



YMCA  
GEORGE WILLIAMS  
COLLEGE

---

# “WHAT IS THE STATE OF YOUTH WORK IN SHEFFIELD?”

A COLLECTIVE ENQUIRY: PHASE 1

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND  
ACTION PLAN

Gin Gregg-Auriac and Justin Watson, March 2025

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Recommendations based on first principles and collective wisdom*

#### **Recommendation 1: Keep Going!**

We believe that working together is better for everyone – for children and young people, the sector that supports them and for funders and decision makers.

The collective effort through development of the Alliance thus far and the momentum built through a first stage at pace has demonstrated need, capacity and will for a collective mobilisation for the benefit of children and young people and the sector as a whole. We recommend you continue to pursue this shared work.

#### **Recommendation 2: Framework Structure and Core Focus Areas**

We recommend that a second phase of work uses the bespoke framework for Sheffield as its starting point. The framework should operate across three connected levels:

1. **Strong Foundations** – ensuring that the enquiry (and Alliance development) purposefully and proactively:
  - a. builds trust, understands and shares power and communicates transparently
  - b. seeks to name, understand and address context, assumptions and limiting beliefs and barriers to inclusion
2. **Shared Vision** – ensuring that the enquiry (and Alliance development) support progress towards a shared vision, with specific and tangible shared outcomes and mechanisms of change which bridge the gap between activities and making the vision a reality
3. **Key Lines of Enquiry** – ensuring that the enquiry focuses on:
  - a. Need: A full and comprehensive needs assessment that underpins and informs the city's strategy and plans for youth work in the city
  - b. Engagement: A process of building relationships, collaboration, and communication between organisations, stakeholders, and partners.
  - c. Mapping: An analysis of the key assets in the city in terms of provision, infrastructure and workforce
  - d. Voice: An understanding how children and young people's voice and experience is shaping youth work in the city
  - e. Strategy: A coherent, collective strategy that unites the sector's efforts and focuses on sustainable, long-term impact for children and young people in Sheffield

- f. Funding: A deep understanding of how current resources are being used, as well as the opportunities for building the resource available
- g. Alliance: A process of building collective working partnership and collaboration in the city

### *Recommendations informed by engagement with the sector (as outlined in the Reflections Report)*

#### **Recommendation 3: Purpose, Scope and Boundaries**

The full enquiry must have a clearly defined purpose that resonates with the sector and partners, particularly regarding:

- What is in and out of scope (e.g., is this focused on youth work practice, the broader youth offer, or wider systems impacting young people?)
- How the enquiry connects to existing local strategies (e.g., City Goals, Culture Strategy) and national frameworks (e.g., National Youth Strategy)
- How young people will be involved, and what role they play in shaping the process and the outcomes (see below)

#### **Recommendation 4: Young People at the Centre**

It must be explicit how the enquiry will:

- Prioritise young people's voices, experiences, and leadership
- Ensure meaningful engagement of young people throughout
- Use young people's insights to challenge assumptions and shape recommendations

#### **Recommendation 5: Equity, Inclusion, and Representation**

A full enquiry needs to directly address the gaps and inequities already highlighted. This means:

- Ensuring broad representation, including those most marginalised and excluded
- Being honest about who is around the table – and who is not – and why
- Considering specific methods to include underrepresented communities (racialised communities, disabled young people, care-experienced young people, LGBTQ+ young people, and those facing poverty)

## **Recommendation 6: System Mapping and Power Analysis**

The enquiry must create space to ensure that we understand not only what is being delivered (standard 'provision mapping') but also existing assets in workforce development and infrastructure. We should also consider the system in which this work is being delivered. This includes:

- Mapping the 'youth system' in Sheffield: who holds power, who controls resources, and who influences decision-making
- Exploring historic and current barriers – particularly around power, trust, and funding – with the aim of identifying solutions, not just restating problems
- Acknowledging how power dynamics play out within collaborative spaces and take steps to mitigate this
- Exploring how this work can, and should, connect to wider work across the city - adding value and influencing city-wide policy and practice

## **Recommendation 7: Partnership development\***

Alongside the full enquiry, partners should seek to develop the Sheffield Youth Alliance and establish its presence within the city as the partnership for children and young people. This includes:

- Defining the vision, mission and purpose of the Alliance
- Establishing a strong and engaging brand and identity which reflects the ambitions of the partnership and its partners
- Progressing work on governance, membership and network engagement, building connection and trust across the city
- Exploring how the Alliance will be resourced and become sustainable
- Delivering some quick wins - including connections across related activities in Sheffield, further Alliance meetings and events, and showcasing the great work delivered by partners

\*also a recommendation informed by initial mapping and desk research.

*Recommendations informed by initial mapping and desk research (as outlined in the Landscape and Opportunities Report).*

### **Recommendation 8: Data, insights and need**

A full and clear understanding of the needs, and ambitions, of young people and the sector will be vital to ensuring that the alliance (and the sector as a whole) is well positioned to secure support and investment, and influence locally, regionally and nationally

### **Recommendation 9: Local alignment and coordination**

With a number of local initiatives and programmes focusing on young people in the city, it will be critical to ensure that the enquiry, and the Alliance itself, are aligned to wider developments and can add value (e.g. provide direct connections to young people and communities through their services) as well as influence strategies, policies and practice.

### **Recommendation 10: Influencing and engagement**

The full enquiry needs to make recommendations on a full Influencing and Engagement Strategy for the city, ideally delivered in partnership through the Sheffield Youth Alliance.

However, timing is critical and we would recommend that coordinated approaches to influencing at all levels are prioritised by the Alliance immediately, allowing the city to inform and influence critical developments especially at a national level.

It will also be key to outline what Sheffield can bring to regional and national spaces - including expertise and experience on specific issues, a strong track record in delivery and/or high quality and impactful youth voice and co-production work.

## ACTION PLAN

A full plan is in scope of the second phase of work once resourcing, scope and priorities are agreed. The note below proposes initial next steps.

Bucket	What	Who	Priority
Phase One completion	Reflection and acceptance of findings as appropriate	Sheffield Youth Alliance and Sheffield City Council	High
	Share updates and documents with alliance members	Sheffield Youth Alliance	High
Establishing second phase of work	Agree scope, resourcing and priorities	Sheffield Youth Alliance and Sheffield City Council	High
	Agree how children and young people should be involved	Sheffield Youth Alliance and Sheffield City Council	High
Sheffield Youth Alliance	Secure resourcing for development and secretariat functions	Sheffield Youth Alliance	High
Phase Two	Develop a clear engagement plan for the sector	Sheffield Youth Alliance (with external support)	High
Phase Two	Develop a clear plan for supporting young people's engagement	Sheffield Youth Alliance (with external support)	Medium
Phase Two	Develop a clear influencing strategy	Sheffield Youth Alliance (with external support)	High
Phase Two	Complete full needs analysis	Sheffield City Council (with external support)	Medium
Phase Two	Complete mapping provision, workforce assets, infrastructure and power	Sheffield City Council (with external support)	Medium
Phase Two	A shared youth work	Sheffield Youth Alliance	High

	strategy	(with external support)	
Phase Two	Fundraising strategy development	Sheffield Youth Alliance (with external support)	Medium
Phase Two	Partnership development	Sheffield Youth Alliance (with external support)	Critical