

Wakefield Youth Work Alliance

Terms of Reference

1. Context

1.1. Wakefield Youth Work Alliance has been developed as a partnership of youth work organisations across the Wakefield district, united by a shared commitment to youth and community work as a distinct and impactful practice. It aims to demonstrate the transformative value of youth work in addressing the personal and social development needs of young people in Wakefield. By building strong networks and relationships between partners, the Alliance creates opportunities for collaboration, mutual support, and the sharing of skills and training, ensuring that the sector remains innovative and responsive to the needs of young people and their communities.

1.2. As part of this, members have agreed to adopt the National Youth Agency's definition of youth work:

Youth work offers young people safe spaces to explore their identity, experience decision-making, increase their confidence, develop interpersonal skills and think through the consequences of their actions. This leads to better informed choices, changes in activity and improved outcomes for young people (National Youth Agency).

1.3. Other underpinning principles that guide our interpretation of our practice include¹:

1.3.1. Voluntary participation, i.e., young people choose to become involved in the work and their involvement is never mandated

1.3.2. Group work, i.e., youth work is fundamentally a group process, where young people learn from each other, develop their social, emotional, and educational skills through social interaction

1.3.3. A practice that proactively seeks to tip balances of societal power in favour of young people

1.3.4. Progressive and developmental practice, i.e., starting where young people are starting *and* seeking to go beyond where young people are starting, encouraging them to develop their personal potential

¹ adapted from Bernard Davies and infed.org

2. Vision

- 2.1. We envisage a bright future where all partners are working collaboratively to provide quality youth provision that meets the diverse needs of Wakefield's young people and enables them to reach their full potential.

3. Purpose

- 3.1. Through Wakefield's alliance model, we aim to create a connected youth and community work sector that is young people centred, providing opportunities to support young people's personal and social development through high quality practice.

- 3.2. Key purposes include:

- 3.2.1. Represent the youth work sector at local, regional and national levels.
- 3.2.2. Lobby for investment in professional youth work and in the wider youth work sector.
- 3.2.3. Provide training and upskilling opportunities for youth workers and those working with young people.
- 3.2.4. Set and maintain standards for youth and community work practice.
- 3.2.5. Facilitate joint projects among member organisations.
- 3.2.6. Share resources, best practices and innovative approaches.
- 3.2.7. Develop sector-wide strategies to address emerging needs.
- 3.2.8. Align activities with key youth-related policies and initiatives.
- 3.2.9. Monitor and assess member compliance with agreed-upon standards.
- 3.2.10. Create a culture of continuous improvement in youth work delivery.

4. Role and functions

- 4.1. Wakefield Youth Work Alliance is a body that has been formed to focus on collaborative action to address challenges seen by the youth sector and young people in Wakefield.
- 4.2. The Alliance maintains regular dialogue with the wider youth sector through the (currently termed) Wider Youth Partnership, creating opportunities for organisations to engage, learn, and collaborate
- 4.3. The Alliances role and functions are to:

- 4.3.1. Influence: act as a critical friend, influencing and shaping commissioning policy, direction and decisions
- 4.3.2. Involve: ensuring young people's voice, influence and active involvement in all aspects of youth work.
- 4.3.3. Advocate: to be a strategic advocate for investment in Wakefield's young people, youth workers and youth work.
- 4.3.4. Collaborate: enable a collaborative environment for young people, youth work provision and commissioning.
- 4.3.5. Inform: information sharing, good practice and networking across the sector.
- 4.3.6. Impact: have a positive effect on the quality and sufficiency, professional development and progression of the youth & community sector
- 4.3.7. Contribute: help inform the priorities of the Children & Young people's plan and the Statutory Sufficiency Duty (Guidance for Local Authorities)
- 4.4. Decision making: To be discussed and decided by the Alliance in Year 1

5. Governance and responsibility

- 5.1. Wakefield Youth Work Alliance shall be chaired by a representative from a third sector member organisation.
- 5.2. Wakefield Youth Work Alliance meetings will have a rotating chair, with each Chair and Vice Chair to be elected, or otherwise chosen, on a 12-18-monthly cycle. Administrative support to the Chair will be provided by a designated officer from the Local Authority.
- 5.3. The Youth Alliance will meet every six weeks in the first twelve months, which will then be reviewed.
- 5.4. Meetings shall be quorate if the number of members present is at least 40% of the total number of members
- 5.5. Representatives of member organisations participating in meetings must hold decision-making authority within their respective organisations or be formally delegated such authority. This ensures that representatives, such as Heads of Service, CEOs, Principals, or equivalent roles, are empowered to make commitments and take decisions on behalf of their organisations in alignment with the Alliance's objectives
- 5.6. The Alliance will not have membership of more than 50% Local Authority officers to ensure a fair and broad agenda with the remainder of the membership comprised from the VCSE sector representatives.

5.7. Wakefield Youth Work Alliance recognises that member organisations have their own accountability frameworks. The Alliance will instead have relationships with strategic stakeholders and partners in the pursuit of its ambitions and interests. These will include but are not limited to:

5.7.1. Children & Young People's Partnership Board

5.7.2. Integrated Care Board

5.7.3. Nova Wakefield

5.7.4. Young Lives Consortium

5.7.5. Wakefield Safer Together Partnership

5.7.6. Youth Work Unit Yorkshire & Humber

6. Membership

6.1. Wakefield Youth Work Alliance will operate an accessible pathway to membership, but membership will necessitate several key commitments, as follows:

6.1.1. Members must demonstrate an identifiable youth work function within their operations. While delivering youth work does not need to be the primary or majority focus of their activities, it must be a distinct and purposeful component of their overall work, aligned with the principles and practices of youth and community work.

6.1.2. Participation will be open to any organisation who meets the criteria for a provider of youth work with young people aged 11-25 years in Wakefield and our *Principles of Collaboration*. The *Principles of Collaboration* include evidence of governance, quality and safeguarding standards and a clear commitment to the Terms of Reference and its purpose and a commitment to quality, training and national living wage pay of youth workers

6.1.3. Members are required to acknowledge and adhere to the definitions of youth work as set out in sections 1.2 and 1.3 of this document. These definitions form the foundation of the Alliance's shared understanding and approach to youth work practice

6.1.4. Third sector members must be formally registered with and adhere to the Wakefield Third Sector Framework, demonstrating their commitment to its principles and standards

6.1.5. All organisations joining the alliance must be a formally constituted body with a recognised legal structure, able to produce a valid controlling

document that clearly sets out the organisation's ownership and who has legal responsibility for what it does.

6.1.6. Member organisations must have at least one qualified member of staff, (paid or volunteer), who is JNC qualified to level 3 or above. There is an expectation that members actively aspire, over time, to have all frontline youth work staff qualified to JNC level 3 or above. The alliance expects to support prospective members in the training and qualification of staff where needed, as per Section 7.

6.1.7. Members may exit the alliance on voluntary or involuntary terms where there may be a conflict of interest.

6.2. Additional requirements for membership are outlined in the *Principles of Collaboration* document, which establishes the foundational expectations and commitments for all members

7. Pathways to membership and other support

7.1. Eligibility for Membership

Organisations seeking membership of the Youth Alliance must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in Section 6.

7.2. Support for Organisations

The Alliance recognises that some organisations may require support to achieve eligibility and is committed to facilitating their progression towards membership. It thereby commits to a range of support to assist organisations in meeting the requirements for membership. This includes:

7.2.1. Youth Work Training and Qualifications

The Alliance offers access to youth work training programmes and qualifications, ensuring organisations can develop the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver youth work.

7.2.2. JNC Youth Work Qualified Supervisors

To support professional practice, the Alliance provides access to JNC-qualified youth work supervisors who can guide and mentor organisations as they develop their youth work functions.

7.2.3. Membership Application Process

Organisations interested in joining the Alliance must complete a membership application form and follow the application process, which is designed to be clear and supportive.

7.2.4. Sector Engagement via the Wider Youth Partnership

The Alliance maintains regular dialogue with the wider sector through the Wider Youth Partnership, creating opportunities for organisations to engage, learn, and collaborate as they work toward meeting membership criteria.

7.2.5. Support to Access the Third Sector Framework

Guidance and assistance in registering with the Wakefield Third Sector Framework, facilitated through Nova Wakefield District, ensuring compliance with this essential membership requirement.

7.3. Third Sector Infrastructure Support from Nova Wakefield

Nova Wakefield will provide infrastructure support to prospective third sector members in its usual capacity. The Alliance recognises and relies on Nova Wakefield's expertise in advising, guiding, and strengthening local third sector organisations, ensuring that new and existing members are well-equipped to meet the requirements and commitments of the Alliance.

7.4. The Youth Alliance will also receive support from the Regional Youth Work Unit to pursue and define its purpose to connect local youth developments into the wider youth sector across the region in the pursuit of mutual interest and opportunities.

8. Review

8.1. The Youth Alliance Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually.