



Youth Access Quality Framework

Who is this quality framework for?

This Quality Framework is for existing hubs, aspiring hubs, commissioners, funders and policymakers.

What is a hub?

Services providing the Youth Access model of advice and counselling are also known as YIACS, early support hubs, mental health hubs, drop-in services, integrated health and wellbeing model, and one-stop-shops. Sometimes they get referred to simply as “hubs”. We know that “hubs” is a popular term to describe a lot of different types of services. When we use it, we specifically mean community-based open-access advice and counselling services for young people aged 11 to 25 i.e. [the Youth Access model](#).

What is the Youth Access Quality Framework?

The quality framework is a shared guide that **sets out how a good hub serves young people**. It includes areas of focus, examples, and ways to measure whether those areas are being delivered well.

Once finalised, the framework can be used in many different ways such as:

- Helping hubs show what they do and how they work with young people
- Supporting hubs to review and improve their own practice to better meet young people’s needs
- Benchmarking progress and demonstrating quality
- Supporting funding bids and contracts
- Informing training and development

- Guiding services who want to become more “hub-like”
- Giving policymakers and funders a clear, trusted tool to guide decisions
- Providing a better national picture of these services

This stage of the project is about **testing the content of the framework** to make sure it reflects the reality of hub work and the needs of young people.

How we developed the Quality Framework

We developed this Quality Framework over twelve weeks, with young people at its heart. Our goal was to create something useful, practical, and informed by evidence.

The Quality Framework was designed with the people who will use it in mind, making it useable and meaningful rather than theoretical. More details on this process are outlined in the full document.

We gathered evidence through:

- Paid partnership with our three Youth Engagement Co-designers: young people from hub services who helped guide the project, including designing and leading workshops with young people
- Scoping interviews with a mix of large and small hub services, and national standards bodies (e.g., British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, National Youth Agency, Advice Services Alliance)
- A national workshop for hubs with 33 practitioners to test an early draft
- A workshop at a youth work conference to test interest in the wider sector
- A review of academic research on hubs in the UK and internationally
- Six weeks of fieldwork at three hubs in Liverpool, Norfolk, and Southampton, observing services and interviewing staff and young people
- Monthly Steering Group reviews with hub leaders, youth work experts, and commissioners
- Engagement with government officials
- A workshop with funders and commissioners to explore how the framework could support their decision-making

We used this mix of approaches to make sure that the framework is evidenced-based and connected to real service delivery and young people’s voices.

About the Quality Framework

The framework includes 17 areas of focus arranged into three categories: Principles, Foundations, and Services.

- **Principles** describe the ethos, values, and relationships that underpin good hub practice.
- **Foundations** cover the operational and organisational elements that make hubs safe, effective, and sustainable.
- **Services** describe the specific supports hubs offer (such as counselling, youth work, and advice) and how these are delivered to meet young people's needs.

Each area of focus defines an aspect of good quality and suggests a few ways that it can be measured. Much more detail, and a list of all quality measures are available in the [full Quality Framework](#).

Principles

1. **Youth Voice** – Young people help shape and lead services.
Measures: Youth forums, documented changes from young person feedback.
2. **Trusted Relationships** – Warm, respectful, and professional relationships.
Measures: Supervision records, case load monitoring, young people's feedback.
3. **Accessibility, Equity & Anti-Opressive Practice** – Services feel safe and inclusive for all young people.
Measures: Board monitoring of equity, budget for equity work.
4. **Values & Culture** – Shared values lived out daily.
Measures: Staff and youth surveys, leadership 360 reviews.
5. **Sustained Community Presence** – Services are rooted in their communities and adapt to local needs.
Measures: Case studies, strategic plans showing responses to local need.

Foundations

6. **Safe & Welcoming Spaces** – Hubs feel calm, private, and youth-centred.
Measures: Youth-led space reviews, accessibility audits.
7. **Clinical Governance, Safeguarding & Risk Management** – Systems to keep everyone safe.
Measures: Safeguarding policies, training records, incident logs.
8. **Workforce Development** – Staff have supervision, training, and opportunities to progress at work.
Measures: CPD records, supervision logs, workforce development strategy.
9. **Service Learning & Improvement** – Services reflect and improve over time.
Measures: Learning logs, documented service changes.
10. **Outcomes & Impact** – Meaningful outcomes are measured and used to improve services.

Measures: Young people's goal tracking, measures (such as YP-CORE) used when appropriate, case studies created with young people.

11. **Internal Coordination** – Teams within the hub work well together.

Measures: Joint planning records, staff feedback.

12. **External Integration & Collaboration** – Hubs work well with other services (NHS, schools, etc.).

Measures: Referral pathways, multi-agency meeting records.

Services

13. **Counselling** – Therapy provided by professionally registered counsellors.

Measures: Staff registration, CPD logs, supervision logs.

14. **Wellbeing** – Support by trained practitioners in drop-ins, schools, and other settings.

Measures: Session logs, young people's feedback.

15. **Drop-In and Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG)** – Practical, rights-based advice on issues such as housing, debt, and mental health and wellbeing.

Measures: Case studies, accreditation, feedback.

16. **Youth Work & Outreach** – Building trusted relationships through youth work, support groups, and outreach.

Measures: Engagement logs, young people's feedback.

17. **Physical Health** – Supporting physical health needs through direct help or referrals.

Measures: Health education records, referral pathways, co-location arrangements.

What's next?

This stage of consultation is about **making sure the content is right**, reflecting the real work of hubs and the needs of young people.

As part of the [Quality and Improvement Programme](#) we are also:

- Developing clearer guidance on the depth of evidence expected and suggestions for how quality in each area could be assessed or scored
- Creating a digital self-assessment tool for services
- Looking at options for how services could have their assessments against the Quality Framework independently checked if they want to
- Producing resources to help services improve their offer for young people

But first, **we want to hear from you**, so the quality framework is practical, realistic, and useful. You can provide your feedback [here](#) for 3 weeks from 14th July.

Thank you for engaging in this process.