



Francis Scott Trust



# Better Tomorrows Programme

More young people in Cumbria getting access to quality youth work

## Evaluation Report – Year 2

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## Executive Summary

**Key highlights:** As a result of the Better Tomorrows programme, by the end of year 2:

- Over 4000 new young people engaged in youth work.
- 36 newly qualified youth workers.
- 38 new youth work jobs funded across Cumbria.
- Nearly 12,000 hours of new youth work provision.

**Context:** The Better Tomorrows programme is a three-year initiative in Cumbria, launched in 2021, which aims to increase the number of trained youth workers and increase the number of young people who get access to quality youth work. It is supported by Cumbria Community Foundation, Cumbria Youth Alliance, Francis Scott Charitable Trust, and over 40 funders who have invested in the programme. The programme aims to empower young people through high-quality youth work, fostering their confidence, skills, and aspirations.

**Method:** The Better Tomorrows programme aims to provide quality youth work opportunities for young people in Cumbria. The evaluation focuses on three main areas: training, youth work jobs, and improving young people's lives, aiming to provide a holistic understanding of the programme and capture both intended and unintended outcomes. For more details on the background and method for the evaluation, please see the Year 1 report.

**Findings from Year 2:** For reporting purposes, Year 2 is from 1 March 2023 to 29 February 2024.

**Training:** As in Year 1, Better Tomorrows training was delivered by CADAS, reporting to Cumbria Youth Alliance (CYA). Part way through this year, Better Tomorrows was successful with a bid to The National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF). The programme, via CYA, has received £445,270 to train an additional 225 youth workers over the next five years. Therefore, it was agreed that existing, unspent funding allocated against training for 2023/24 would move into the 'additional youth work' budget line, increasing the amount available to spend on salaries. There were two cohorts of learners in Year 2 (Cohorts 3 and 4), and to date, from Cohorts 1-4, there have been **38 completed certificates** at either L2 or L3, plus two unit accreditations completed under extensions. One learner has completed both L2 and L3. The high level of completion and near completion demonstrates the commitment of the training and assessment team and the determination of learners to complete their training.

At the end of Year 2, there are 52 more trained youth workers supporting young people in Cumbria, which is a testimony to all those involved. In Year 2, the elements of training and development that appear to be more helpful are summarised as:

- **CONSISTENCY** - ongoing support between cohorts for part-time trainee youth workers;
- **AWARENESS** - negotiating the complexities of providing support for newly appointed youth workers to balance the competing demands of starting a new role and undertaking training;
- **COMMITMENT** - being able to work through the challenges and celebrate the increased number of youth workers supporting young people in Cumbria;
- **FLEXIBILITY** - being open to learning from monitoring and evaluation of the project and exploring new methods for delivery of training; for example, the decision to move to a new

provider with predominantly online training. In year 3, from Cohort 5 onwards, training will be delivered by Your Edge Training.

**Youth work jobs:** In Year 2, 6 new organisations were funded, resulting in the creation of 10 additional new youth worker positions, taking the cumulative total to 38 new posts over two years. As was seen last year, the impact on the lives of youth workers in Cumbria was significant, with 172 people reporting an increased sense of belonging in their community and 92 people reporting improved skills and knowledge. Case studies in section four of the report highlight the experiences of four youth workers and one trustee. Their feedback demonstrates the positive impact they have had within their organisations, such as improved youth work practice and confidence, and positive feedback from young people and the wider community. Overall, in Years 1 and 2 of the programme, Better Tomorrows has made a significant impact on the personal and professional development of youth workers and has provided diverse and valuable experiences for young people in Cumbria.

**Improving young people's lives:** In Year 2, **4,289 young people** engaged in the programme. This is 3,243 more than in Year 1, giving a **cumulative total of 5335** for Years 1 and 2. For each year, the data collected reflects the number of young people supported during that year, and there may be some cross-over between years, as projects were not asked to report the number of new people to benefit. Even allowing for that, the increase from Year 1 to Year 2 demonstrates the impact of the Better Tomorrows programme. Many of the projects are in the second year of funding and have become established, enabling them to recruit and engage more young people. Engagement in the activities provided has supported young people's perceptions of functioning well: 22% reported improved engagement in education/learning, and 6.5% reported feeling better prepared for work. In terms of 'Feeling Good', 21% reported increased confidence in keeping themselves safe, and 15.5% reported that they feel an increased sense of belonging in their community.

There have been a number of challenges reported in Year 2, including limited resources and issues with accessing designated spaces for youth work, and some organisations reported young people have been experiencing barriers to attending social activities. In addition, there have been reported high levels of vulnerabilities around learning needs and disabilities, 'problematic behaviours', chaotic family lives, and a rise in the suspected use of class A drugs in some areas.

**Summary of Year 2:** The second year of Better Tomorrows has established the programme across the county. A total of 4289 young people were engaged in Year 2, with increases in their perceptions of functioning well and feeling good. They also report having fun and enjoying being with other young people in informal settings. Youth workers are supporting young people through a combination of informed education around the risks of experimenting with drugs and the long-term implications of these actions, such as the risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system. This involves multi-agency working with other professionals and teams such as schools and colleges, Early Help, and local police community support officers (PCSOs), as well as working holistically to meet the needs of the young person and the wider family to help make informed, educated choices around actions and consequences. As can be seen from the case studies, some young people are inspired by the youth workers who support them and go on to become youth workers themselves.

## Suggested areas for review by the steering group

- Carried forward from Year 1: it would be beneficial for the evaluation to include the voice of young people (e.g. in the form of stories or ‘pen portraits’ and direct quotes) to understand what they have made of the opportunities available to them as a result of the Better Tomorrows programme. This is particularly important for the evaluation to report against the programme's overall aim: Young People in Cumbria experience increased wellbeing “feeling good and functioning well”.
- Carried forward from Year 1: review the reporting criteria to ensure that data can be accurately collected regarding the number of experienced youth workers and new youth worker jobs and how these categories are defined. This is planned to be addressed within Year 3 with the use of a new data management system.
- With the NYA’s redefinition of the age range for youth work to 8-25 year-olds, from the previous age range of 11-25 year-olds, it would be useful to know the ages of young people who are engaged through Better Tomorrows projects to understand this shift in ages and a resultant potential shift in focus of practice.
- Monitor the change of training provider to understand how students respond to the mainly online provision.
- Review the Case Studies from Years 1 and 2 and suggest interviewees for Year 3 who will enable the evaluation to provide a comprehensive insight into the programme as a whole.
- Consider ways to encourage more asset-based approaches to youth work, in addition to the targeted interventions that are demonstrably having a positive impact on youth workers and the young people they work with. Perhaps it could be highlighted (if not already) within the training that the aim of youth work is not to ‘fix young people’ (a deficit approach); it is to accompany young people, be with them and advocate for them. Quality youth work is a process of recognising their strengths and supporting and empowering them to develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to reach their full potential.

The Year 2 report ends with a quote from one of the organisations that has benefited from Better Tomorrows Funding:

*The grant has enabled us to run weekly sessions... We have been able to keep these sessions free for young people to access... The impact of these activities extends beyond the immediate outcomes. The development of skills, raised aspirations, and increased confidence among the participants are key indicators of the grant’s success in fostering personal and professional growth. By combining artistic expression with educational and vocational opportunities, we aim to create a holistic and enriching experience that empowers youth, paving the way for a brighter future. The grant has been instrumental in bringing these initiatives to fruition, enabling us to make a meaningful and lasting impact on the lives of those we serve.*

Dr Tracy Ann Hayes, 28 May 2024, email: [thayes@marjon.ac.uk](mailto:thayes@marjon.ac.uk)

## Introduction

Better Tomorrows is a three-year programme to encourage people in Cumbria to become accredited in youth work and substantially increase the number of young people having access to support from youth workers to help them reach their potential. The Year 1 report<sup>1</sup> provides an introduction to the programme, the methods for the evaluation and the findings for Year 1 of the programme. This report focuses on Year 2, which, for reporting purposes, is from 1 March 2023 to 29 February 2024. The report starts with an overview of the training and reviews the two cohorts of learners from Year 2, before then addressing the two agreed evaluation questions, drawing on youth worker case studies, notes and minutes from steering group meetings and meetings between the evaluator and steering group members.

### 1.0 Training

Training in Year 2 was delivered by CADAS, reporting to Cumbria Youth Alliance (CYA). CADAS' evaluation report dated November 2023,<sup>2</sup> the update provided in April 2024 and the interim report from CYA dated February 2024 have been incorporated into this evaluation report. Part way through this year, Better Tomorrows was successful with a bid to The National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF). The programme, via CYA, has received £445,270 to train an additional 225 youth workers over the next five years. Therefore, it was agreed that existing, unspent funding allocated against training for 2023/24 would move into the 'additional youth work' budget line, increasing the amount available to spend on salaries. As in Year 1, Better Tomorrows training was delivered by CADAS. From the reports provided, it is clear that there have been several issues, and at the time of writing the Year 2 report, some assessments were still being completed. To date, from Cohorts 1-4, there have been:

- 38 completed certificates at either L2 or L3
- Plus, two unit accreditations are now being completed under extensions, and one needs an observation.
- One learner has completed both L2 and L3.
- By the end of the training delivered by CADAS, it is expected that there will be 40<sup>3</sup> certificates out of 52 enrolments.
- The other 12 were either withdrawn or have deferred.

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<sup>1</sup> Available from <https://www.cumbriafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Better-Tomorrow-Programme-Evaluation-Report-Year-1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> CADAS Youth Work Practice Certificate Training Centre Progress Report, November 2023

<sup>3</sup> It stands at 38: one student is completing in Cohort 5; another is appealing an assessment decision, if this is upheld, the total will be 39; if not, they plan to complete in Cohort 6.

CYA has requested a final report from CADAS when these remaining issues have been resolved. From Cohort 5 onwards, training will be delivered by Your Edge Training.

### **Individual Cohorts**

There were two cohorts in Year 2: Cohort 3 and Cohort 4 of the programme. Delivery of both cohorts finished prior to the external verifier visit in February 2024.

**Cohort 3** was held at Carlisle Youth Zone between April 2023 and July 2023, with 24/07/2023 given as the final submission date for completed portfolios. No completed portfolios were submitted at this time; for some, there were outstanding observations or professional discussions, and for others, there were incomplete workbooks. Despite regular reminders about timely submissions, almost all learners submitted work after the deadline, some significantly after, with a few requiring persistent chasings. There were some complaints about the timeliness of feedback, which the training centre accepted. It was reported that tutors had made it clear that work submitted after the deadline would be assessed when the team could create additional capacity. After the course end date, some of the learners with outstanding work found it difficult to respond to communications, delaying matters further.

There were also issues raised by the Internal Quality Assurer (IQA), resulting in learners being approached to make amendments. Some of the IQA feedback was challenged by the training and assessment team and will be decided upon by the External Quality Assurer (EQA). At that point, the feedback will likely be absorbed by the training centre rather than individual learners. Of the IQA feedback that the training centre accepted, it was challenging to get the learners to produce the required amendments.

The original target date for External Moderation was September 2023; however, with so few complete portfolios, the visit was postponed. The results of the IQA activity further necessitated the delay of external moderation or the risk that some learners would not pass the course. The moderation visit was then planned for November 2023 and had to be cancelled again because there was still outstanding work required from some learners, inclement weather prevented final portfolio checks from being undertaken, and unscheduled building works presented noise and access issues on the planned moderation day. External moderation/verification occurred in February 2024 for both Cohorts 3 and 4.

- 13 learners started the course in April 2023
- 8 learners achieved Level 3
- 2 learners achieved Level 2
- 2 learners deferred
- 1 candidate withdrew.

In addition to this, two Level 3 learners from Cohort 2 successfully completed the training programme.



**Cohort 4**, held in Kendal, started in September 2023. Learning agreements were in place for seven organisations, and seven learners began the course. In addition, a member of staff from a grant-making organisation joined the cohort to enhance the organisation's understanding of youth work when making funding decisions relating to youth work. Of the seven learners, five were new to the training, and two had been deferred from Cohort 2 (see p.11) and completed outstanding tasks in order for their portfolios to be included in the Cohort 3 external moderation visit. This was ahead of the target; however, as the moderation visit was postponed, they were moderated along with Cohort 4.

One learner withdrew after three sessions as there was no secure scope for regular (weekly) practical work with young people, which is a course requirement. There are elements in every unit that require evidence of practical work undertaken with young people, and therefore, it is impossible to complete the programme without this. The organisation hopes to place a learner in a subsequent cohort.

Of the 5 new learners:

- There were 2 at Level 3 – 1 completed and 1 deferred to Cohort 5.
- There were 3 at Level 2 – 1 completed, and 1 is due to be completed imminently.
- 1 learner withdrew from the programme.

Despite the delivery of learning agreement meetings where learners and managers were provided with the course schedule, sample workbooks, observation and personal development plan briefs, learners still struggled to complete and submit evidence in a timely manner. There was a rich diversity within the cohort, the quality of work submitted was of a high standard, and attendance and engagement in taught sessions were very good.

Some learners shared that they felt the course started too soon after their appointment (the case for 3 of the 5 new learners in this cohort), which compromised the quality of their onboarding and induction experience with their new employer, as well as providing unnecessary pressure on top of navigating new organisations, new roles etc. The training and assessment team shared this view, as it was evident that learners felt torn between their commitment to their onboarding and completing the work associated with the course. Feedback from all learners was that despite the thorough learning agreement process, there was still more work than expected. One learner provided feedback that units referencing theory and theorists require more taught content than is available within the delivery model.

### **1.1 How effective was the youth work training in readying youth workers to support young people in Cumbria?**

It is difficult to accurately calculate a completion rate for training, as there are several near completions and deferrals; this is best left until the end of Year 3. A cumulative record for the first

two years of the programme is included in Appendix ii. This high level of completion and near completion demonstrates the commitment of the training and assessment team and the determination of learners to complete their training. However, despite the clear guidance and opportunities to meet with trainers during the application phase, there are ongoing issues with applicants and their organisations underestimating the training requirements.

It took five attempts for an external verifier visit to be completed, with the previous four having to be cancelled due to a range of issues. This highlights the shortage of suitably qualified verifiers, indicating the need for further localised training of assessors and verifiers to support the ongoing development of youth work training in Cumbria.

Several organisations that have received Better Tomorrows' funding have not yet put forward a candidate for the new online training despite saying they would prefer this way. This new delivery method will be an area of focus for the evaluation in Year 3.

From the evidence provided and from interviews and conversations with those involved in Better Tomorrows' training, whilst being a rewarding experience, it has been challenging for those involved. This resulted in CADAS providing an unanticipated level of support for learners from both Cohorts 3 and 4. It is difficult to estimate the support needs relating to training part-time youth workers, who may have been in organisations where there has been limited access to practising youth workers or opportunities to be supported by trained youth workers. Unfortunately, this appears to have resulted in a dissatisfactory experience for many of the training and assessment team, the organisation and some of the learners. Despite this, at the end of Year 2, there are 52 more trained youth workers (see Table 1 below) supporting young people in Cumbria, which is a testimony to all those involved.

Table 1: Summary of Learners from Cohorts 1 - 4, as of 30 April 2024

Total learners engaged Cohort 1- 4	52	Notes
Cohort 1	14	
Cohort 2	20	
Cohort 3	13	
Cohort 4	5	
Total Learners Studying at L3	35	
Total Learners Studying at L2	15	
Receiving Unit Accreditation	2	This will be 3 if one does not complete the full L2
Receiving full L3	27	
Receiving full L2	9	This will be 10 if one achieves full qualification
Withdrawn	9	
Progressing from L2 to L3	1	
Deferred to subsequent cohorts	3	

Going forward into Year 3, Cohort 5 will be the first to participate in training delivered by Youth Focus/Your Edge Training. The online application form went live on 1 February until the beginning of March. In the first week of applications, Youth Focus had 26 applications, of which 13 were from Cumbria. It seems that joining in with this existing system has doubled the uptake of youth work training in the North West. Unfortunately, the number of bursaries available to Youth Focus that were funded by the government via NYA has been halved this year, so there may be fewer places than hoped for Cumbrian candidates. A meet-the-trainers day was held on Friday, 22nd March, in Kendal, with trainers from Your Edge attending and invitations sent to all candidates and supervisors. This will be reported on in Year 3 of the programme.

### 1.2 Which aspects of the youth work training and development were the most helpful and why?

In Year 1, the following helpful aspects were identified: expectations, appropriate level of study, placement support, motivations of individual learners and ongoing professional development. It is evident that the training team has worked closely with the steering group to refine programme delivery, which has strengthened the initial phases of applying for and starting the course. This has maintained the high completion rate that was established in Year 1.

In Year 2, in addition to the five aspects identified last year, the elements of training and development that appear to be more helpful are summarised as follows:

- **CONSISTENCY:** Ongoing support between cohorts for part-time trainee youth workers, which enabled learners who had to defer from one of the earlier cohorts to join a later cohort and complete the course.
- **AWARENESS:** Negotiating the complexities of providing support for newly appointed youth workers to balance the competing demands of starting a new role and undertaking training. This awareness will be helpful during future training application processes.
- **COMMITMENT:** Being able to work through the challenges and celebrate the increased number of youth workers supporting young people in Cumbria. This demonstrates tenacity and determination.
- **FLEXIBILITY:** Being open to learning from monitoring and evaluation of the project and exploring new methods for delivery of training. It will be interesting to see what happens in Year 3, with the move to a new training provider and online delivery of training.

## 2.0 Youth Work Jobs

### 2.1 How many youth worker posts were created and in which organisations?

As with training, for reporting purposes, Year 2 is from 1 March 2023 to 29 February 2024. Six new organisations were funded, resulting in 10 new youth worker posts created in Year 2, summarised in Table 2 below.

*Table 2: Organisations funded in Year 2 of the programme*

<b>Awarded Date</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>New Posts Funded</b>
<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Total carried forward</b>	<b>28</b>
	Aspatria Dreamscheme – year 2 of 3	0
	Brathay Trust – year 2 of 3	0
	CandoFM Community Radio – year 2 of 3	0
	Cowran Care Limited – year 2 of 3	0
	Drop Zone Youth Projects – year 2 of 3	0
	Keswick Youth Centre Services – year 2 of 3	0
	Kirkby Stephen Youth Centre – year 2 of 3	0
	North Allerdale Development Trust (NADT) – year 2 of 3	0
	Shackles Off Youth Project – year 2 of 3	0
	South Whitehaven Youth Partnership – year 2 of 3	0
	Women's Community Matters – year 2 of 3	0
	Youthability Youth Services & Walney Community Centre – year 2 of 3	0
<b>Year 2</b>	<b>New</b>	
	Brampton and Beyond Community Trust	2
	Friends of Bram	2
	Kent Estuary Youth	2
	Kirkby Stephen Youth Centre	2
	The Riverside Group – Eden Foyer	1
	Wave Forward	1
	<b>Total new for year 2</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>The cumulative total for years 1 and 2</b>	<b>38</b>

## 2.2 Who became youth workers in Cumbria, and how did the Better Tomorrows opportunity impact their lives?

Table 3 (below) summarises the impact of the Better Tomorrows programme for the youth workers and volunteers involved. 172 people reported an increased sense of belonging in their community and 92 people reported increased skills & knowledge.

*Table 3: Quantitative data for youth workers and volunteers for Years 1 & 2*

<b>Youth Workers / Volunteers</b>				
		<b>Yr 2</b>	<b>Yr 1</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>
<b>Programme</b>	No. of additional qualified youth workers as a result of the funding <sup>4</sup>	14	24	38
	No. of new volunteers as a direct result of the funding	59	30	89
	No. of people reporting that they feel an increased sense of belonging in their community	172	149	321
<b>Employment</b>	No. of people employed as a direct result of the funding	28	24	52
	No. of people who have gained employment after funding	18	31	49
	No. of people who have gone on to further employment in youth work	9	3	12
	No. of people reporting that they feel better prepared for work	39	16	55
<b>Education</b>	Total no. of hours of training/education undertaken	1621	1086	2707
	No. of people progressing onto further education/training	7	6	13
	No. of people who undertook Level 2 accreditation	4	8	12
	No. of people who undertook Level 3 accreditation	11	15	26
	No. of people who gained an accredited qualification <sup>5</sup>	36	14	40
<b>Skills</b>	No. of people reporting increased practical skills	60	72	132
	No. of people reporting increased interpersonal (social, communication & relationship) skills	71	77	148
	No. of people reporting increased skills & knowledge	92	55	147

<sup>4</sup> This refers to a minimum of L2 training.

<sup>5</sup> 2 received unit accreditation, not the full qualification.

What is not evident from the data provided is the ages of the young people who are engaging other than the broad range of 11-25: for example, how many are aged 11-14, 15-19 and how many are 20-25? This has implications for practice as the needs of older young people tend to focus more on the transition to adulthood and independent living, whilst for young ages, practice may align more with supporting school attendance and general work with young people, and may draw on playwork practice as well as youth work. Play can be the entry to youth clubs, which then develops into youth work as confidence and trust grow. Turnbull (2024), referring to the National Youth Work Census (NYA, 2023a),<sup>6</sup> explains, ‘... most organisations are delivering to 8-12-year olds and 41% of small organisations and 32% of the largest organisations surveyed have no staff with any youth work qualifications at any level. The new statutory guidance for local authorities places an importance on making a distinction between children’s work and youth work but what does this mean in practice for organisations who are delivering with no qualified staff?’ To ensure that what is delivered is *Youth Work*, it is important that staff (paid and voluntary) engage with appropriate training that clearly defines and supports youth work practice and aligns with the National Youth Work Curriculum.<sup>7</sup> In response to concerns such as those outlined by Turnbull, it is important to note that Better Tomorrows only funds projects delivered by trained youth workers, or where new youth workers have either signed up for the L2/L3 youth work training or are committed to accessing it. For evaluation purposes, a breakdown of the ages of young people who engage in the activities will provide a greater insight into understanding the impact of Better Tomorrows.

Section 2.4 of the report provides detailed case studies for Year 2. Here, exemplar quotes from the Year 2 monitoring reports give insight into some of the other youth workers supported by Better Tomorrows and the impact they have had within their organisations.

“When I first came here, it was a bit scary because I had not done anything like it before, and I found it hard to talk about my feelings to someone without getting upset, but the more I spoke to someone about it, the more I realised that speaking to someone helps and being here helped me. I saw a lot of different staff here and they helped me get to where I am now. It was also coming into a new building for the first time. I did a week’s placement here from college, spent most of the time in drop-in speaking to the women and they immediately welcomed me and accepted me as a male... at first, I didn’t feel like I fit in because it’s a women’s centre and I’m a male and it all felt a bit weird but after a couple of weeks being here and I started to settle into the working life here all the doubt and the weirdness left and I realised that this is

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<sup>6</sup> National Youth Agency. (2023). The National Youth Work Census. Snapshot, Spring 2023. Available <https://s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/assets.nya2.joltrouter.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/17113324/NYA-Census-Snapshot-Spring-2023-Report.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://nya.org.uk/national-youth-work-curriculum/>

the place where I want to work. I was scared to speak to the women, even though I did a week placement here in drop-in talking and listening to the women that attend the centre, because I didn't know what they would think of me being in the centre, but some of them remembered me from my placement and they were so lovely."

Beyond the artistic realm, the grant has facilitated the attainment of a Level 3 youth work qualification for two members of our team. This qualification represents a tangible investment in professional development, enhancing their capacity to effectively engage with and support the youth in our community. By elevating the skills and qualifications of our team members, we are better equipped to provide a higher quality of service, ensuring that our interactions with young individuals are informed by the latest knowledge and best practices in youth work."

"We have also helped out at [other youth groups]. These youth groups are looking very unstable as they do not have a plan to develop their group and are just ticking over while just meeting the staff ratio required. These groups are very well attended, and the volunteers are doing a great job considering the resources and funding that they receive. We plan to offer further help to other groups that we have made a connection with... These groups may need support for the youth workers to establish the legacy groups again, and we hope to contribute to the continuation of as many already running youth groups as possible."

"The grant to [organisation] has significantly transformed its capacity to support youth development and community engagement. It has propelled the professional growth of Youth Workers by providing essential training and qualifications, including Level 2 accreditation in Youth Work and Level 3 Safeguarding Children, alongside enriching experiences through Detached Youth Work sessions with expert practitioners."

### **2.3 How many youth work sessions were delivered, and of what nature?**

In Year 2, there was an average of 222 hours per week of youth work provision provided through Better Tomorrows funding. Across all the projects, a total of 8314 hours was provided, resulting in a cumulative total of 11,984 hours provided across Years 1 and 2.

The range of activities provided was similar to Year 1 (see p.16). However, this year saw an increase in providing support for young people making the transition from primary to secondary school, which reflects an increasing focus on the positive impact youth work with schools can have



(NYA, 2023b).<sup>8</sup> This is not without controversy. As Turnbull (2024) argues, *'If we want youth work to be further recognised and valued by other sectors and government, we must ensure that we are consistent in how we are articulating who it is for...'* There is a clear need for skilled work with older young people, who may present with a range of complex needs and require support within smaller groups or one-to-one. Better Tomorrows is well placed to *'...support the profession to better advocate for the resources needed to ensure that youth workers are able to engage with young people utilising a youth work approach so that the time and resources required to build the foundations of trust and voluntary engagement with the older age range are appropriately considered.'* (Turnbull, 2024). It is unclear how many of the sessions were informed by the National Youth Work Curriculum or what the ages were (within the reporting criteria of 11-25) of those who engaged in them. Lowering the age range to include primary-aged children (who may be younger than 11) may provide some much-needed, quality work for those children and provide a way to engage higher numbers of children (younger young people) within a challenging operating environment. It may draw on youth work skills, but this is not the same as youth work. It also highlights the need for more professional skilled play workers.

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<sup>8</sup> NYA (2023). Better Together: Youth Work with Schools report, available <https://nya.org.uk/document/better-together-youth-work-with-schools-report/>

## 3.0 Improving Young People's Lives

### 3.1 Who accessed youth work funded via Better Tomorrows?

In Year 2, 4,289 young people engaged in the programme. This is 3,243 more than in Year 1, giving a cumulative total for Years 1 and 2 of 5335. For each year, the data collected reflects the number of young people supported during that year. There will likely be some cross-over between years, as projects were not asked to report the number of new people to benefit. Even allowing for that, the increase from Year 1 to Year 2 is a testimony to the impact of the Better Tomorrows programme. Many of the projects are now in the second year of funding and have become more established, enabling them to recruit and engage more young people. A quote from one of the Year 2 reports encapsulates this:

"Receiving this grant has enabled [organisation] to begin to embed itself within the local community and become a recognised trusted provision for young people to attend... The local people of this town now recognise us as a trusted provision where young people can attend free of charge, get help, support and guidance, but more importantly, a safe place to increase social interaction, have fun and positive engagement. Due to the prominent level of deprivation in [the area] coupled with the current cost of living crisis, it has been essential that young people have had this provision free of charge to prevent any young person being excluded due to their family financial background [...] continue[s] to work with vulnerable groups and/or identified individuals with targeted intervention work and informal education providing alternative pathways for achievement."

Following recommendations from Year 1, additional data was collected on the number of young people (11-25) with additional needs (based on youth workers' professional judgement) engaged in youth work activity. This indicated that 13% (n = 410/3240 engaged in Year 2) of young people engaged in Year 2 had additional needs (this data was not collected in Year 1). Cumbria Children and Young People's Plan 2021-23<sup>9</sup> reports that '11.9% of school pupils in the county receive Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) support; similar to the national average (12.2%).' Therefore, 13% seems a reasonable estimate for those attending activities delivered within the Better Tomorrows programme.

Table 4 below shows that engagement in the activities provided has supported young people's perceptions of functioning well: 22% reported improved engagement in education/learning, and 6.5% reported feeling better prepared for work. In terms of 'Feeling Good', 21% reported

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<sup>9</sup> Available at

<https://legacy.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/537/6683/7033/42478103822.pdf>

increased confidence in keeping themselves safe, and 15.5% reported that they feel an increased sense of belonging in their community.

*Table 4: Summary of impact on young people in Years 1 & 2*

<b>Young People</b>				
		<b>Yr 2</b>	<b>Yr 1</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>
<b>Youth Work Activity</b>	No. of young people (11-25) engaged in the programme	4289	1046	<b>5335</b>
	No. of young people (11-25) with additional needs (based on youth workers professional judgement) engaged in youth work activity	410	-	-
	No. of hours of youth work provision provided per week (on average)	222	-	-
	Total no. of hours of youth work provision provided	8314	3670	<b>11984</b>
	No. of other services offered to participants	161	23	<b>184</b>
<b>Functioning Well</b>	No. of people whose engagement in education/learning has improved	931	391	<b>1322</b>
	No. of people who went into further and/or higher education as a direct result of participation.	92	31	<b>123</b>
	No. of people reporting increased interpersonal (social, communication & relationship) skills	979	724	<b>1703</b>
	No. of people reporting they feel better prepared for work	277	59	<b>336</b>
	No. of people reporting increased practical skills	488	406	<b>894</b>
<b>Feeling Good</b>	No. of people reporting that they feel an increased sense of belonging in their community	664	590	<b>1254</b>
	No. of people reporting increased confidence in keeping themselves safe	903	453	<b>1356</b>
	No. of people reporting an increase in personal aspirations and goals	452	331	<b>783</b>

	No. of people reporting an increase in:	Resilience	738	444	<b>1182</b>
		Competence	588	412	<b>1000</b>
		Optimism	713	481	<b>1194</b>
		self-assurance	791	579	<b>1370</b>
		self-care	684	544	<b>1228</b>
		Confidence	934	717	<b>1651</b>
<b>Community</b>	No. of <u>new</u> youth sessions created		212	171	<b>383</b>
	No. of people reporting that they feel safer in their communities		573	558	<b>1131</b>
	No. of people reporting better access to services or support		645	597	<b>1242</b>

There have been a number of challenges reported in Year 2, including:

- Limited resources and funding constraining ability to expand and reach more young people, and the opportunity to offer them a wider range of activities, skills and experiences.
- Staffing challenges include staffing capacity, illness, and staff moving between roles and employers. For smaller organisations, which have previously managed through sub-contracting staff, constitutional changes have been required to be able to directly employ staff.
- Challenges with accessing designated spaces for youth work. Shared spaces can be restrictive and bring young people and youth workers into conflict with other users of the spaces. For some youth workers, their aim is to deliver more group work on the streets, but meeting young people on a regular basis has been difficult. Having more designated spaces would help with the planning and delivery of more social action projects and workshops.
- Some organisations reported that young people have been experiencing barriers to attending social activities, and some took a while to fully engage in sessions. In addition, there have been reported high levels of vulnerabilities around SEND, 'problematic behaviours', chaotic family lives, and a rise in the suspected use of class A drugs in some areas. Youth workers are supporting young people through a combination of informed education around the risks of experimenting with drugs and the long-term implications of these actions, such as the risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system. This involves multi-agency working with other professionals and teams such as schools and

colleges, Early Help, and local police community support officers (PCSOs), as well as working holistically to meet the needs of the young person and the wider family to help make informed, educated choices around actions and consequences.

### **3.2 What impact did the youth work have on young people in the short term?**

Without talking to the young people involved, it is difficult to evaluate the impact on young people in the short term beyond what is captured in the quantitative data, summarised in Table 4.

However, exemplar quotes from the Year 2 monitoring reports give insight into some of the impacts the youth work had on young people:

“Within one month [of offering activities] at least 10 young people are feeling empowered to take action in creating campaigns, activities and events that are focussed on improving the lives of those in their wider community. The members to date have expressed how refreshing it is to have a peer group whereby they've bonded over their interest in 'making a difference'.”

"As a direct outcome of the grant, our project has been able to offer a diverse array of activities and services, enriching the lives of children and young people in the community. One notable initiative involves engaging participants in group singing and songwriting sessions. These creative endeavours not only serve as a form of artistic expression but also contribute significantly to skill development. Through these activities, participants have honed their musical abilities, nurtured their creativity, and acquired valuable songwriting skills.”

“We have found that many young people living in the area have been experiencing barriers to attending social activities... some of them took a while to fully engage in sessions, mainly due to their low self-esteem, lack of confidence, motivation but also anxiety and stress has been a real issue for them. The majority of participants found the environment difficult when they attended for the first time. They struggled to communicate and network with other young people. However, by attending the club regularly, they have learnt how to build their own confidence and become more open to others, having fun by participating in the activities.

“From the evaluations completed by the young people attending our universal provision we know young people feel safer, appreciated and most importantly happier. Young people have said they feel more motivated to be more active, both physically through sports activities and to participate positively in their local community such as supporting their local food pantry. This involvement enables them to experience the emotional and practical advantages of helping others and contributing to the wider community. This engagement then provides a positive ripple effect which can help bridge gaps between generations and previous perceptions of young people within their own communities.”

“Our survey results show a continued difference in happiness and general mood resulting from their time together at the Junior Youth Club sessions, in a dedicated, permanent space created especially for the young people of [the area]. The local Primary schools have been very supportive in recommending the Year 6 Youth Club to their pupils, based on the feedback received and positive results they've seen in last year's Year 6 pupils.”

“Having this grant is having a very positive effect on the youth, giving them a purpose and value. We like to encourage a sense of ownership to the groups... the young people are showing signs of ownership of their group, participating with enthusiasm and gusto. They are also making use of the space provided... and with this new-found freedom, they are able to work through issues that may arise at school and within their friend groups.”

“The initiative has given young people unique opportunities to develop new skills and interests... establishing Young People's [...] Clubs in schools and Youth Organisations. These clubs have been crucial for extracurricular learning, enhancing participants' communication, technical, digital, leadership, teamwork, and self-confidence skills, and ensuring inclusivity for all, including those with additional needs. The project's influence extends across the community, enhancing educational offerings through partnerships and promoting media literacy, civic responsibility, and a sense of belonging. Positive feedback from schools, parents, and caregivers highlights its impact on boosting students' confidence and self-esteem. Regular surveys confirm improvements in creative thinking, self-expression, and a heightened sense of community belonging among participants, affirming the project's success in meeting its objectives and fostering enjoyment and community engagement through [...] participation.”

### **3.3 How might this contribute to longer-term outcomes in their lives?**

This was explained in Year 1 (p.21). However, as can be seen from the case studies that follow, some young people are inspired by the youth workers who support them and go on to become youth workers themselves. Anecdotally, it has been reported that there are several family ‘dynasties’ of youth workers where children have been inspired by their youth worker parents to become youth workers themselves. It would be beneficial for the Year 3 evaluation to include some ‘pen portraits’ or short stories of some young people in addition to the youth worker case studies.

## 4.0 Youth Worker Case Studies

As in year 1, case studies have been anonymised using pseudonyms chosen by participants and removing names of organisations and specific areas of Cumbria.

### 4.1 Individual Interview with Marie

Marie first undertook youth work training in 2000, achieving a level 2 qualification. She joined the Better Tomorrows training programme, along with her daughter, to refresh her knowledge so that she would be up to date with requirements and feel more confident as a manager. In her youth work practice, she uses circus skills to engage young people, encouraging projects to be youth-led as she has found this to be *“the best way to get young people involved, give them ownership of whatever it is that they're doing and that usually guarantees that they're going to stay on board or at least be passionate about what it is that we're doing or invested in it”*. She says that completing the level 3 training *“reaffirmed for me what I've been doing up until now has been the right thing”*.

Marie shared that she did not find studying easy, had not achieved in school when she was a young person and described herself as *“a bit of a tearaway when I was a child... it was youth working, that kind of saved me...”*. She explains that there were three youth clubs near where she lived, and the youth workers' support was critical to her upbringing because she was so disconnected from school. She also experienced challenges within the family home and says that youth work was one of the things that *“helped me find myself”* and encouraged her to be creative.

Over the years, she has combined teaching circus skills with youth work, in voluntary and paid work, while raising a family, some of whom are also now working in the organisation. She is clearly passionate about supporting young people and is committed to social action and building communities. She aims to help individuals *“kind of break that [negative] cycle ... And look towards a more positive way of living life. And the main thing is, you know, building their confidence again ... making them believe in themselves, which fits really well with youth working”*. The organisation does not have their own centre and works collaboratively using other organisations' buildings.

Marie enjoyed the training provided through Better Tomorrows and looked forward to the weekly sessions, with the opportunities they offered to network with other learners on the programme. When talking about her experiences, she took a considered, thoughtfully reflective approach. She thought the trainers *“were brilliant”*. However, she found the written work challenging due to dyslexia, *“it takes me a lot longer to read things than it does for anybody else. And sometimes I get myself in a bit of a pickle with numbers because my dyslexia is actually worse with numbers than it is with letters...”*. In addition to the training, Marie's organisation has also received funding from Better Tomorrows to deliver youth work activities. They run a leadership programme for young people (15 – 21), which enables them to take on some of the responsibilities of being an older participant.

Marie emphasised the need for more effective promotion of youth work, identifying a need to make it *“... more common knowledge, because what's really strange is we're doing this and we say, oh, we're youth workers and people, even young people say, what are youth workers?”* She is grateful for the opportunities provided by Better Tomorrows that have enabled them to improve their practice and to be able to offer this as a career opportunity for others. She explained *“I do feel like it [youth work] is sort of my calling in a way because it's come from my childhood, you know? And it's me putting back into the community... it's really important to me to be able to do that.”*

#### **4.2 Paired interview with James Bond and Phoebe**

James is the volunteer chair of the board of trustees, and Phoebe is a youth worker at a small charitable organisation in Cumbria. James shared that *“we're forever looking for ways of expanding the services to the young people”* of the area, and funding from Better Tomorrows enabled them to employ Phoebe, who had previously qualified as a youth worker through the Open University. The organisation has existed in *“some way, shape or form”* since the 1950s and used to operate out of its own building until it was demolished following flooding. James explained, *“...we've been nomadic since then and had to rent different places whilst we still own a piece of land without a building... we spent a lot of time in the last few years working out plans for a new youth club... that hasn't materialised yet... we are now operating out of a rented facility, which is exclusively ours... which we have used over the last 10 years”*. Now they have their own space, in the town centre, where they can lock the front door, and it is set up for youth work. They rely on volunteer youth workers to run sessions and James shared that Phoebe is their first paid youth worker. If they had enough volunteers, they would offer activities every evening instead of a couple of evenings per week and school holidays.

One area of focused work for Phoebe has been supporting young people with the transition from primary to secondary school and as a result, they now offer activities for year six to year nine. She explained that the funding from Better Tomorrows enabled them to *“... have a club for younger children within the town because before it it was just for year 7 upwards and there wasn't much for the younger... the primary age children”*. She expanded that there were sports clubs, but not *“an informal space where children can come and just hang around with their friends after school... have free food, chill out, that kind of thing, and also have people around them where maybe got a little bit more time just to sit and have a chat with them and build those relationships. And because we've started with them in primary school, it actually enables us then to build a relationship with them at an earlier age... that's helping us really to know them before they reach the teenage years and they face even bigger challenges and things like that.”*

Building and maintaining relationships is a cornerstone of effective youth work, as Phoebe articulates: *“... building those relationships, it helps them know that somebody around who's a safe*



*person to talk to... maybe they don't feel they can talk to a teacher or if there's something happening outside of school and they want to come and talk... even though we would encourage them to talk to the family members... we're an ear to listen to them, a helping hand... a safe space to be in".* The youth club offers an opportunity for young people to meet other young people from different primary schools, who they are likely to be with once they start secondary school. The local secondary has over 1000 young people who attend, and it can be "... really daunting for those year sixes to move up" (Phoebe). James explained that young people appreciate what is on offer, saying, "... some of the kids walked into this space, and they said, 'is this really all for us?'... they actually make that connection, that people care enough about them to create this space for them."

Phoebe came into youth work through helping in her local church, initially with younger children then moving onto youth work, and "... just completely fell in love with it... I just knew there and then that's what I want to do." She volunteered in various places around the area to gain practical skills whilst completing her degree. James came to his role as a trustee through having a child who attended the youth club and friends who helped run it. He has a business background and brings these skills to the trustee role. He finds it an enjoyable role, "if you have something to offer that sort of value, and you can give something to the local community, whatever that is... I mean, where would communities be without volunteers? I'm just doing a little bit of that myself." As with other interviewees, they were invited to share their thoughts on what is 'quality youth work' (see page x).

James emphasised the need for more effective collaborative working together to support the young people in the area, "... we're all tapping into the same group of people, the same group of volunteers and the same funding streams... get closer as organisations and know what each other's challenges are as a starting point... surely we must be bumping into similar things... we can learn stuff from each other." This is something that Better Tomorrows seems to do well. James and Phoebe are grateful for Better Tomorrows because it has enabled them to do something that they could not do without the additional support provided.

The case study comes to a close with Phoebe's reflections on the impact on her of the Better Tomorrows' funding: "It's my dream job... all I wanted to be was a youth worker... I started looking at leaving Cumbria to get a job in youth work... it's giving me my dream job here... it's giving me that confidence now to work in youth work across all age groups and actually to fully lead a session and take the responsibility on my shoulders."

#### **4.3 Paired interview with Sheldon and Bob**

Sheldon and Bob are in their early twenties and are based within the same organisation, which primarily uses music to engage with young people. Sheldon started doing youth work in September 2022, alongside working as a recently qualified primary teacher. The organisation runs some youth work sessions in schools and others in the community. Sheldon explains why she

started doing youth work: *"I think I just enjoy helping young people, but I used to... we're working at [organisation] and I used to attend [same organisation] when I was younger, so I think it was really something I really wanted to do"*. She explained that she benefited from the organisation's work when she was a young person and wants to bring that into other young people's lives. Bob had also attended the organisation as a young person and, after graduating with a degree in songwriting, welcomed the opportunity to work there.

Their work includes activities designed to support young people with the transition between primary and secondary school, as well as *"a lot of songwriting-based activities and also just general youth work as well like games and stuff and just having a chat with them..."*. Bob explained that they use music in a therapeutic way to engage with young people, and they both joined the Better Tomorrows training to develop youth work skills and knowledge.

They shared that they found the training overwhelming at times, trying to fit it in with full-time paid and part-time youth work, and keeping on top of deadlines. They would have liked the training to be spread over a more extended period of time, there to be clearer communication from the training team members and access to more support, which they felt would reduce their feelings of stress. Bob said, *"I'm finding it useful to reflect on my own practice"* – reflective practice is critical within youth work, and this helped them to see their progress. She also shared, *"I've enjoyed just being in a room with other youth workers and getting to network from that point of view... I feel like I know there's people well enough that I could drop them an e-mail and be like ohh I need some help with this, or could I come and watch you doing your session? ... I do think I have improved my confidence quite a lot, sort of just by soaking things up..."*. Sheldon agreed. They found it useful to see the range of opportunities for youth workers beyond using music.

Bob shared how much they enjoyed working with young people, *"... some people in the group who are like, incredible musicians, and it will be really nice to watch them improve ... growing confidence... it's interesting because some of them are teaching us... Brilliant... I think it's just that they're able to socialise with each other and develop, for example, songwriting... they have lots of fun and they're able to do it with each other. Whereas at school they're probably not doing things like that... they're having more fun... they like dancing as well. So we get them dancing... and they just have a fun time. And I think that we know full well the benefits that coming into [this organisation] has on young people and... it's very exciting to see the potential that we could have on their lives... that's really positive"*.

They summed up the impact the organisation had had on their lives as young people:

Sheldon: *"Well, we've both gone on to do music-related things... We both did music degrees and now we're both working. We both do music doing gigs still. And it helped our confidence, I wouldn't have ever been able to do that if it wasn't for coming here."*

Bob: *"I joined when I was approaching unis and going through the audition stage... helped massively with my confidence there and just getting gigs and stuff... Now I am a professional musician as well as everything else. So yeah, it's helped massively."*

Bob has plans to progress onto postgraduate study in music therapy and is interested in working with neurodivergent young people and further exploring the relationship between music therapy and mental health. They both shared their thoughts on what is 'quality youth work' (see page x) and responded to the question "What do you like about youth work?":

Sheldon: *"I just really like making a difference... it's little things like we were running a session and... all the kids - they were going home and they were like can't wait for next week and then they will come back and you could just see the positive effect that it was having on their life... the effect that you have on them."*

Bob: *"... when we're working in the school, and we'll go and knock on the door to go and get the kids, and they just look so happy... like they've been doing maths or whatever, and their faces like light up ... they come running out the classroom. So happy to see us... it's so lovely. It's the best feeling in the world. Yeah. It is, yeah."*

#### 4.4 Quality Youth Work – contributions from Year 2

Like the participants in Year 1, the Year 2 interviewees were invited to share their thoughts on what quality youth work is (see Appendix i), summarised below.

**Sheldon:** *Quality youth work is providing young people with... a means to access... to be able to express themselves and having a really positive relationship with the young people so that they can trust you... providing them with a space too... Networking with other young people...*

**Bob:** *I've learnt from the course that an understanding of all the legislation and the policies and everything is also really, really important... the base level by which you can develop those trusting relationships with the young people, so that then if there is an issue, then you're there to support them with it...*

**Marie:** *Quality youth work is to be somebody who creates a safe space for young people to feel safe to express themselves and find themselves... Where they're not being judged. And they're able to be creative in finding themselves... somebody who may give them space to build their confidence in social skills... maybe extra support if they need it... And somebody who is informed, who doesn't just blow hot air. Somebody who actually knows what support to be able to give them, I think is really important.*

**James:** *Creating a safe space for them to be somewhere... quality youth work within those safe spaces [...] is probably mostly about finding the right balance between doing their thing with their mates... Yet at the same time, being capable as a good youth worker to spot the moments when somebody needs something else and then creating the space for that to happen... having the quality or the skill to help that person to a better space in that particular moment... subtly equipping them with additional life skills that they might or might not get anywhere else and that's often a group thing, and that's that makes it a little bit more constructive... a place where they can be kids with their mates, and then also be there if somebody is struggling and then knowing what to do with it, without embarrassing the person and that's quite a skill... we are not capable of delivering everything that the child needs when they're with us, working with other youth organisations and services... so that we are able to signpost elsewhere if necessary...*

**Phoebe:** *Providing that space for young people, especially in our area where it's rural and there's not a lot... and it's getting less and less... providing that space where they can come and be in a safe space where they can grow as individuals or they can be around people who are going to help them grow to be the best version of themselves, where they can build on life skills, things that they may not even necessarily learn in school, or if they don't fit into the mould that comes from schools... it's that place where they can be. It's building on those skills... it'll help develop these fabulous young people... help them grow and grow. Hopefully, into even more fabulous people.*

## 5.0 Summary and Conclusions from Year 2

There are recognised challenges in training part-time students; as Butcher (2020, p.5)<sup>10</sup> highlights that, with regard to higher education, adults who study part-time are disproportionately likely to have characteristics associated with non-traditional and disadvantaged learners. They typically require significant pastoral support and may have additional learning support needs, which can be difficult to provide within a short, part-time learning programme. Butcher (Ibid., p.12) argues for the importance of giving attention to ‘the voices of adults struggling to overcome barriers to studying part-time’. This is something that Better Tomorrows has done from the start by seeking and acting on feedback gained through monitoring processes and by including case studies within the evaluation report, which helps to amplify the youth workers’ voices. Better Tomorrows cannot be a panacea; however, by listening to and acting on the findings from this programme, it can help make a difference for some adult learners in Cumbria and the young people they work with.

There have been additional opportunities created for paid and voluntary employment through Better Tomorrows’ funding and support. There is a clear spread of new opportunities around the county, which is having a demonstrable impact on youth workers and young people. A total of 4289 young people were engaged in Year 2, with increases in their perceptions of functioning well and feeling good. They also report having fun and enjoying being with other young people in informal settings, which is vital when ‘mental health is a big issue for young people.’<sup>11</sup>

With regard to the outputs within the Better Tomorrows Theory of Change (p.3), see Table 5 below.

*Table 5: Progress Towards Outputs in Theory of Change*

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<sup>10</sup> Butcher, J. (2020). Unheard: The voices of part-time adult learners. *Higher Education Policy Institute*. [https://oro.open.ac.uk/69482/1/HEPI\\_Unheard%20-%20the%20voices%20of%20part-time%20adult%20learners\\_Report%20125.pdf](https://oro.open.ac.uk/69482/1/HEPI_Unheard%20-%20the%20voices%20of%20part-time%20adult%20learners_Report%20125.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> YOUNGMINDS (2021-24) Mental Health Statistics. Available <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/mental-health-statistics/>

<b>Output</b>	<b>Year 1 &amp; 2 Cumulative numbers</b>
Over 100 L2/L3 qualifications	38
Over 100 experienced youth workers	Difficult to determine
Over 100 workers delivering high-quality youth work practice	Difficult to determine
20 Youth Worker jobs created (minimum)	32
1000 Young People accessing Youth Work (minimum)	5335

### 5.1 Suggested areas for review by the steering group

- Carried forward from Year 1: It would be beneficial for the evaluation to include the voice of young people (in the form of stories or ‘pen portraits’ and direct quotes) to understand what they have made of the opportunities available to them as a result of the Better Tomorrows programme. This is particularly important for the evaluation to report against the programme's overall aim: Young People in Cumbria experience increased wellbeing “feeling good and functioning well”.
- Carried forward from Year 1: Review the reporting criteria to ensure that data can be accurately collected regarding the number of experienced youth workers and new youth worker jobs and how these categories are defined. This is planned to be addressed within Year 3 with the use of a new data management system.
- With the NYA’s redefinition of the age range for youth work to 8-25 year-olds, from the previous age range of 11-25 year-olds,<sup>12</sup> it would be useful to know the ages of young people who are engaged through Better Tomorrows projects to understand this shift in ages. This potentially has implications for the ‘Quality of Youth Work’ outlined in this report.
- Monitor the change of training provider to understand how students respond to the mainly online provision.
- Review the Case Studies from Years 1 and 2 and suggest interviewees for Year 3 who will enable the evaluation to provide a comprehensive insight into the programme as a whole.

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<sup>12</sup> Turnbull, G. L. (2024). An Age of Uncertainty. *Youth & Policy*. Available <https://www.youthandpolicy.org/articles/an-age-of-uncertainty/>

- Consider ways to encourage more asset-based approaches to youth work, in addition to the targeted interventions that are demonstrably having a positive impact on youth workers and the young people they work with. Perhaps it could be highlighted (if not already) within the training that the aim of youth work is not to 'fix young people' (a deficit approach); it is to accompany young people, be with them and advocate for them. Quality youth work is a process of recognising their strengths and supporting and empowering them to develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to reach their full potential (see p.7).

The Year 2 report ends with a quote from one of the organisations that has benefited from Better Tomorrows Funding:

*The grant has enabled us to run weekly sessions... We have been able to keep these sessions free for young people to access... The impact of these activities extends beyond the immediate outcomes. The development of skills, raised aspirations, and increased confidence among the participants are key indicators of the grant's success in fostering personal and professional growth. By combining artistic expression with educational and vocational opportunities, we aim to create a holistic and enriching experience that empowers youth, paving the way for a brighter future. The grant has been instrumental in bringing these initiatives to fruition, enabling us to make a meaningful and lasting impact on the lives of those we serve.*

## Appendices

### Appendix i: Quality Youth Work (from Year 1 report)

Quality youth work is a process of recognising young people's strengths and supporting and empowering them to develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to reach their full potential. It places young people at the centre of practice and empowers them to overcome disadvantages or challenges (UK Youth).<sup>13</sup> It involves creating a safe and inclusive space where young people can explore their identities, their interests, express their views, and engage with others in meaningful ways. It is a practice of informal education, which involves the development of democratic and associational approaches that promote learning and development in the communities or individuals who choose to take part. It is focused on work with adolescents, with groups as well as individuals, and with personal development in the context of the development of wide social networks and collective engagement with issues of social justice (Marjon, 2023).<sup>14</sup>

Quality youth work starts where young people are in terms of developmental or physical location (e.g. open access or detached/street work). The relationship between young people and youth workers is entirely voluntary: it is the young person's choice whether/how to engage with the professional (NYA n.d.).<sup>15</sup> This does not negate school-based or targeted interventions where young people have been referred; it is about the process of developing a relationship with the youth worker. Quality youth work is characterised by a number of key features, including:

- Focus on the needs and interests of young people: responsive to their needs and interests, guided by their perspectives.
- Commitment to youth participation: actively engage young people in the planning, design, and delivery of programmes and activities.
- Recognition of the importance of relationships: prioritise building positive relationships between youth workers and young people, as well as among young people themselves, and their wider communities.
- Commitment to youth development: support the holistic development of young people, including social, emotional, cognitive, and physical well-being, so that they have voice, influence and place in their communities and society as a whole.
- Focus on learning and skill-building: provide opportunities for young people to learn new skills, explore new interests, and develop their talents. This builds resilience and gives young people the confidence and life skills they need to live, learn, work and achieve.
- Commitment to diversity, inclusion and social justice: inclusive and accessible to all young people, regardless of their background or circumstances.

In the words of some Better Tomorrows youth workers, a quality youth worker is

... somebody who is caring, is kind, is compassionate. It's somebody who has the young person's interest, like their *best* interest at heart, and it's somebody who is *passionate* about it... It's about making a difference and impacting their lives in a positive way.

... always be approachable and *let them talk*... being there for them... have a *crac* with them...

Quality youth work requires training that can *inspire, encourage and nurture*... [enabling youth workers] *to become a catalyst for change and make a real difference to the lives of young people* (Marjon, 2023). The National Occupational Standards (NOS) and the National Curriculum<sup>16</sup> for youth work inform and underpin training.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.ukyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/UKYouthStrategyPaperFINAL.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.marjon.ac.uk/courses/youth-work-degree-apprenticeship/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.nya.org.uk/youth-work/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.nya.org.uk/quality/curriculum/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.nya.org.uk/national-occupational-standards-and-english-youth-work-policy-new-document-published/>



## Appendix ii: Summary of Training Cohorts

Cumulative record.

Year / Cohort	Start Date	Venue	Enrolled / started	Completed		Unit accreditation		Deferred	Withdrawn
				Level 2	Level 3	Level 2	Level 3		
<b>Year 1</b>									
<b>Cohort 1</b>	03/03/2022	Cleator Moor	14	4	10			0	0
<b>Cohort 2</b>	13/09/2022	Barrow	20	3	7			2	8
<b>Year 2</b>									
<b>Cohort 3</b>	19/04/2023	Carlisle	13	2	8			2	1
<b>Cohort 4</b>	05/09/2023	Kendal	5 (+ 2 deferrals)	2	2	1	1	1	0
<b>Totals from 1—4 <sup>18</sup></b>			<b>52</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Year 3</b>									
<b>Cohort 5</b>		Online							
<b>Cohort 6</b>									
Deferrals who completed									
<b>TOTAL</b>									

<sup>18</sup> This includes those with issues still being resolved by CADAS at time of writing Year 2 report. Cohorts 5 & 6 will be with Your Edge Training.