

A blueprint for Young Futures hubs

Briefing for young
people

March 2025

**FUND
THE
HUBS**



About this blueprint

The 'Fund the Hubs' campaign group have created this blueprint to influence the Government's new Young Futures hubs programme. This blueprint has been produced with input from hubs service providers, young people and the mental health sector.

Since 2020, we have been calling for a national network of early support hubs to ensure that children and young people receive timely mental health and wellbeing support. There are over 60 of these hubs already in existence across the country, but they are not yet universally available in every community.

The Young Futures programme provides a unique opportunity to make sure that every local community has a hub and that these hubs can provide the best early intervention support for all young people experiencing a mental health problem.

This blueprint sets out a range of actions for the Government, which we believe will help this programme to achieve success.

What are early support hubs?

- Early support hubs currently offer easy-to-access, drop-in support on a self-referral basis for young people experiencing mental health or wellbeing difficulties, up to age 25.
- They are often delivered in partnership with the NHS, local authorities and the voluntary sector
- They are community based and provide a range of services including counselling and psychological therapies, employment advice, youth services, sexual health and housing support.

Hubs are guided by the Youth Access Model Principles which are:

Open access: Hubs are free at the point of access and delivery, and there are no thresholds for young people to access support.

Accessible: Services are accessible to all young people with a range of needs, particularly those experiencing the greatest inequalities, for example, young people from racialised communities and LGBTQ+ young people.

Safe and confidential: Hubs are informal settings where young people can explore their needs and access a range of support. They offer non-judgmental and non-stigmatised support and are located in places where young people feel comfortable.

Flexible: Hubs recognise young people as individuals and work flexibly to respond to young people's differing needs, such as adapting opening hours, offering a range of avenues to engage and working at a pace that young people determine.

Responsive: These services are committed to understanding and responding to young people's individual needs as well as understanding their local communities.

Integrated: Hubs build on, and integrate with, existing infrastructure within local areas that is already working to support young people.

The Youth Access model



The Youth Access model of youth advice and counselling services

Diverse support under one roof

Range of access points

- Self-referral
- Drop-in
- Outreach
- Online and phone

Range of support options

- Information, advice, guidance
- Assessment
- Therapy and mental health support
- Youth work and participation initiatives
- Colocation with other agencies

Young person centred and rights based

- Timely and age appropriate for specific life phases
- Goals and strengths based
- Choice, agency and rights
- Cultural humility
- Responsive

Cultures of safety and care

- Competent and skilled staff
- Transparency and boundaries
- Anti-oppressive practice
- Workforce support and clinical supervision

Feedback and evaluation throughout

- Co-production
- Validated measures

Supported signposting, referrals and advocacy

- Family
- Education
- Social services
- Community
- Health

Positive outcomes and experiences

- Youth-friendly
- Stigma-free service
- Tailored whole-life support
- Clinical improvement
- High satisfaction

The Government's missions

Young Future hubs are expected to support the delivery of the Government's missions by:

- Promoting children and young people's development
- Improving mental health and wellbeing
- Preventing young people from being drawn into crime

However, we believe that in order for the Government to successfully meet its aims, it must avoid the following risk factors:

- **Cutting off support at 18** – Young people face major life changes at this age and still need access to vital services. We strongly believe that anyone between the ages of 10-25 should be able to access Young Futures hubs.
- **Isolated career advice** – advice support must include specialist advice to address basic needs, for example, around housing, harmful substance use and wellbeing.
- **Combining youth services with family and early years offers** – As this can discourage young people from seeking confidential support for personal issues, hubs should remain separate.
- **Clinical or unwelcoming environments** – Hubs should be inviting community spaces, designed with young people's needs in mind.
- **One-size-fits-all support** – Services should be flexible, offering different types of support at convenient times and locations.
- **Focusing on deficits** – Instead of labelling young people by their challenges, hubs should use a strengths-based approach that builds confidence and inclusion.

- **Stigmatised services** – If hubs are seen mainly as crime prevention programmes, it could prevent young people from engaging and building trust.
- **Strict limits on support** – Receiving support and advice at Young Futures hubs should not be conditional upon meeting set criteria or thresholds, and support should be delivered flexibly to accommodate young people's differing needs.
- **Enforcement-based approaches** – Hubs must not operate as part of a pathway into the criminal justice system or form attendance requirements, as support must be voluntary to build trust.

Embedding Youth Voice

Young people should be involved at every stage of the design and delivery of Young Futures hubs – this means at both national and local levels, as well as within individual services.

Two separate charters which have been developed by a **Youth in Mind project in Norfolk and Waveney** and **Youth Access** define the key aspects of mental health and wellbeing services that are important to young people.

These include:

- Caring services that treat young people with respect
- Accessible and welcoming spaces
- Timely support that meets the individual needs of each young person
- A skilled workforce capable of providing effective support
- Regular communication
- Services that actively listen to the voices of young people.

We would therefore urge the Government to:

- **Establish a ‘national design panel’ comprising of young people and practitioners to help shape a minimum national specification for Young Futures hubs.** This should include the creation of national guidance on the inclusion of youth voice and influence, to ensure that every hub meets a minimum standard for youth engagement and feedback.
- **These ‘design panels’ should be replicated at a local level bringing together local stakeholders, youth service practitioners and young people to decide the details of what hub provision should look like in their local area.** This should involve scoping what is available locally, what can be built on and the local approach required to deliver the hub specification.

Implementing Young Futures Hubs

The development and implementation of Young Futures hubs provide a vital opportunity to build on existing expertise and services within local communities. We also believe there is important learning from the early support hub model that should be considered and addressed within the rollout of Young Futures hubs to ensure the programme's success.

We believe that the following factors will contribute to the success of the programme:

- Accessible and inclusive spaces, owned by young people
- Designed and delivered against the Youth Access (YIACS) model values and principles
- Long-term, sustainable funding and capital are in place
- Clear commissioning frameworks that empower areas to respond to local need and build on existing community assets
- Integrated within local infrastructure, with clear referral pathways to specialist services
- Set out a workforce development plan to support the roll-out of hubs
- Consistent outcomes framework that includes a range of both quantitative and qualitative measures
- Mechanisms to share learning and measure quality practice.

Our recommendations

We are calling on UK Government to set out a roadmap to deliver a hub in every local authority area, with the aim to have achieved 70% coverage within the next five years and 100% by the end of 2035.

We are specifically asking the government for:

- A commitment to a multi-year funding package for the roll out of Young Futures hubs. We estimate that £169- £210 million per year in revenue funding is required to roll out a hub in every local area, with a further one-off £74m to £121m needed for capital and set up costs.
- A comprehensive, cross-government consultation on delivering open access support for children and young people
- A cross-departmental approach throughout the development of the Young Futures programme, aligning with the Youth Strategy, the Child Poverty Strategy, and the 10-year Health Plan
- The development of a joint commissioning guidance for local areas on implementing Young Futures hubs
- Joint collaboration with existing hub providers to design a clear and consistent outcomes framework
- A workforce development plan to support the roll-out of hubs.
- A mechanism to capture and share learning and quality practice from hubs to support continuous development.

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