

Just One Question Insights – January 2025

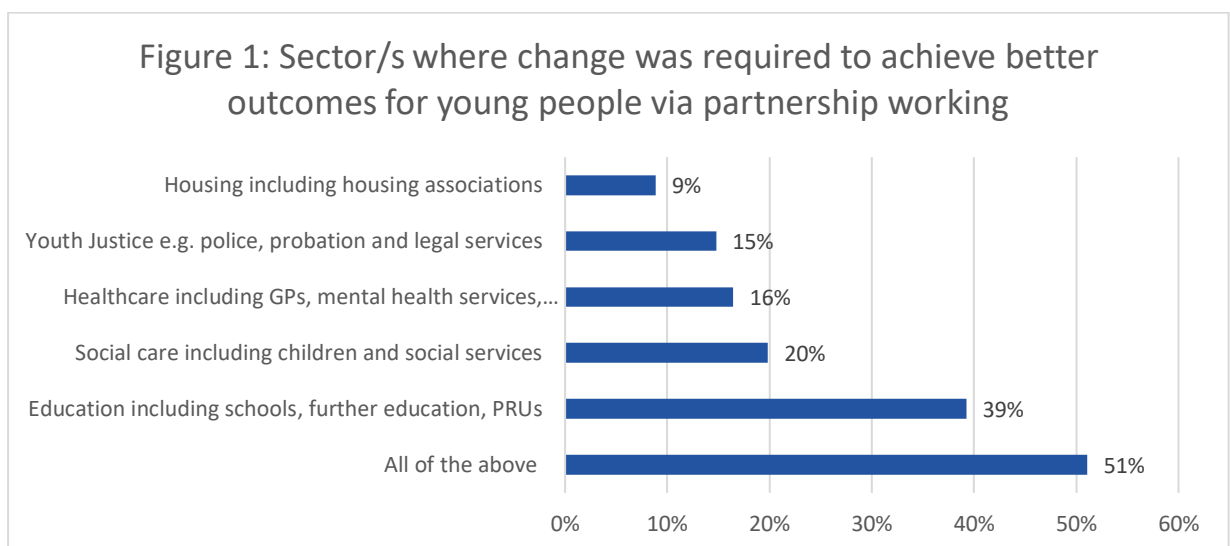
This month we asked: Based on your experience what is the one change that would improve working together with the selected sectors to achieve better outcomes for young people?

Respondents were asked to select from the following sectors: Education, Social Care, Healthcare, Youth Justice and Housing.

We received: 237 responses

Key Findings

- Figure 1 highlights the sectors where respondents felt change was needed to improve outcomes for young people. More than half (51%) of practitioners selected **all five sectors**, indicating a strong recognition of their interdependence. The most suggested change was **enhancing collaborative working across sectors**, as many respondents noted inefficiencies and poor outcomes due to fragmented services.



- Education (39%) came out as the **most frequently selected individual sector** where change was required. Schools and education establishments are often the first point of contact for identifying young people in need of additional support, whether this is due to safeguarding concerns, mental health or being at the risk of exclusion.
- Practitioners recommended the following changes for the education sector to improve cross-sector collaboration and achieve better outcomes for young people:
 - Improve communication and partnerships for a more cohesive approach.
 - Integrate outdoor learning, mentoring, after-school clubs, and support from non-teaching staff, to create a more enriched learning experience for young people.
 - Strengthening connections between schools, healthcare, and social care to address mental health challenges.

- A further 20% of the respondents highlighted that change was needed in the social care sector. They identified the struggle with high caseloads in social care and said that this makes collaboration with youth work, schools, healthcare providers, and justice organisations difficult. Some changes that were suggested included:
 - Establish shared budgets, facilities and management structures to create a more united approach to supporting young people.
 - Have trust-based systems for sharing information across sectors, to provide better tailored support for vulnerable young people.
- A lack of early intervention often leads to young people entering the justice system instead of receiving necessary support. Recommended changes for youth justice included:
 - Shift towards preventative approaches rather than reactive interventions.
 - Strengthen partnerships between youth justice, voluntary youth organisations, and community services.
 - Improve rehabilitation and reintegration programs for young offenders, which involve youth workers throughout.

Insight into the changes needed across different sectors

- Collaboration across sectors is essential. Respondents emphasised that better communication and structured partnership working between education, social care, healthcare, youth justice, and housing would lead to more effective support for young people.
- Key recommendations included:
 - Recognising youth workers as essential professionals alongside teachers and social workers, with resources dedicated to improving mutual trust and understanding.
 - Embedding multi-agency teams within schools (including social workers, youth workers, and mental health professionals) to address issues early.
 - Improving data-sharing mechanisms to prevent loss of key information due to staff turnover and fragmented services.
 - Enhancing post-custody support for young people transitioning back into education, housing, and employment.
 - Securing ring-fenced funding for alternative education settings and youth intervention programs.
- There is a need for better data-sharing mechanisms and regular inter-agency meetings to prevent the loss of key contacts due to staff turnover. Education, social care and youth justice should have access to share case management tools to improve coordination between professionals.

"We often work in isolation because there's no clear way to share information between schools, social services, and healthcare—everyone is working on different systems."

- Many respondents noted the challenge of "firefighting" within their sectors, where overwhelming workloads prevent the development of meaningful inter-agency relationships. Addressing this issue requires dedicated resources, staff, and time to build effective cross-sector partnerships.

"Ensure that youth workers are valued as professionals and youth work is valued as a profession and given the same level of respect as other professionally qualified workers/services."

Education

Education emerged as the primary sector engaged in multi-agency collaboration. However, only 8% of respondents reported integrating education with social care, despite schools frequently supporting vulnerable children. Even fewer (4%) included partnerships with healthcare and youth justice. The lack of collaboration increases the risk of missed opportunities for early intervention by social care, healthcare, or justice services. While schools play a crucial role, they often face resource constraints and insufficient training to effectively support young people in need.

Some of the changes recommended for the education sector were:

- Offer more support to families to help parents and care givers recognise and address issues before they severely affect their children.
- Creating a more structured partnership approach that includes youth workers, schools and support/family services to reduce family breakdown and schools exclusions.
- Have a greater understanding and provide better resources for neurodiverse young people.
- Promote pathways for social mobility and economic opportunity to raise young people's aspirations.
- There is a call for ring-fenced funding to ensure that alternative education settings such as PRU's and additional services are supported.

"Consistent funding and recognition of alternative education providers, ensuring that students placed in non-traditional settings receive the same level of investment and opportunities as their mainstream peers."

- Youth workers should be consulted and engaged early to ensure that young people are supported across both their educational and personal development needs.

... 'professional services' asked about what youth club and what young people attend at initial interviews and engage with youth practitioners much more early on when carrying out interventions. Utilise the Trusted Adults that youth workers are to enhance support for young people. We are here, ready to work with you!"

Healthcare

Healthcare responses highlighted the need for better referrals, strong partnerships with the voluntary sector, and improved information sharing. Healthcare needs sustainable and regular funding to support community based preventative care. This would help to reduce pressures on NHS services.

"To establish a framework for social prescribing for CYP nationally with a clear outcome model and sustainable funding."

Some of the changes recommended for the healthcare sector include:

- Implement mandatory training programs to enhance expertise and foster stronger collaboration between statutory and third-sector services.
- Prioritise early intervention to manage mental health and physical health issues before they escalate.
- Reduce silo working and enable better integration of healthcare and community-based support.
- Establish a framework for social prescribing for children and young people, which will have clear outcomes and sustainable funding.

Social care

65% of social care professionals reported working mainly within their own sector, with only limited integration with other services. Their most common partnerships included: youth justice (18%), healthcare (12%) and housing (6%).

Respondents called for easier access to relevant social care funding. These respondents also called for shared budgets, shared facilities and shared management structures to improve relationships between services.

Some of the changes recommended for the social care sector included:

- More consistent and long-term funding for youth services, early intervention programs, and community organisations who can provide holistic support to young people.
- Sharing detailed and relevant information across sectors (whilst remaining privacy and safeguarding protocols) to offer the most appropriate, tailored support.
- Creation of user-led support networks and services that are tailored to the unique needs of young people. This could include addressing challenges such as neurodiversity, social isolation and family challenges.

Youth Justice

Respondents reported very little cross-sector collaboration involving youth justice, with only 18% of respondents reporting working with social care and 10% with housing.

Respondents called for more youth justice funding to provide adequate rehabilitation and reintegration support for young people, with the emphasis on resources before and after custody. They also felt that young people should be more involved in decision-making processes. Overall, there was frustration that the justice system remains reactive rather than preventative, engaging mostly when young people have encountered a legal issue or within the system already.

Some of the changes recommended for those in the youth justice sector were:

- Have better communication methods with other sectors to ensure a clear point of contact when working together.
- Ensure a wider range of support programs are accessible and beneficial to young offenders.
- Increased funding for trusted providers that focus on prevention activities and help young people engage with positive community activities.

Housing

Despite its importance in providing stability and support for young people, very few responses highlighted strong partnerships between housing and other services.

"Young people leaving care or the justice system are at huge risk of homelessness, but housing isn't always included in multi-agency meetings."

A number of responses highlight challenges that young people face regarding housing instability and the need for better joined-up support systems. Such as:

- *"We work closely with housing associations to deliver community-based play and youth work initiatives, improving community cohesion and reducing isolation for children in vulnerable housing situations."*
- *"Our team has experience supporting young people at risk of homelessness, providing early intervention and support services to prevent housing instability."*



- *"Through community engagement projects, we bridge the gap between housing providers and residents, ensuring that young people and families have access to essential services and opportunities for social mobility."*