

# Warwickshire County Council Targeted Youth Support

## Peer Review

25 – 27 June 2024

# Executive summary

Warwickshire is a largely rural area, with a population of 571,010. The County Council are ambitious for children, young people and families and in recent years launched the 2021 – 2030 Children and Young People Strategy, holding, at its heart, the Child Friendly Warwickshire programme. Warwickshire Targeted Youth Service (TYS) are to be commended for the work they have done over recent years to protect a youth service during challenging financial times. The Peer Review team are impressed with the retention of JNC Terms and Conditions, numbers of qualified youth workers and an investment in trainees and apprentices to develop the workforce. The report expands on this, alongside recommendations to further develop and improve on these strengths.

The focus of the review, as directed by Warwickshire County Council (WCC), was Leadership and Management, and Practice and Impact. As such, this report pays specific attention to these two key areas as they relate to the statutory duty (Section 507b of the Education Act 1996). However, these foci can often overlap with other peer review themes, meaning that other thematic areas are occasionally noted but reported in relation to the two identified areas.

## 1. Key recommendations

There are a range of suggestions and observations within the main section of the report that will inform practical actions to support this. The following are the Peer Review team's key recommendations to WCC:

### i. Comprehensive mapping exercise

To work with internal and external statutory partners and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE) to map all youth work provision, including needs and gaps. Having a clear and full picture of what is available and what is needed will aid Warwickshire Targeted Youth Service (TYS) to identify any gaps in provision, including quality and types of provision. Likewise, this exercise will aid WCC to reduce duplication and make links and new partnerships to ensure the best use of resources to support positive outcomes for young people. This will also include having up to date information to signpost young people effectively. This is an important step to understand and assess youth work sufficiency in Warwickshire.

### ii. Explore the development of a participation model and strategy for Warwickshire TYS

A participation strategy for WCC TYS would set out a concrete plan for participation activity and expectations, including informal and formal approaches to participation and youth voice. This would make clear the opportunities and expectations for young people within the service, to compliment the opportunities available via the wider Youth Council. The development of a participation strategy would outline a clear pathway for young people engaged with TYS to influence the youth work they experience and more broadly across

the whole service and local decision makers. Selecting a model to base the WCC participation approach on will lay the foundations for effective delivery by enabling a clearer articulation of the work for all stakeholders. A rights-based approach such as the Lundy Model is very practical and lends itself well to TYS. The new Hear by Right self-assessment framework is a free tool to support organisations to plan, develop and evaluate their participation practices.

### **iii. Develop a clear TYS strategy and annual plan**

A TYS specific strategy, underpinned by a re-write of the current Warwickshire Youth Work Approach 2021 (operational document), should clearly state what youth work is and the distinct role TYS has within children's services across the local authority, such as the unique position youth work plays in the Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme (FFFCPP). The production of such a strategy would identify links to other partners (internal and external), and the significant contribution TYS makes to the Children and Young People's Strategy (2021-2030) and identified priorities.

Accompanying this, it would be advantageous to redevelop the operational plan as an annual plan. This would outline how the work delivered meets the strategic aims and objectives of the service (and subsequently how these feed into the wider children and young people strategy). The annual plan should be available to and understood by all stakeholders (including young people) and would play a key role in developing the strategy. This will build a sense of ownership by youth workers and young people and create links to the strategic leadership.

### **iv. Develop data maturity to understand the contribution TYS makes towards WCC priorities**

It is commendable that Warwickshire TYS have a clear and strong commitment to placing youth voice at the centre of efforts to measure the impact of the service. However, the current impact measuring system relies very heavily on a self-reporting system and is only one of many potential strands of data that could be utilised. One example of where TYS could further enhance current impact measurement practices is knife crime and youth violence. Triangulating the current self-reporting data with crime, school and / or health data would significantly enhance the TYS approach. This in turn would aid in better guiding future priorities.

### **v. Further enhance the WCC's role in coordinating the voluntary sector networks**

It would be helpful to further consider how WCC can coordinate and bring together voluntary sector networks in an equitable way to ensure all relevant partners have a *seat at the table* and contribute to delivering effective outcomes for young people. Local area networks and/or an alliance members body could bring the voluntary sector and local authority together to co-design and co-deliver a plan for youth work, making best use of resource and ensuing high quality youth work provision for young people. WCC's role could focus on creating a mutually supportive and non-competitive environment within which organisations can effectively work alongside one another with a shared vision for young people. This work is already being shaped; WCC colleagues have shared there is an existing Warwickshire Youth Alliance and plans to further develop this. This is to be

commended; the development of this will enable a more holistic Warwickshire wide service for all young people (strengthening statutory duty delivery).

## 2. Summary of the Peer Review approach

Independent external evaluation and feedback from the sector has endorsed peer reviews as an approach that promotes learning from a sector-led improvement perspective. All LA's and their partners are responsible for improving outcomes for children and young people, and it is recognised that an external and independent view can help to accelerate or consolidate progress.

The Peer Review team was sourced specifically to address the areas of focus highlighted by WCC. The team consisted of senior colleagues with significant experience of leading and managing children's and young people's services within local government and the VCSE sector, supported by an experienced peer review manager

### The Peer Review team

Peers were selected based on their relevant experience and expertise.

- **Xyna Prasad**, Peer Reviewer, Safeguarding and Risk Lead, National Youth Agency (Social Worker)
- **Laura Keegan**, Peer Reviewer, Quality Practice Manager, National Youth Agency
- **Matthew Pilling**, Peer Reviewer, Senior Manager (Young People, Early Help and Prevention), Cheshire West and Chester Council
- **Andy Lloyd**, Peer Review Manager, Head of Quality and Standards, National Youth Agency
- **Richard McHugh**, Peer Review Co-ordinator, Organisation Development Manager, National Youth Agency

### The process

The Peer Review team prepared by reviewing a range of documents and information to ensure they were familiar with the local authority and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent three days on-site during which they:

- Heard from over 50 people, including: young people, front-line practitioners, managers, partners, parents
- Undertook visits to settings, observing sessions and talking to professionals.

This report provides a summary of the Peer Review team's findings. It builds on the feedback presentation provided by the peer team at the end of their on-site visit on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024. By its nature, the peer review is a snapshot in time and reflects what is presented and observed during the review period.

Some of the areas may already be in scope for development by WCC.

### 3. Scope and Focus

WCC identified two out of the five areas of focus for the peer review, and these were agreed at the beginning of the scoping process. The five areas are listed below with the two selected themes highlighted:

- **Leadership and Management** (strategy, quality assurance, workforce support and development)
- **Practice and Impact** (skills, needs assessment, impact and evaluation)
- **Sufficiency** (statement of offer and secured resources to deliver, accessibility for all young people – targeted and open access)
- **Partnerships** (LA and VCS sector, distinct youth work within allied services)
- **Youth Voice and Participation** (structures and opportunities, rights-based and asset-based approaches, co-production of services / programmes)

During the on-site visit, the Peer Review team identified several cross-cutting issues that were covered in the final day feedback presentation, and these are included in the main findings.

### 4. Main Findings

#### Leadership and Management

##### Strengths:

##### *Workforce leadership and development*

Warwickshire are be commended for the work they have done in recent years to rebuild a youth service and centrally delivered open access provision. The Peer Review team were impressed to learn that WCC has a strong commitment to maintaining Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) terms and conditions and increasing numbers of youth workers, including trainees and apprentices. Youth workers felt that the retention of JNC terms and conditions affords a sense of protection and security through this investment. Likewise, retaining JNC terms and conditions is particularly estimable in the pursuit of attracting and maintaining experienced qualified workers. However, despite this the LA has had some difficulties in recruiting suitably experienced and qualified youth workers in recent years. This reflects national workforce challenges.

To mitigate difficulties in recruiting experienced qualified youth workers, WCC have established a local culture of grow your own youth workers supplemented with robust qualification routes (i.e. apprenticeships). These trainee workers are supported in their development by highly experienced, long serving WCC youth workers.

WCC targeted youth support service benefits from a good balance of experienced and new staff, which enables a system of peer support and development within the workforce. During the review it was notable that there is a clear and robust structure for supporting trainee youth workers with a work 'buddy' system, as well as mutual support meetings and shadowing opportunities. Across all respondents, it was clear that youth workers value the LA's investment in bespoke training and development. Examples of training and

development that the Peer Review team heard about include safeguarding, first aid and other continuous professional development opportunities.

During the review it was clear that the service is managed and led by experienced and passionate staff from a youth work background. The importance placed on youth workers managing youth workers within the service resonated across the review. Equally, the Peer Review team encountered clear examples of good management of provision at local service provision level. Across the workforce there is a clear structure for supervision, team meetings and opportunities for reflection. Beyond internal structures WCC TYS management are well respected by partners across the county, which is indicative of a positive partnership environment.

### ***Responsiveness and profile***

TYS are held in high esteem, both internally and externally. Respondents articulated how the insights that the service can provide are often invaluable and make significant contributions within the context of interdisciplinary practice. One respondent explained that *"[We are] lucky to work with targeted youth [service, they] give perspectives that may not have been thought of"*. The ability of TYS to work effectively across a broad spectrum of functions was clear across the review. For example, several respondents explained that TYS contribute to all areas of the 2021 to 2030 Children and Young People's Strategy, although this was not universally understood or articulated (see recommendations).

The service has developed agility over several years, with significant changes across a five to six-year period. It was described as a *"service has grown [...] from acorns"*. The service has fought hard to protect a youth work ethos. One respondent pointed out the merit of the achievements in this and that this has necessitated *"the constant reinventing of the service and the ability to always be on the next page is a credit"*.

Leadership of the service is invested in raising the profile of youth work, which aids in ensuring that youth work is viewed in equal standing to other disciplines within the local authority. This ethos in leadership extends into the directorate with the Director for Children and Families Service personally advocating for youth workers to be seen in equal standing alongside other Children's Service professionals. One respondent described this in terms of as being both valued yet unique:

*"This is the first time I have heard a director regularly speak about youth workers alongside social workers and family support workers in directorate meetings. We definitely have equity with other professions"*

### **Areas for Consideration:**

#### ***Strategy***

The team at WCC have worked hard to protect a youth service offer during turbulent budgetary times, and their protection of a youth services offer is to be commended. However, despite a clear commitment to excellent youth work delivery, there is a challenge for the wider staff team in recognising and articulating what the strategy is for youth work in



Warwickshire today, and as part of the FFCPP transformation. There is an opportunity for leadership to work with the staff team to set a distinctly mapped vision and strategy for youth work in Warwickshire that situates it proudly in the broader CYP offer and articulates its unique value clearly. Youth workers in Warwickshire today are a key part of a multi-disciplinary ecosystem around young people. An ambitious Youth Work Strategy would connect youth workers to their role purpose and place strategically, as well as operationally. This would strengthen their appreciation and delivery of modern, contextualised youth work.

WCC has an existing Children and Young People Strategy (2021 to 2030), a 'Warwickshire Youth Work Approach' (2023) and an Early Help in Warwickshire Partnership Strategy Review (2021) document. The Peer Review team felt that now is the time to build on TYS strengths and review their strategic documents. Youth workers expressed a view for renewed clarity of the TYS direction and strategy.

Despite some practitioners articulating the understanding of where TYS is implicit in the CYP strategy and vision, this was not universal. Some youth workers particularly did not feel that they understood what the vision is for youth work in Warwickshire, and a strategy that clearly sets this out in the broader context would help this. It would also give the explicit opportunity to celebrate WCC's ongoing and continued commitment to youth work for all young people in the county. Some youth workers did not feel it was within their remit to know what the priorities are for youth work, and did not know therefore how to engage with the CYP strategy in terms of their specific role for young people.

In the context of Warwickshire being a wave two LA of the Families First for Children Pathfinder Pilot (FFCPP), it will be important for the LA to produce up-to-date guidance on the Warwickshire model and strategy for youth work. This will provide a youth work specific reference point for youth workers within and beyond the LA guiding a youth work identity and ethos across the county. The Peer Review team feel that updating these documents would be best supported by supplementary briefings to best ensure that WCC's perspective on youth work is recognised and embedded across the diverse workforce.

The Peer Review team recognise that TYS managers have put significant effort and energy into maintaining youth work in the county.

It was observed that the team are incredibly responsive across the partnership, providing multiple services which some interviewees felt were not sustainable. Understanding and articulating the role youth work plays in a multi-disciplinary eco-system around a young person in its own right will go some way to addressing these challenges. Leadership and management are clear about role, function and purpose, but this understanding is not shared across the whole staff team. To develop a specific TYS strategy, would directly steer youth work in Warwickshire and provide clarity to partners and the workforce where to deploy and deliver resources, aligned against agreed priorities within the C&YP Strategy (2021-2030).

Alongside a TYS strategy there is now an opportunity to build on strengths and refresh a comprehensive mapping exercise and needs assessment, detailing the full provision offer and identifying any gaps in offer. Any strategy should critically be under-pinned by this mapping and needs assessment.

In talking about comprehensive mapping of youth work provision, the statutory duty (Section 507b) refers to developing a deep and rich understanding of needs through a range of activities including carrying out local needs analysis and community profiling, as well as analysis of how these fit with existing provision (beyond but including location). This, as for other key recommendations made in the report, can be supported by the [NYA tool kit](#) for fulfilling the statutory duty.

## **Workforce**

It is important to note that the NYA support and encourage Warwickshire's approach to retaining JNC terms and conditions and employment of full-time qualified level 6 youth workers, as detailed in the [NYSAB Roadmap](#) and [NYA Manifesto](#). This is not replicated in the majority of authorities across the country and should be commended.

From discussions with WCC colleagues and reading the pre-review materials provided, the Peer Review team recognised that there is a high ratio of full-time to part-time youth workers (15 full-time and 5 part-time). In open access sessions visited there were, in some instances, two full-time qualified youth workers supported by one part-time youth worker<sup>1</sup>.

In the context of economically challenging and uncertain times, there could be value in exploring other configurations of ratio of full to part-time staffing for open access universal youth provision<sup>2</sup>. This would free and enable full-time, professionally qualified workers to focus on high-end targeted intervention activities that require significant time investment and skill. The Peer Review team recognise that, as a targeted service, TYS have a high volume of one-to-one work and require the employment of 15 full-time equivalent (FTE) qualified youth workers to meet this demand. Any consideration of reconfiguring ratios of full to part-time staff for open access universal sessions would have to be explored in the context of that work and potentially the service supported with further part-time staff resource.

The retention of JNC youth workers delivering both targeted services and open access was recognised as a service strength in providing seamless pathways between the two, meaning vulnerable young people felt supported into community provision. Many young people we spoke to highly valued their youth workers who they met 1:1 and saw in provision, such as their local youth club. There may be localised evidence that young people successfully engaging with community provision are less likely to re-enter targeted services at a later stage. If so, this evidence could form part of cost benefit analysis.

## **Schools offer**

The Warwickshire TYS schools offer provides a comprehensive and wide-ranging menu of support for challenges being faced by young people in schools. However, during the review, it became apparent that this is not consistently engaged with by schools. Through observation, the Peer Review team noted that only a limited percentage of group work

---

<sup>1</sup> Often open access sessions in other authorities would see two part-time youth workers supervised by one full-time youth worker deployed. Such a model ensures quality through the supervision of less experienced part-time staff by an experienced full-time youth worker, providing higher value for money model.

<sup>2</sup> This is something that other local authorities find to be useful as an efficient way of staffing such sessions.



referrals from schools converted to intervention. The Peer Review team felt consideration could be given to why this is and would suggest a full review of the offer, with an aim to improve the rate from referral to completed interventions. This would maximise efficiencies and impact of the service.

In academic year 2023 – 2024, 18 out of 38 referrals progressed to actual interventions. In 2023-24, 17 referrals were received: resulting in 8 delivered, 5 waiting to be delivered, 2 being carried over to the next academic year (2024 - 2025) and 2 not having sufficient numbers to be able to progress. Additionally, youth workers noted that they felt the school's work may 'not be working' and shared some concerns with the school's offer, alluding to schools using the intervention for purposes other than TYS aims and objectives.

For these reasons, there would be value in measuring the impact of this work to fully understand the outcomes experienced for the young people involved. In pursuit of the best use of resources through targeted deployment, it may be of value to further explore the opportunities and risks afforded by the school offer. WCC may find it useful to carry out a consultation with schools and youth work staff as part of a wider mapping exercise<sup>3</sup>.

It is important to note that there was limited engagement with schools who were unable to attend due to unforeseen challenges, so this is based on data, one interview and staff perceptions.

## **Practice and Impact**

### **Strengths:**

#### ***Impact measurement***

In 2020 TYS was given a temporary increase in funding and were set a challenge to demonstrate the effectiveness of youth work. From this, new evaluation measures were developed using the Outcome 2.0 toolkit. Positive distance travelled for young people was clearly evidenced resulting in more permanent funding and the growth of TYS over the last five years.

TYS have continued to evolve evaluation and outcome measurements during this period and have developed a strong self-reporting youth informed evidence base underpinning their engagement with young people. This is effectively presented using positive infographics and reporting systems. Young people's voice is central to this evidence base as a self-reporting model and this aspect should be celebrated. Respondents articulated that youth voice is well formed in the context of the Youth Council and similar formalised forums, also indicating that at day-to-day delivery level, the voices of young people contribute to the context of individual local provision<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> Please see earlier point about mapping the local offer.

<sup>4</sup> However, as noted in the Areas for Consideration section below, this is not currently connected in influencing decision making at local authority wide level.

## ***Practice and partnerships***

The Early Help Partnership has demonstrable mechanisms for triangulating and substantiating impact data. For example, the Peer Review team met with partners from other statutory agencies and were informed by those representing the police that in 2023 they received 5 instances of intelligence from TYS youth work colleagues, while in the first two months of 2024 they received 56 instances from youth work colleagues. This provides evidence of the youth work relationship with communities and the contribution it makes to meeting shared priorities.

The Peer Review team met with partners across Early Help and the strong positive working relationship held with TYS including youth workers, senior youth workers and the team manager was clear. Early Help partners described an innovative and creative approach, led by managers and evident through all levels. There were also clear messages from a range of partners pointing out that they could count on TYS to help in challenging circumstances.

There is evidence of great youth work practice, led by passionate, enthusiastic and knowledgeable youth workers and youth work managers, who understand their communities. There are several examples where youth workers have supported young people in connecting with the community and the wider youth offer. This includes instances where young people may not have had positive relationships with other adults. Youth workers are equipped to enable young people to build confidence to access other services.

Most of these examples lie in the targeted 1:1 offer. Whilst this work sits very comfortably alongside Social Care and Early Help teams, much work has been carried out to ensure referrals keep a youth work ethos and maintain youth work principles and identity. There was a clear understanding amongst the teams that all this work only happens on a voluntary basis and young people are central to their plan.

Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) has strong positive working relationships with targeted youth support that can be seen in the articulated description from partners, the offer of activities by WCC Targeted Youth Support and the take up of opportunities by young people attending the provisions. The relationship with WCC Targeted Youth Support has enabled a growth in the offer to secondary aged young people with increase from 6% to 25%.

## ***Training and development***

The Peer Review team were impressed by the children's directorate commitment to developing and training new youth workers. The children's workforce strategy ensures there is an equal emphasis on training youth workers alongside other disciplines. This includes a commitment to bursaries for year 13 pupils to train as social workers or youth workers. There is a recognition that the service was struggling to recruit new youth workers from outside the authority and a positive response to develop a strong '*grow your own*' ethos.

## **Areas for Consideration:**

### ***Data maturity and impact on priorities***

Whilst the service has a wealth of self-reporting data and evidence of impact on individuals and groups, this is not uniformly and universally triangulated with other statutory partner data. TYS is making contributions to the children strategy priorities and priorities of the partners, and this should be celebrated more boldly. There is value in exploring further how formal mechanisms can be developed for triangulation of impact data (for example linking the experiences of young people to those of partners and wider local quantitative data).

Equally, the team saw no evidence that the data of partners is correlated and used to influence and develop the service and its priorities. Currently, the service contributes to the whole directorate's strategic priorities, without identification of its own, across the wider directorate strategic priorities<sup>5</sup>. Inevitably, due to youth work taking a holistic approach to young people, it is understandable that TYS would do this. However, TYS is at a pivotal point and holds a standing of respect within the local authority, as such now is a good time for TYS to identify its own key priorities and strategy (see 'Leadership & Management': 'Areas for Consideration'), based on a range of evidence and data. By taking a more focused approach to service specific priorities, the Peer Review team feels this will help enhance and sharpen existing tools for recording and measuring impact, in turn clearly articulating the TYS position within WCC.

### ***Youth offer and operational approach update***

Historically the service produced a document, 'Warwickshire Youth Work Approach'. The Peer Review team view this as a valuable document highlighting youth work principles, the service vision, support for VCSE organisations and an overview of the local youth work offer. Some elements of this document are now dated, and it is felt it would be useful to update and publish a new TYS offer<sup>6</sup>. A new offer would clarify the TYS identity and vision, in line with more focused priorities. The Peer Review team recommend consideration to align this document with the NYA principles, [Youth Work Curriculum](#) and [National Occupational Standards for Youth Work](#).

### ***Youth fund, mapping and VCSE partners***

As a means of supporting a broad range of VCSE providers within the county, WCC administers a fund (the Youth Fund) of £95,000 per year (extended from one to three years) for direct universal youth work. This has typically been, and continues to be, distributed across 39 organisations, providing up to £5,000 per organisation per year. On average this likely equates to one open access session per week, per organisation. The Youth Fund provides a small amount of short-term money and capacity to a relatively large number of organisations.

---

<sup>5</sup> WCC Children and Young People Strategy 2021 – 2030.

<sup>6</sup> As noted in the Leadership and Management section above.

Although this approach has merits, not least providing wide coverage of provision, there is opportunity should WCC decide to carry out a comprehensive mapping exercise<sup>7</sup>, to explore if this fund has potential to better meet local needs through narrower but needs led targeting of the funding. Ultimately the question for WCC to grapple with is: is the current funding model achieving the greatest level of impact possible?

WCC colleagues have outlined to the Peer Review team that there is an existing Warwickshire Youth Work Alliance and that there are plans to develop this. VCSE partners that the Peer Review team spoke with clearly explained that they would welcome the opportunity to engage with a mutually supportive and non-competitive network. With these varied perspectives held between WCC and their VCSE partners in mind, the Peer Review team feel it would be valuable to further develop and scope this important forum, with a view to increasing reach and support to the VCSE youth offer. This could include opportunities to identify diversified funding streams that could enhance and grow the offer across the county and ensure standardisation of offer quality.

### ***Participation and youth voice***

It is recognised that excellent youth work practice is taking place with a highly skilled, passionate and knowledgeable team of youth workers. However, while the team could articulate participation and youth voice influencing change within their immediate youth centres or individual young people's plans, there was limited evidence of youth voice influencing wider change (such as within the wider service, local authority, communities and Warwickshire more broadly) outside of the youth council.

There were some excellent examples of great practice of local youth voice influencing change, such as young people attending LGBTQ provision speaking about concerns for their safety in an unlit local park and a particular pathway leading to youth provision, which the youth worker raised with elected members and lights were funded in these places, for the benefit of the whole community. However, the Peer Review team found these examples were not the norm across the service and youth workers' understanding was limited to young people's influence on their own project.

Some TYS youth workers articulated that they felt it is not their place to raise the voice of young people into wider strategic decisions, despite an acknowledgement and agreement that they have a role to advocate for young people. It was widely perceived that participation in this influential sense was the role of more formalised groups, such as the Youth Council and not a focus for young people attending more community based open access provision. With such a highly skilled team of youth workers, this is a missed opportunity to be capitalised upon to shape the whole Warwickshire offer and strategy.

The Peer Review team feel consideration should be given to developing the understanding of participation, in the broadest sense, across the service and developing additional routes for youth workers to promote and advocate for the voices of diverse groups of young people into wider decision-making arenas. As previously mentioned, this could be built into a TYS Participation Strategy, ensuring that participation is widely understood as an integral aspect

---

<sup>7</sup> As previously noted.

of the youth work role generally, beyond formal participation work as it relates to the fulfilment of the statutory duty (Section 507b of the Education Act).

Whilst the Peer Review team recognise that there is an existing wider participation strategy within the WCC, the development of a TYS specific participation strategy that specifically aligns with youth work cornerstones, principles, values, ethics and processes would aid in bridging gaps between the voices of young people in general youth work settings and strategic decisions within the WCC. Equally, the development of this would aid in the continued professional development of those youth work staff that currently perceive participation as something that happens separately to their own youth work. The rationale for a TYS specific participation strategy is also founded on the fact that TYS has the highest concentration of youth workers than any other team within WCC and therefore would be well placed to lead the way on steering this important principle of youth work.

An alternative to this might be to build a specific named participation strand into a TYS Youth Work Strategy.

### ***Workforce, training and development***

Senior managers detailed how in the past there have been difficulties in recruiting experienced professionally qualified youth workers. These difficulties were aligned with issues relating to attracting experienced qualified youth workers from outside of the county due to a lack of these locally, an issue exacerbated by the relatively higher cost of living within parts of Warwickshire. WCC mitigated for this through significant investment in recruitment of apprentices and trainees.

To note, there is a national workforce crisis with a shortage of professionally qualified workers. Warwickshire investing in a 'grow your own' model is a critical mitigation of this on a local level. And is something that should be celebrated and platformed as an example of good practice for other local authorities, who face similar issues.

Retention of youth workers in Warwickshire has been overall good, but there is a need to review and map potential progression routes for qualified workers long term, to ensure solid return on investment and quality staff. <sup>8</sup>

### ***Digital youth work***

Although it was not discussed widely during the review, the Peer Review team think, like in most LA's, there is an opportunity for Warwickshire to consider their offer and appetite for digital youth work. In post review dialogue WCC colleagues explained that during the pandemic they had some success in developing aspects of digital youth work but have been led away from that as the pandemic 'lockdowns' were removed. WCC colleagues added that digital youth work skills are mixed across the service and that the service would benefit from exploring this aspect of youth work further. The NYA is currently developing standards for digital youth work and the wide breadth of this area, including online, offline

---

<sup>8</sup> For example, qualifying apprentices may choose to seek employment outside of the county where progression opportunities are not available locally.

and hybrid digital engagement. This is something that the NYA can support WCC with in the post-review follow up available to the WCC.

## 5. Next Steps

The Peer Review team hope that WCC will find the above findings to be a considered and a true reflection of the discussions that the review team had with local authority staff, partners and young people in Warwickshire. WCC and colleagues may now want to consider how to incorporate the Peer Review team's findings into your ongoing planning.

For further support you can contact the NYA's Head of Quality and Standards: Andy Lloyd - Tel: 07842 437176, email: [andyl@nya.org.uk](mailto:andyl@nya.org.uk).

### **National Youth Agency**

9 Newarke Street, Leicester LE1 5SN

Company registration no. 2912597

Register charity in England and Wales no. 1035804

[nya.org.uk](http://nya.org.uk)