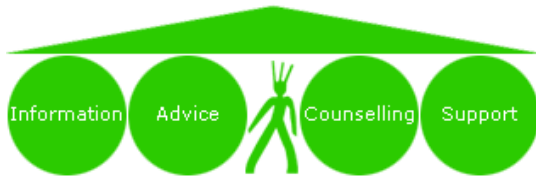


Easing the strain:

How young people's information, advice, counselling and support services (YIACS) ease the strain on young people and on commissioners of services



Youth Access represents a network of 200 young people's information, advice, counselling and support services (YIACS) nationwide. YIACS provide services to a million young people every year.

Through interventions such as counselling and other psychological therapies, advice work, health clinics, community education and personal support, YIACS offer a unique combination of early intervention, prevention and crisis intervention for young people.

What are YIACS?

Open to all young people, YIACS offer a universal access point to targeted and specialist services, supporting young people on diverse and inter-related issues:

- social welfare – e.g. benefits, housing, debt, employment
- mental and emotional health – e.g. depression, low self-esteem, self-harm, family problems and stress
- personal and physical health – e.g. sexual health, drugs and alcohol
- practical issues – e.g. careers, money management, independent living skills

"NPC estimates that collectively YIACS see approximately 44,000 young people a week in England.... to get this range of support from the statutory sector a young person would typically have to access two or three different services. YIACS provide a 'one stop shop' and young people like being able to access a range of service in this way". **New Philanthropy Capital**

YIACS services reflect local need, but share the following features, proven to be uniquely popular with young people:

- ✓ A range of Interventions 'under one roof'
- ✓ Young person-centred
- ✓ Open to a wide age range, 13 to 25
- ✓ Holistic approach, meeting complex needs
- ✓ Multi-disciplinary - wrap-around support
- ✓ Flexible access, including open door 'drop-in' sessions
- ✓ Free, independent and confidential

Young people's views show they value YIACS' approach, the skills of staff and the range of help available. Young people rarely, if ever, find this package of help in a single statutory sector setting and many fail either to engage or be engaged by statutory services.

"[Confidential drop-in centres] offering information and advice on a wide range of health and wellbeing topics, are popular with young people and increasingly being developed." **Department of Children Schools and Families and Department of Health**

"Young people have a lot of problems and it is easier for them to walk into a place that deals with young people.... It is good to come to just one place where they sort everything out. I wouldn't want to keep explaining my situation over and over again. It is just too difficult and upsetting." **20-year-old male**

Why YIACS?

Emerging research about patterns of brain development compellingly suggests a need for distinct, age-appropriate models of support for young people right up to age 25. While most young people, supported by parents, friends and school, manage the **transition** to adulthood successfully, for some the process is fraught with difficulties.

Evidence points to the risks associated with **abrupt and poorly supported transitions** and the influences of **poverty and social exclusion**. **Vulnerability to mental health problems** also increases in this critical period and

where serious underlying disorders are present, they are most likely to emerge at this stage.

Whatever the reason, adolescence and early adulthood is a period when many serious problems are known to emerge. YIACS are there to help young people negotiate these vital years as successfully as possible.

The Wider Cost

We know that the **impacts of individual problems fall upon society**. For example:

- Half of all mental illness is present by 14 (DH), contributing to economic and social costs of mental health problems totalling £105.2 billion in 2009/10 (Centre for Mental Health).
- Over a million 16-24 year olds fail to get the advice they need to resolve social welfare problems each year, costing the exchequer around £1bn each year (JustRights).

This is the cost of doing nothing – untreated mental health and emotional problems; unresolved housing and debt problems; unmet personal and social support needs; difficult personal relationships – avoidable expenditure on homelessness, worklessness, criminal justice and health.

We know that YIACS work ... for young people and society at large

There is **substantial, long standing evidence of YIACS' effectiveness** in dealing with the consequences of difficult transitions and complex problems. Government and independent reports have for 30 years recognised the benefits of holistic 'under one roof' models of service for young people.

There is also an emerging, but **growing, robust body of evidence** from work in the sector capturing the **outcomes of YIACS' interventions**.

Young people themselves tell us that YIACS interventions have **made a real difference to their lives**.

"[Without coming for advice and counselling] I would probably have been dead, I was sharing needles, involved in prostitution. The staff here encourage me, they believe in me, and I have started to believe in myself. I used to hate myself before."

24-year-old female

YIACS interventions make vital contributions to a range of policy imperatives – the evidence is clear:

Improving mental and emotional health

- YIACS are a **key early intervention** in mental health problems and are *"of critical importance to the children and young people's mental health sector."* (New Philanthropy Capital)
- Many YIACS evidence the outcomes from their counselling services using **nationally recognised and validated tools** and demonstrate outstanding results.
- Other YIACS' interventions, including advice, are proven to contribute to improved mental and emotional health.
- Emerging evidence suggests that **multi-disciplinary services are most effective of all**, offering significant improvements in clinical measurements of anxiety, depression and phobias.

"There is a wide consensus among service providers within the voluntary and community sector that psychological therapy or counselling for young people – on issues like depression, eating disorders, or bereavement – can be beneficial...There is evidence that young adults benefit from counselling when they receive it." **Cabinet Office**

"I no longer self harm as counselling has helped me understand why I did it and how I can do other things instead to deal with my emotions. I feel I can now get my life back and look forward to the future."
21-year-old female

Improving physical and sexual health

- YIACS deliver **services aimed directly at improving health**, including sexual health clinics, smoking cessation programmes, and drug and alcohol counselling with widely accepted effectiveness.
- Improvements in emotional and physical health are frequently linked.
- Independent reports highlight how access to a YIACS enhances a local council's ability to achieve **good health outcomes** for young people (Ofsted) and can reduce harmful behaviours like excessive drinking, self-harm and violence (Mental Health Foundation).

“For those who leave school at 16, further support is vital in the form of skills development for work and training, management of relationships, and advice on substance misuse, debt, continuing education, housing concerns and pregnancy and parenting. Such training and support should be developed and located in every community, designed specifically for this age group.”

The Marmot Review. DH

Building well-being and resilience

- YIACS work to boost young people’s capacity to avoid and cope with risks, challenges and problems as they grow older. This develops well-being and ‘resilience’ to poor outcomes, improving **quality of life and future life chances**.
- Outcome monitoring in YIACS demonstrates **impressive improvements** in quality of life.
- Evidence suggests that getting advice from YIACS greatly improves **ability to deal with other problems in the future**.

“I’m feeling more confident, more optimistic and proving to myself that I can cope on my own and sort out our problems by myself” **17-year-old female**

Reducing ‘NEETS’

- ‘NEETS’ (young people not in education, employment or training) experience far higher levels of problems like mental ill health and homelessness than other young people. YIACS **remove these real barriers to employment and training**.
- YIACS provide **direct interventions** to maximise opportunities for sustainable employment, such as employment-seeking support and advice on rights at work and in work benefits.
- YIACS’ **approach to tackling** inter-related issues has been recognised as a key part of successful strategies for reducing NEET numbers by MP’s, Ofsted, the CBI and the Audit Commission.
- Outcomes monitoring shows improvements in **ability to engage in education, employment and training** and social functioning in relation to work.

*“Young people who are NEET often face a **number of barriers to participation and need to access** support from a variety of sources. The co-location of services such as healthcare, housing support, access to benefits and financial support and careers advice and guidance in a joined-up approach could help young people to access more easily the help they require. Such provision could prove to be more cost-effective than current structures.”* **House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee**

Tackling youth poverty and improving financial capability

- Debt is an increasing problem for young people, with over **half of England’s teenagers in debt by the time they are 17** (pfeg) and **77% by the age of 21** (Rainer).
- YIACS interventions help young people **to budget** and develop skills and **confidence to deal with debts**.
- Outcomes monitoring in YIACS shows significant numbers with **improved income** and **better ability to manage money** and emerging evidence reveals substantial increases in recognised measures of **satisfaction with financial situation**.

“Being financially capable is an important life skill for young people and it is a key factor in improving their economic wellbeing. Reaching young adults is essential, but it is also notoriously challenging. Our solution is to work through the organisations they know and trust.” **Consumer Financial Education Body**

“Because of my debts, I nearly lost my home. I feel in a better position now to hold onto it.” **25-year-old female**

Better housing situations

- Housing and homelessness problems are the most common reason for presentation at youth advice services, reflecting the fact that 16-24 year olds account for **40% of all homeless acceptances** (CLG).
- Links between **mental health problems** and **homelessness** are well established.
- **YIACS interventions resolve not only the presenting issue**, most commonly through housing advice, **but also the underlying causes and other associated issues**, including mental health problems, emotional and family problems, poverty, debt, unemployment and offending behaviour.
- YIACS results show significant reported **improvements in housing situations**, particularly for the most disadvantaged young people.

“I would have been homeless, mentally disturbed and in the gutter.” **19-year-old female**

“The young people were asked to identify what they thought the impact upon their lives would have been if they had not received advice. They answered this very frankly and most identified homelessness as very likely.” **MBA Research and Consultancy**

Reducing Crime

- Links between **mental health problems and offending** are well established. Over 90% of imprisoned young offenders have at least one, or a combination of, personality disorder, psychosis, neurotic disorder, or substance misuse (Prison Reform Trust).
- Social problems like debt, homelessness and difficulties finding and retaining employment are **key factors increasing the risk of re-offending**. Stable accommodation alone reduces the risk of re-offending by a fifth (Social Exclusion Unit).
- Counselling and advice can **break the vicious circle of re-offending**.
- YIACS outcomes monitoring reveals **reported improvement in behaviour** from 50% of the most disadvantaged young clients.

"[Since I got advice] I haven't been in trouble with the police for nearly 2 years." **20-year-old male**

Strengthening relationships, families and communities

- Many young people turn to YIACS for help with relationship problems with families and others.
- For those in school, early support to deal with bullying and peer relationships can **address loss of confidence** and **prevent isolation**.
- Emerging YIACS outcomes evidence indicates very substantial increases in recognised measures of **satisfaction with relationship with family** and **satisfaction with number and quality of friendships** after counselling and advice.
- Outcomes evidence also shows that YIACS interventions assist young people to **play a positive role in and feel part of their communities**.

"My main goal was to sort problems with my mum – which is done!" **16-year-old male**

"I am no longer affected by anxiety and depression. I have accepted the situation with my mum and brother. It has helped me have better relationships and generally I feel happier. I have gained everything I thought I needed and I think counselling has changed my life" **15-year-old male**

YIACS are very cost effective

The unique way in which YIACS deliver services, their popularity with young people and unrivalled accessibility alongside their proven outcomes, means they offer consistently good value for money.

"An integrated one-stop-shop support strategy for young people could help make spending on youth services more efficient by including multiple services as part of a joined-up package.... This should include careers guidance, health information and advice, legal and housing support, access to internet and other essential services." **Confederation of British Industry**

Analysis of unit costs data of statutory Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and YIACS suggests that **average case costs in YIACS are a fraction of those in CAMHS**, whilst **outcomes from YIACS' interventions appear at least as good** as those achieved by CAMHS and Adult Mental Health Services (AMHS).

Reasons why YIACS are more efficient than statutory mental health services include:

- Large numbers of statutory cases get **no further than initial assessment**.
- Many referrals to YIACS by CAMHS and AMHS are young people who have **not met statutory thresholds**, but nevertheless have complex needs.
- YIACS **successfully engage disadvantaged young people who dislike the stigma of statutory services**.
- **Waiting lists in YIACS are shorter**, meaning young people can get earlier, more timely treatment.
- YIACS are far **more effective at keeping young people engaged** with the service due to their strong relationships with clients.
- YIACS have **much lower rates of 'DNAs' (did not attend)** than statutory services.
- YIACS **have much higher rates of male service users** than in statutory services.

"YIACS provide treatment for young people who would not otherwise access support. This may be because they are too old for CAMHS, waiting lists for specialist CAMHS are too long, or their condition is not above a certain threshold of severity. As one CAMHS psychologist told NPC: 'If it wasn't for our local YIACS service, we would be swamped'." **New Philanthropy Capital**

"Streetwise is a clear example of the kind of local services our GPs wish to see. It is friendly, expert, free of bureaucracy and highly accessible. The whole approach is based unashamedly on the practical needs of young people rather than a model of support that only a handful of professionals can understand. Young people can face so many challenges nowadays and, without support, these can escalate to become awful problems. It is good to know that Streetwise is there for when young people need help." **Doctor Guy Pilkington, GP, Newcastle Upon Tyne speaking about his local YIACS**

Can we prove it?

Yes we can!

If you need to be convinced and would like to see the supporting evidence for YIACS in more detail, just visit www.youthaccess.org.uk/publications to see for yourself. For details of YIACS in your area or to contact Youth Access to find out more about our work, visit www.youthaccess.org.uk

The benefits of YIACS interventions are carried throughout life ...

"As a seventeen year old I grew up in a volatile and sometimes violent home. I found myself homeless and shaken after another violent episode at home. I turned to The What? Centre and was given invaluable support through getting a safe place to stay, housing advice and counselling. I was engaged in various youth schemes and activities, including residential programmes. I was later encouraged and supported in training as a part-time youth worker. Sixteen years later I now work as a teacher and as a support worker with young people in children's homes. I was a very troubled and vulnerable young person and the guidance and support I received was life-changing. I am forever indebted to the centre for the compassion, guidance and tangible support I gained there." **Testimonial from former user of Youth Access member The What? Centre**

About Youth Access

Youth Access is the national membership organisation for a network of 200 youth information, advice, counselling and support services. Youth Access provides the training, resources, research, campaigning and other infrastructure support to ensure high quality services exist to meet young people's diverse needs.

Youth Access has published a number of reports on advice and counselling services, covering: young people's needs; help-seeking behaviour and access; effective models of delivery; the impact of services. All our reports are available to download from our website.

Research by New Philanthropy Capital on the contribution of charities to children and young people's mental health, singled out Youth Access as having a "crucial role in representing local counselling, advice and support services", describing our organisation as one that "punches above its weight".