NYA
National Youth Agency

County Lines
A Youth Work Response

Professional Statutory Regulatory Body for Youth Work

https://nya.org.uk/2020/06/hidden-in-plain-sight/

https://nya.org.uk/resource/responding-to-youth-violence-through-youth-work/

Hidden in Plain Sight

Gangs and Exploitation
A youth work response to COVID-19

May 2020

NYA
National Youth Agency

Headline statistics indicate a drop in gang activity and exploitation.

They show a reduction in drug-related arrests as a proxy for gang activity, and a drop in children 'missing from home' and, therefore, a reduction in county lines as a form of child criminal exploitation.

However, NYA have dug deeper, going beyond the headlines to establish that there has been a change in patterns of behaviour rather than necessarily an overall reduction. These patterns will vary by area and by region, but there is an emerging picture of gang activity throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Scale of need

- 60,000 young people identify as a gang member
- 300,000 young people know someone **who's in a gang**
- 500,000 young people in groups exposed to **'risky behaviour'** associated with gangs
- 700,000 persistently **absent** from education
- 380,000 young people are homeless or at risk of **homelessness**
- Many vulnerable young people still going outdoors to avoid toxic trio when trapped at home.

- COVID19: **3x** the number of young people in need post COVID19
- COVID19: Gangs preyed on **different demographics**. Young women, those with SEND and younger ages.

Drug supply changes - COVID19

- Lockdown restricted and changed the flow of drugs into the UK.

- Over and under supply of drugs due to supply chain disruption.

- Ports closed and restricting public transportation hit the capacity to run a line.

- Gang activity became increasingly hidden as detection methods couldn't keep up with behavioural changes.

- Gang leaders had to take a more public role.

Youth workers reporting gangs using lockdown/restrictions to recruit more vulnerable young people.

Young people today are not the young people of yesterday.

So we can no longer focus on old models and approaches rather we should be adapting new models and approaches to meet the needs of children and young people in 2020 and beyond.
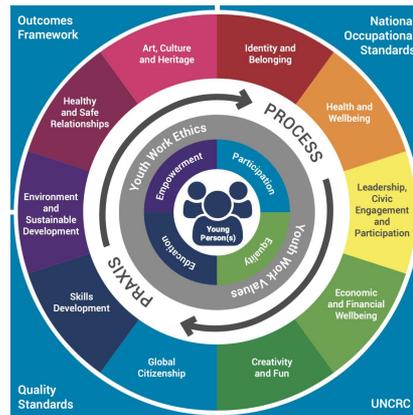
'On Road' A Youth Work Response

Language and Behaviour - Understanding the changing face of youth cultures and being able to adapt in any settings.

Dress Code - Understanding that clothing is symbolic and depending on the individuals/groups engaged, can be a barrier or used to gain access.

Knowledge (Agenda, Grassroots, Geography, History, Interventions and Boundaries) - Knowledge exceeds just knowing your craft but also includes the knowledge of the people, community and spaces of engagement. Also, understanding which models and interventions have not been successful vs being unsuccessful in particular environments in order to develop appropriate responses.

Credibility - It is not just about what you are but focusing on 'who' you are. Young people that live deviant lifestyles will not work with people who have no credibility amongst their peers, family and wider community.

'On Road'… Cont.

Social Capital - It is not what you know, but who you know. Most young people will not seek help but if you are the person they trust, using that trust can help them access services that they would not engage with otherwise.

Gender - Recognising that gender roles are important when addressing young men or women that are victims/perpetrators of youth criminality.

Legislation and Policies - Safeguarding and Risk Assessment - Ensuring that one understands the importance of following and creating polices aimed at ensuring the safety of both the professional and young people. In addition, it is also important to note that some youth work polices may be very different to how other organisations work. i.e. with lone working, one to one support or mediation in hostile environments.

Managing Conflict - Acknowledging that when working in environments that are violent or have been impacted by gangs, there could be significant community conflicts. However, the principles of 'on road' youth work if applied correctly enables professionals to navigate these environments in a safe way.

https://www.youthandpolicy.org/articles/on-road-youth-work/
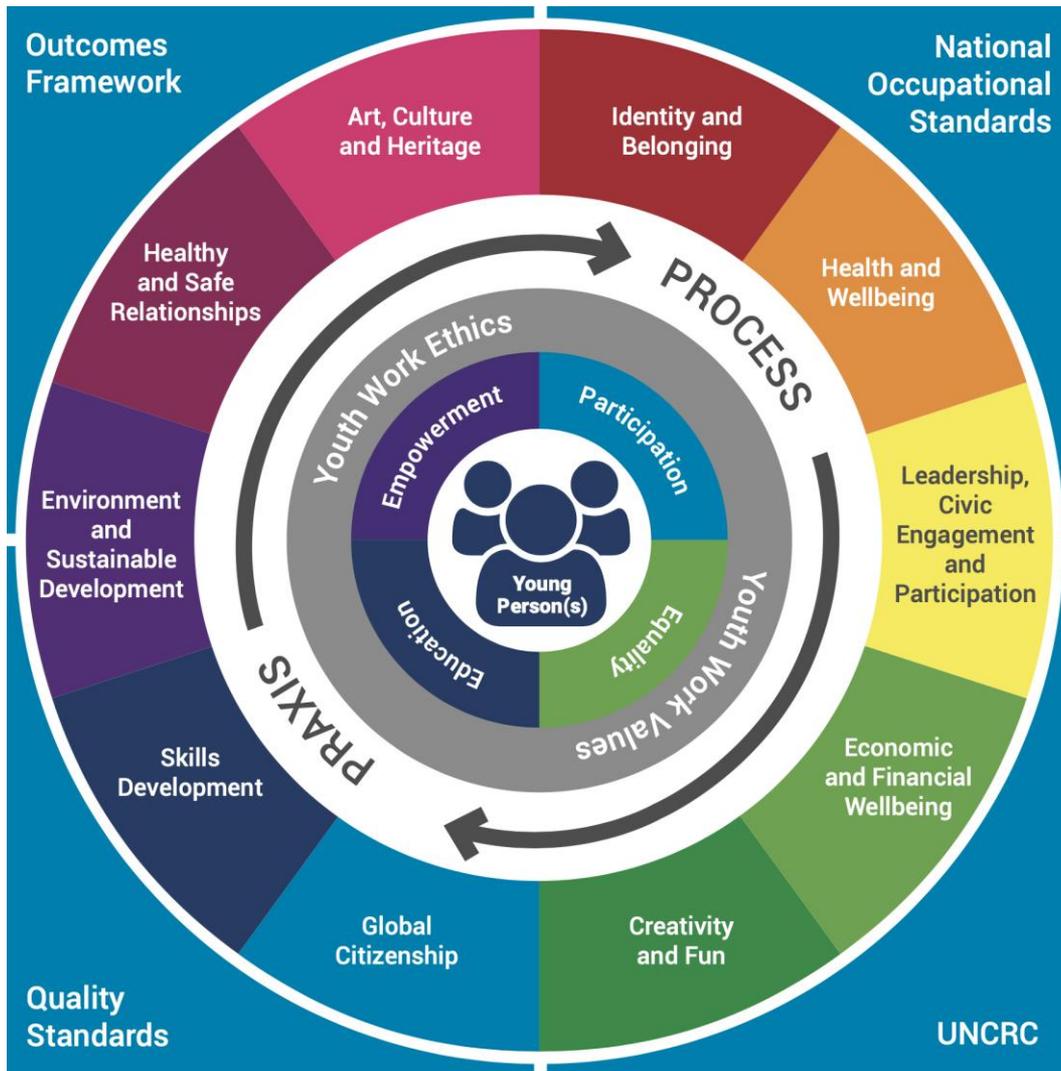
Theory of Change | Youth Work

Youth Work

Open access, outreach or targeted support	Curriculum and pedgogy: emotional literacy and social theory	Situated learning: community and cultural context	Experiential learning: critical dialogue and democracy	Peer education: developmental group work	Choice and creativity: adventure, play and arts-based	Respect, diversity and equality of opportunity	National Occupational Standards

Inputs

Access to safe spaces in the community and digital	Voluntary engagement and trusted adult relationships	Regular activities and opportunities for social action and volunteering	Mentoring, information, advice and guidance	Needs-led support and issues-specific learning	Co-designed and co-produced activity, projects and services	Practical or technical skills, awards and work experiences	Bridge and support to other services and multi agency working

Young person

Feel safe, able to access facilities and actitivies, and able to ask for support	Build positive peers networks and mix with others from different backgrounds	Feel connected to and included in their communities	Build social and professional networks and make connections	Make a positive contribution to their communities	Stronger communities, more cohesive and inclusive
Engage voluntarily, build trust and relationships with adults	Participate and challenge themselves in a safe environment	Aware of and able to access other provision	Feel they have a say on decisions and services that impact on them	Feel valued and value themselves, for a sense of belonging and achievement	

Intermediate outcomes

Knowledge and skills
- Self awareness and emotional intelligence
- Social and communication skills
- Empathy and understanding of other people
- Acquired knowledge, planning and problem solving

Attitudes and capabilities
- Increased aspiration, confidence and agency
- Increased independence, resilience and determination
- Informed attitude to risk
- More positive about people from different backgrounds

Social behaviours
- Engaged in more postive activities, more often
- Increased willingness to take action to help others
- Improved decision making, voice and advocacy
- Democratic engagement

Community
- Needs identified early and access to support services
- Increased social capital and more positive relationships, peers and intergenrational
- Increased sense of belonging and community cohesion

Collective impact
- Stronger families, friendships and civil society
- Active citizenship, respect and equality of opportunity
- Improved education, employment, health and mental wellbeing

Outcomes

Safe and secure in the modern world, including digital	Skilled and equipped to learn and earn	Positive health and wellbeing	Happy and confident in their future	Active in their communities and civil society	Democratic engagement and their views respected