closely with our partners and infrastructure organisations in the devolved nations. We’re exploring ways to build stronger, mutually-beneficial relationships with our Nation partners so that the youth sector, in every corner of the UK, benefits from consistent support and advocacy. We’re also exploring where UK Youth can bring the most value to the devolved nations – for example, by supporting nation-specific research.

10. Regularly tracking the needs and preferences of our network

In 2024, our Network Survey is exploring some of the themes discussed above in more detail – particularly themes around cross-sector working and workforce development needs in the youth sector. This year, our Network Survey is open to cross-sector organisations as well as youth work-specific organisations. Alongside the Network Survey, we are also consulting with a number of key stakeholders in order to shape our future work.

UK Youth gathers insights from our network in a number of ways: For example, in 2023, we relaunched [Just One Question](#) – each month, we ask youth practitioners one simple question to get a snapshot of youth practitioners’ views on quite specific themes. We also share back what we hear so that the workforce gets to hear others’ opinions and have a louder collective voice on key issues affecting them and young people.