

The logo for QTURN, featuring the word 'QTURN' in a green, sans-serif font. The letter 'Q' is stylized with a white square cutout in its top-left corner.

Department
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THE CENTRE
FOR YOUTH
IMPACT

Part of YMCA George Williams College

A Framework of Outcomes for Young People 3.0

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YMCA George Williams College

A Framework of Outcomes for Young People 3.0

Acknowledgements

This is **A Framework of Outcomes for Young People 3.0**.

The original Framework of Outcomes for Young People was published in 2012. The framework¹ was developed by the Young Foundation as one element of the DfE-funded Catalyst Consortium² work programme. The original framework focused on seven ‘clusters of capabilities’ that were intended to provide a common language in youth work and provision for young people to help providers, commissioners, and the funding community to convene and align their work around a shared vision. The framework was based on an extensive review of research and was applied across a wide range of provision for young people in informal settings, as well as in targeted support for particular young people, groups, and communities.

A Framework of Outcomes for Young People 2.0 was originally published in 2019 with support from Louise Smith and colleagues at the Local Government Association (LGA) in framing the work and enabling conversations with local authority colleagues. We are also grateful to UK Youth for hosting a dedicated consultation with its members to contribute to the development of version 2.0. We would also like to acknowledge the role of the National Youth Agency in the second phase of the project, which focused specifically on supporting commissioners to embed the outcomes framework in their work. We are also grateful to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) for supporting the Centre for Youth Impact to produce the updated Outcomes Framework 2.1 in March 2022 with a strengthened focus on socio-emotional skills.

This latest iteration, ‘A Framework of Outcomes for Young People 3.0’, with increased focus on high-quality practice in developing socio-emotional skills, is published under our new organisational name, YMCA George Williams College, following its merger with the Centre for Youth Impact in 2022. We are indebted to colleagues at QTurn, who have advised and supported us in our development of the last three versions of the outcomes framework.

¹ <https://youngfoundation.org/publications/framework-of-outcomes-for-young-people/>

² Catalyst was a consortium of four organisations (led by the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services, working with the Young Foundation, the National Youth Agency, and Social Enterprise UK) that worked with the Department for Education (DfE) as the strategic partner for young people as part of DfE’s wider transition programme for the sector. Catalyst worked to deliver three key objectives over the two-year period 2011-13: strengthen the youth sector market, equip the sector to work in partnership with the Government, and coordinate a skills development strategy for the youth sector’s workforce.

1. Introduction

A Framework of Outcomes for Young People 3.0 (Outcomes Framework 3.0) is for everyone working with and for young people. It is particularly designed for practitioners, to support their thinking about planning, designing, delivering, and evaluating their provision for young people, and commissioners, to support their local mapping, planning, commissioning, monitoring, and evaluation activity. The rationale for an outcomes framework was noted in 2018 by the Local Government Association, which funded version 2.0 of this framework, that stated: “A clear outcomes framework can help to effectively monitor the impact of a service at key milestones to spot where things aren’t working and provide opportunities to make changes where needed. It can also support evidence of collective impact across the system”³. We remain committed to this vision: for continuous quality improvement in informal and non-formal provision for young people, and for a strong and compelling shared evidence base across the sector.

There are many existing frameworks of outcomes, produced for different reasons and featuring different ranges of outcomes. Outcomes Framework 3.0, like the earlier versions that came before it, is firmly grounded in current research and its themes have emerged over time with the development of academic and practice knowledge, from version 1 (often referred to as ‘the Catalyst Framework’) in 2012, to 2.1 in 2022, and now to this version 3.0 in 2023. The focus of the 3.0 update is on relational practice to support the socio-emotional skill development of young people, and to strengthen links to trauma-informed practice.

Outcomes Framework 3.0 is intended to shape both the design and the evaluation of provision. This document sets out the rationale for our focus on socio-emotional skills and high-quality relational practice to underpin the design of your provision. Our accompanying document ‘Our Approach to Measuring Socio-emotional Skills’ describes how to use this Framework as an evaluative framework and introduces the socio-emotional skills measures we have in place to facilitate that evaluation.

This Framework is focused on socio-emotional skill outcomes for young people that research suggests support positive and healthy development through adolescence and into adulthood. It is our hope that Outcomes Framework 3.0 will:

- Make clear that growth in socio-emotional skills is *the most important outcome* of informal youth provision;
- Help all those involved in the monitoring and evaluation of informal youth provision to produce more powerful evidence about the impact of quality practice and engagement on both socio-emotional skill growth and subsequent later life outcomes; and
- Facilitate a framework for shared measurement *and continuous* quality improvement strategies across the sector.

³ <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/bright-futures/bright-futures-childrens-services/bright-futures-our-vision-youth-4>

There are three core elements of A Framework of Outcomes for Young People 3.0:

1. An *Outcomes Framework* for understanding socio-emotional skill development as the central outcome of youth provision;
2. A *Young People's Socio-emotional Skills in Context Model* that describes how young people's socio-emotional skills are shaped by the contexts in which they grow up, developed in provision for young people, and 'transfer' to the settings of community, school, work, and later life.
3. An introduction to the importance of high-quality practice in facilitating socio-emotional skill growth, aligned to the neuroperson model.

1.1. Explaining key terms

There are several terms that are used throughout this Framework. We define them here:

Provision for Young People: We refer to 'provision for young people' to mean provision that is not part of the formal education curriculum, but is nevertheless building skills with young people in informal settings. A Framework of Outcomes for Young People 3.0 is relevant to all provision for young people, whether open access or targeted, one to one, or group-based.

Outcomes: An outcome is "an indicator of progress along a successful life path" (Eccles and Gootman 2002:67). Critically, this helps us to understand that 'outcomes' include both socio-emotional skills themselves, as well as the positive life events with which they are associated, such as gaining qualifications, sustaining fulfilling employment, fostering positive relationships with family and friends, and experiencing good health and wellbeing.

Skill: We use the term *skill* to mean the same as *capability*. Rather than trying to distinguish between abilities, capabilities, capacities, competencies, knowledge, and skills (all of which can be viewed as referring to the same set of psychological and behavioural processes), we focus on what appears to be a more fundamental set of distinctions between different parts of socio-emotional skills.

We also refer to 'socio-emotional *skills*' rather than 'socio-emotional *learning*' (or 'SEL') in order to distinguish clearly between the socio-emotional skills that are being developed and the learning processes involved with that development. As described below, we intend the Framework of Outcomes for Young People 3.0 to help clarify what socio-emotional skills are *and* the ways in which they are acquired (e.g. through engagement within provision) and applied (e.g. by transferring them to other contexts in young people's lives).

Domains: We use the term 'domain' to refer to a group of mental skills, behavioural skills, *and* the staff (and/or volunteer; may also be referred to as 'practitioner') practices that engage young people in order to develop a particular socio-emotional skill. For example, in teamwork, there is a related set of teamwork-oriented 'staff practices' that interact with young people's teamwork skills to 'produce' teamwork experiences within the provision, as well as – over time - the transfer of young people's teamwork skills to other areas of their lives.

Neuroperson: We use the term 'neuroperson' to refer to the collection of mental processes and behaviours that underpin the socio-emotional skill domains. The neuroperson includes awareness, beliefs, and schemas.

Relational Practice: Relational practice is quality practice. It is characterised by dialogue, authenticity and reflection, which are embedded within our trauma-informed model of quality practice (i.e. practices that are warm, responsive, scaffolded, and support awareness).

Trauma-informed Practices: Trauma-informed practice is an approach grounded in the understanding that trauma exposure can impact an individual's neurological, biological, psychological and social development. Trauma-informed means that practitioners understand that young people's internalising and externalising behaviour is generated mainly by activated schemas, over which they have minimal control, meaning that the appropriate response is warm, responsive, scaffolded, and encouraging, rather than punitive or avoidant. This approach is reflected in our Quality Practice Tool (QPT), identifying appropriate practitioner responses (i.e. warm, responsive, scaffolded, and supporting awareness).

Trusted Adult: The 'trusted adult' is the practitioner with whom the young person comes into contact within youth provision. The trusted adult understands that in order to be 'a stable and reliable presence', 'consistent in their response', and with 'boundaries', 'empathy', and 'support', their behaviour needs to be high-quality, trauma-informed, and characterised by warm, responsive, scaffolding, and awareness-building behaviours.

Informal youth provision: Informal learning happens outside of formal educational settings, such as schools characterised by voluntary rather than mandatory participation. It may take place consciously or unconsciously on a daily basis in a range of interactions. Youth provision provides informal opportunities for young people's learning.

2. Why a Socio-emotional Outcomes Framework?

This outcomes framework is focused on socio-emotional skill development and will support organisations and commissioners to understand which socio-emotional skills they promote, the importance of quality practice, and how this framework underpins the evaluation of provision.

Long-term outcomes pertaining to education, employment, health, family, and community don't exist in a vacuum or 'occur' one at a time. These outcomes emerge in chains of cause and effect that are different for each individual person as they move through different life experiences. In fact, using the term 'outcomes' is somewhat deceptive, since the outcomes that we're usually referring to are often just behavioural waypoints or markers along pathways of individual mental and behavioural skill development across the contexts of young people's lives. This is why we have a 'Young People's Socio-emotional Skills in Context' model to support practitioners' understanding of the factors that influence young people's lives (see Figure 1).

Socio-emotional skills are critical missing mediators of later outcomes, so it makes sense that practitioners will benefit by learning to talk more clearly about socio-emotional skills, how they develop, and how they transfer to other settings in young people's lives. If you feel like we've been here before (for example, in the early 1990s debate about 'soft skills'), we have, and we're continuing to build on a significant consensus here: it is already established that well-developed socio-emotional skills increase the likelihood of achieving positive later life outcomes, such as the attainment of qualifications; securing, sustaining and progressing in employment; forming and maintaining positive relationships; developing a physically and mentally healthy lifestyle; and taking action on social injustices that matter to us⁴. This evidence base is continually growing and remains a strong foundation for the life-long benefits of acquiring socio-emotional skills (Gedikoglu, 2021).

This evidence base has been further extended by developments in the field of neuroscience, pertaining especially to young people who have experienced trauma or stress. This matters particularly at a moment in time when we are witnessing unprecedented levels of mental wellbeing issues for young people. We are responding to this moment by extending the Framework of Outcomes for Young People 3.0 more deeply into the realm of mental skills, or the 'neuroperson', and the strategies that young people can be supported to learn and use to become intentional authors of their own development. Importantly, this development of the Framework of Outcomes for Young People 3.0 in terms of the neuroperson reveals the extent to which socio-emotional mental skills are equally applicable to both young people experiencing stress *and* the practitioners who are supporting them. In this respect, the Framework of Outcomes for Young People 3.0 has stronger links with trauma-informed practices (e.g. viewing challenging behaviour as an expression of unmanageable stress and a clue to understanding what a young person might need to further the development of their underlying socio-emotional skills).

⁴ You can review the evidence in our summary of the UK Evidence Base for Socio-emotional Skill Development

The importance of a focus on socio-emotional skill development (SESD) also lies in the evidence that SESD has a powerful equity effect. Young people experiencing a range of disadvantages are likely to have the lowest levels of socio-emotional skills⁵. Supporting socio-emotional skill development is therefore critically important in addressing short- and long-term inequalities⁶, with quality youth provision demonstrating a powerful ‘equity effect’⁷.

Young people do not all experience the world in the same way and a range of factors influence their socio-emotional skill development. Critically, we must recognise that socio-emotional skill development is inequitably distributed. This is the rationale for our ‘Young People’s Socio-emotional Skills in Context Model’. Here we map the global, national, regional, local and familial influences on young people’s skill development and acknowledge they are not a level playing field. Our analytical approach (see our Guide to Interpreting SESD Data) is ‘pattern-centred’, enabling us to understand young people in their particular contexts, rather than treating them all the same and looking for averages across diverse groups and individuals. As young people develop so-emotional skills, they have increased agency with which to act in and on the world, potentially making it a better place.

SESD, its equity effect, and its impact on lifelong outcomes is contingent on high-quality SESD practices. This Framework of Outcomes for Young People 3.0 therefore presents a heightened focus on the staff practices that support that development as reflected in the four areas of our Quality Practice Tool; warmth, responsiveness, scaffolding and supporting awareness.

In summary, socio-emotional skills matter to young people in the here and now, and lead to life-long ‘success’. A focus on SESD is equitable as young people with the lowest level of skills when they enter or join provision gain as much or more than young people with moderate or high skills at entry. Young people, therefore, need to be understood in context and supported to further develop their automatic agency and, especially, to learn how to apply intentional agency to the ongoing challenges of living in a complex social world.

This is achieved best where youth workers use high-quality practices when interacting with young people. In other words, socio-emotional skill development is *the* central outcome of informal youth provision.

3. Young People’s Socio-emotional Skills in Context Model

Young people live in particular contexts, which need to be clearly accounted for. A young person growing up in an area of deprivation will have a different experience and trajectory of a young person in a more privileged home because of the degree of environmental stressors acting on the family. All young people experience a range of protective and risk factors that either enable or

⁵ See the Education Endowment Foundation guide to social and emotional learning.

⁶ See Feinstein’s guide for the Early Intervention Foundation.

⁷ See The Youth Investment Fund Learning and Insight Paper 7, Scanlon, K et al (2021).

hinder socio-emotional skill development. This modelling of a young person is linked to theories such as Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory⁸. For illustrative purposes, these challenges might include national issues such as an economic depression, climate crisis or the cost of living crisis. Regional issues could include the presence of absence of employment opportunities and mobility. Community factors include the cohesion of the community, access to open safe green spaces, and social norms at play. Familiar issues will encompass the quality and stability of housing, income, food and other basic needs as well as the quality of parenting and caring that is present in the home. Our 'Young Person's Socio-emotional Skills in Context' model illustrates how the development of socio-emotional skills is situated in these very diverse and multi-factoral contexts that consider a young person's life cycle in continual flux with contextual factors.

These contextual factors do not *determine* young people's skills, but do *influence* them. There are young people who thrive despite challenging contexts and young people who struggle despite having relative privilege. Whilst the quality practice approach demands that we are aware of and responsive to young people's experiences of stress and trauma, it does not anticipate that every young person will have these experiences. Nor does it assume that young people who have such experiences do not have other strengths and assets. The approach to understanding young people's contexts and skills is to be asset-balanced, appreciating both the issues and needs and strengths to be built upon.

Just as these different contexts act on young people, young people act on the contexts in which they live. Young people influence their peers, families, communities, and in time, regional and national contexts. Young people with high levels of socio-emotional skills are able to influence these contexts more fully, they have more agency to use on them and in them.

This may be a helpful model to underpin an organisational- or project-level theory of change, as the model identifies exactly who the young people you support are and what contexts they live in, the provision you will offer them, and the outcomes you hope they will achieve. In effect, the 'Young People's Socio-emotional Skills in Context' model is a very high-level theory of change.

At the centre of the model is the place where young people engage in quality provision. Regardless of their level of socio-emotional skills, all young people will benefit from high quality socio-emotional skills development (SESD) practices. According to the socio-emotional young person in context model, high-quality staff practices will encourage higher levels of engagement from young people during provision. Over time, the combination of high-quality staff practices and young people's engagement fuels the development of socio-emotional skills. With longer-term participation in, and intensity of exposure to, high-quality settings, these socio-emotional skills will become integral parts of young people's emerging identities and so transfer to other areas of their lives. This is not to say SESD is a simple or progressive process. External contexts and influences mean young people will have challenges to their development, to which practitioners will respond

⁸ Bronfenbrenner, U., Ceci, S. (1997) [Nature-Nurture Reconceptualised in Developmental Perspective: A Bioecological Model.](#)

promoting on-going cycles of experiential learning. We unpack what we mean by quality practice further in section 7.

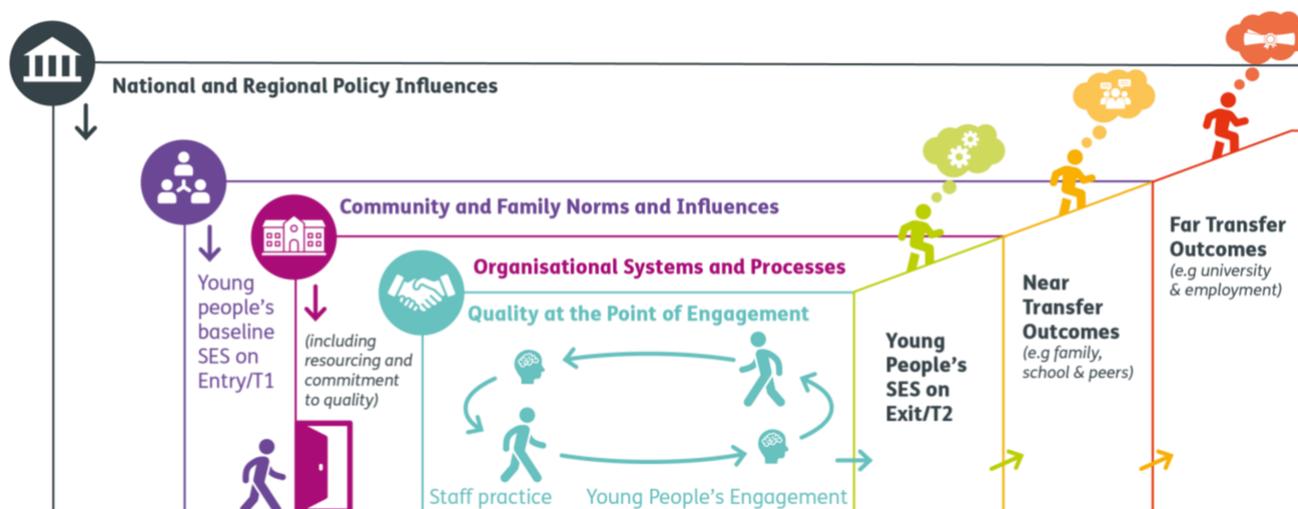


Figure 1: The Young People's Socio-emotional Skills in Context Model

As young people gain socio-emotional skills, they will first deploy them in the *optimal* conditions in the youth setting. Once skills are consolidated enough (i.e., become *functional* skills) young people will also transfer them into their wider lives. In this way, the socio-emotional skills they develop will support young people to increasingly act as effective agents on the contexts and structures that also act on them.

4. Socio-emotional Mental Skills – the Neuperson Model

Young people's socio-emotional skill development starts with unseen internal work. Sitting beneath the socio-emotional behaviours that we see, lie integrated sets of schemas, beliefs, and awareness. We refer to this fundamental mental skill set as 'the neuperson'. In order to enact socio-emotional skills *behaviourally*, in any of the six domains described in section 6 (e.g. teamwork), the young person will first need to master the neuperson *mental* skills (i.e. schemas, beliefs, and awareness) that we outline below.

We use the term *neuperson*⁹ to emphasise how socio-emotional skills can be defined and understood in terms of three different kinds of information storage and processing systems that are centred in three different areas of the brain: the limbic system (schemas), the neocortex (beliefs),

⁹ The neuperson part of the MPCn framework is a practical simplification of the more detailed Basic Levels of Self (BLoS) model (Roeser et al., 2006; Roeser & Peck, 2009).

and the prefrontal cortex (awareness). These concepts are derived directly from neuroscience. These three systems work together to promote (or undermine) optimal experience and behaviour in any outcome domain and all areas of life¹⁰ as shown in figure 2 below.



Figure 2: The Neuroperson Model

Schemas. Schemas are nonverbal maps of how to act, react, and engage in a certain situation. Schemas are initially formed in early childhood, during child-adult (and child-child) interactions, and are relatively enduring parts of young people’s identity. The more significant or intense the adult-child relationship, the more influence they may have on the schemas young people develop. Schemas influence how a young person will respond to provision and will only be ‘activated’ by an environmental trigger or self-reflection. This helps us to understand that young people are often acting without awareness, from deeply ingrained patterns that they themselves do not understand. Young people enter provision having had a wide range of childhood experiences within the home, school and communities (both positive and negative), and ‘meeting young people where they are at’ means being sensitive to their feelings and understanding that they may be emotionally triggered in a way that makes it difficult to be mentally present and engaged.

Schemas tend to be stable across the lifespan, but can change with effort and persistence. Quality provision with trusted adults who consistently provide support is key to this process. There are two types of schemas: ‘broaden and build’ schemas produce positive feelings and enable reflective thinking so facilitating a young person’s connection to and actions in the world. ‘Narrow and constrain’ schemas produce negative feelings and inhibit reflective thinking, so undermine young people’s connections and actions.

¹⁰ McNeil et al., 2019; Smith, McGovern, Peck, et al., 2016; Peck & Smith, 2020

Broaden and Build Schemas. Young people’s experiences and reactions to their experiences tend to be dominated by one of two different kinds of schema. If they have had a history of stable and supportive environments and relationships with adults (e.g. warm, responsive, and encouraging) they tend to form *secure attachment*¹¹ schemas, or what we call *broaden and build* schemas. When activated, broaden and build schemas generate:

- (a) positive feelings, like interest and curiosity;
- (b) proactive behaviour, like exploration and initiative; and
- (c) reflective thinking and a wide scope of attention.

Young people with well-developed broaden and build schemas tend to appear comfortable and confident in their demeanour and to respond constructively and with awareness when frustrated or in stressful situations. Their reflective thinking and wide attentional scope also help them keep track of both what’s going on around them in the setting, and what’s going on inside their body.

Example of a broaden and build schema in action:

A young person comes to a session and takes part in a game of dodge ball. They don’t dodge very well and lose the game. The young person looks upset and drops their shoulders. When you chat with them, they say they really don’t like losing as they think it makes them look bad in front of their peers. You talk about ways to deal with these feelings.

Narrow and Constrain Schemas. If young people have had a history of non-supportive (e.g., cold, non-responsive, and discouraging) adults on whom they depend, they tend to form *insecure attachment* schemas, or what we call *narrow and constrain* schemas. These can also be created by a wide range of frightening or traumatic environmental factors such as: poverty, hunger, migration, overcrowding, natural disasters, Covid-19 restrictions, and/or being bullied etc. These are sometimes articulated as ‘adverse childhood experiences’ or ACEs. When activated, narrow and constrain schemas generate:

- (a) negative feelings, like fear and anger;
- (b) reactive behaviour, like withdrawal and blaming; and
- (c) non-reflective thinking and a narrow scope of attention.

Young people with well-developed narrow and constrain schemas tend to appear shy, anxious, aggressive, or agitated in their demeanour and to respond ineffectively (e.g. by withdrawing or pushing others away) when frustrated or in stressful situations. Their non-reflective thinking and narrow attentional scope makes it difficult for them to keep track of what’s going on around them (except for perceived threats) or inside their body (except for negative emotions).

¹¹ Attachment Theory originates from [John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth](#).

Example of a narrow and constrain schema in action:

A young person comes to a session and takes part in a game of dodge ball. They don't dodge very well and lose the game. When they realise they have lost, they kick over a chair, shout and swear and then sit down in a bean bag with their arms folded and head down. You go over to talk to the young person and ask them what happened. They just reply, 'dunno, it's a stupid game, I hate it here'.

The young person in this example had patterns of failure and rejection triggered by losing the game of dodge ball. They do not recognise this pattern yet and consequently are unable to explain why they behaved in the way they did.

Youth provision offers a young person both a stable and trusted adult who can help them understand experiences and behaviour that are generated automatically by their schemas, and a secure and safe environment in which to develop and strengthen new schemas. This is why quality practice, innately relational and trauma-informed, is so fundamental. Over the past decade the UK's understanding of trauma-informed practice¹² has increased, and we highlight its importance here in both strengthening broaden and build schemas and coping with (and modifying) narrow and constrain schemas. (See the end of this section for an example of Narrow and Constrain Schemas in the context of quality SESD practice.)

Beliefs are symbolic (e.g. verbal) representations of oneself, others, and the world. An example of a negative belief is that "I am bad and cause harm to others". Beliefs develop over time into complex belief systems, such as attitudes, values, opinions, goals, and plans. Many, and probably all, of us hold conflicting beliefs. Beliefs are formed automatically through social interactions as well as life events, and intentionally during self-reflection. Beliefs are relatively malleable (compared to schemas) and can change as a result of a single social interaction or even just reflecting on previous or anticipated social interactions. Changing beliefs from negative to positive beliefs can be a result of quality provision, where young people interact with positive, engaged and authentic reactions from practitioners.

Example of beliefs in action:

A young person in the dodgeball game shouts out 'loser' to the young person who just lost. They have been brought up to believe that winning is important and a way of being 'better than' other young people. They shout out (unconsciously) to assert and validate this belief and to position themselves as 'better than' the young person who just lost.

Both schemas and beliefs are generally unconscious. They only influence feelings and behaviour when they have been 'activated' by an environmental trigger or self-reflection. Youth provision provides a safe environment for young people to explore their belief systems with practitioners and to try out new beliefs (e.g. new goals or self-concepts). In supporting young people's ability to identify and question their beliefs, we equip them with life-long critical thinking skills.

¹² UK Government – [Trauma Informed Practice](#)

Awareness refers specifically to consciously focusing on thoughts and feelings. Supporting young people's intentional development of beliefs and schemas starts with bringing them into awareness. This might be by mirroring back what they say or do, offering them feedback, or helping them reflect on their thoughts, feelings and actions. Using focused awareness to interact with activated schemas and beliefs (i.e., thoughts and feelings) allows young people to keep information active in working memory to form new beliefs (e.g., plans, goals), and inhibit impulses that might result in destabilising their own learning (or the learning of others). Awareness is the basis for all forms of self-reflection. Young people use awareness to reflect, evaluate, plan, problem-solve, and develop their own personal and social identities.

Agency is often described generally as a young person's ability to act in the world to achieve the outcomes they want. However, the neuroperson model distinguishes between *two different (and specific) types of agency*: automatic and intentional. All young people have automatic agency that governs most of their daily experiences and behaviour. This comes from their prior experiences in the form of schemas and beliefs about the self and the world around them. Schemas and beliefs automatically construct meaning and behavioural responses from the immediate situation. In contrast, intentional agency occurs only when young people consciously focus their awareness on their thoughts and feelings, as in self-reflection.

Using awareness to consciously engage in personal and social learning to develop intentional agency might look and sound something like this:

Example of intentional agency as awareness in action:

We talked and thought a lot about why I reacted the way I did yesterday and what I could have done differently. At first, my usual reaction seemed like it was totally out of my control, but then I reflected on why I reacted that way and some new ideas about how I might think and react differently came to mind. I also had ideas about how I can make sure these new beliefs were going to stick in my memory (through reflection, repetition and practice, for example). Today when something like that happened, I caught myself reacting with my old habit for a split second but that was just enough time to stop my usual reaction and really focus on my new belief and the reaction I wanted to have, so I was then able to think "they must not have noticed..."

'I can intentionally use awareness to help develop my socio-emotional skills.' This new understanding from neuroscience equips youth provision and practitioners with a new language with which to understand and explain some key aspects of skill and nuance in their practice.

Working with trusted adults who use high-quality practices to create safe and secure environments will help young people develop broaden and build schemas. healthy beliefs, and the ability to intentionally shift and sustain the focus of awareness. This paves the way to them developing a range of socio-emotional skills that we can observe as behaviours.

Example of a narrow and constrain schema in the context of a practitioner helping a young person develop their intentional agency:

A young person gets angry at another young person for taking the last piece of pizza.

Practitioner asks:

“How did that make you feel when they took the last slice of pizza?” The young person says; “they did that on purpose, they wanted me to not have any food... I’m going to get them for this”.

The young person in this example did not consider others’ perspectives or mitigating factors, which resulted in them blaming others and apportioning spite and deliberate intent from the perspective of the other young person. The young person does not recognise this pattern yet and consequently is unable to explain why they thought this way.

Over a series of sessions, the practitioner helps the young person consider a different perspective to such situations as the above; “OK, maybe they didn’t see that you hadn’t had any... maybe they were hungry”. Over these sessions, the young person intentionally considers others’ viewpoints and reasons behind their behaviour. Using intentional agency, the young person thinks “they must not have noticed that I didn’t have any food yet, I will go and chat with them or tell the staff I need something to eat”.

Example of a practitioner helping a young person using intentional agency to recover from activation of a narrow and constrain schema:

The member of staff approaches calmly and slowly, expresses warmth, and encourages the young person to focus on something concrete (e.g. the wall colour, the weight of an object). They encourage the young person to take a few deep breaths, staying focused on the breath, then noticing whatever feelings come up, but letting them flow through without judging them or themselves for having them. Then after achieving some calmness, the staff member invites the young person to talk about what happened, the feelings, or whatever else they might need in that moment.

Given the importance of the mental skills, or the ‘neuroperson’ underpinning all our human functioning, we have aligned our new Quality Practice Tool to the neuroperson model as described later. Next, we progress to describing six domains of socio-emotional skills that we believe can be fostered in all youth provision.

5. What Do We Mean by Socio-emotional Skill Domains?

We continue to organise Outcomes Framework 3.0 around six domains of socio-emotional skills: emotion management, empathy, initiative, problem solving, responsibility, and teamwork¹³. As we set out in A Framework of Outcomes 2.0 and 2.1, we selected these domains because:

- They emerged directly from practice and the voices of young people about the experiences that build socio-emotional skills and how skills transfer beyond the setting and into the early adult life course¹⁴;
- They have extensive overlap with many other socio-emotional skill frameworks, including the CASEL, Catalyst and CCSR frameworks, and CASCAID standards¹⁵; and
- They describe, in plain language, sets of socio-emotional mental and behavioural skills that are both developed during provision *and* transferred beyond provision.

These six domains are intended to both simplify and extend the common language for discussing and promoting socio-emotional skill development in a way that is easily understood by practitioners, commissioners, and young people. In particular, socio-emotional skills in each of the six outcome domains can be viewed as important contributors to longer-term outcomes (as shown in Figure 4), reflecting the logic of socio-emotional skills as generic life skills that can apply in many situations.

¹³ The work of Reed Larson and colleagues provided the primary evidence base for developing the interview questions, socio-emotional skill domains, and performance standards. Domain content was derived primarily from the voices of practitioners and adolescents via hundreds of interviews conducted across two decades. A list of published work related to the six SEL skill domains can be found in Smith, McGovern, Larson, et al., 2016, Appendix C. A complete list of Larson's work in this area can be found at <http://youthdev.illinois.edu/>).

¹⁴ Smith, McGovern, Larson, et al. (2016); Smith, McGovern, Peck, et al. (2016)

¹⁵ See <https://cascaid.co.uk/social-emotional-learning/standards/>

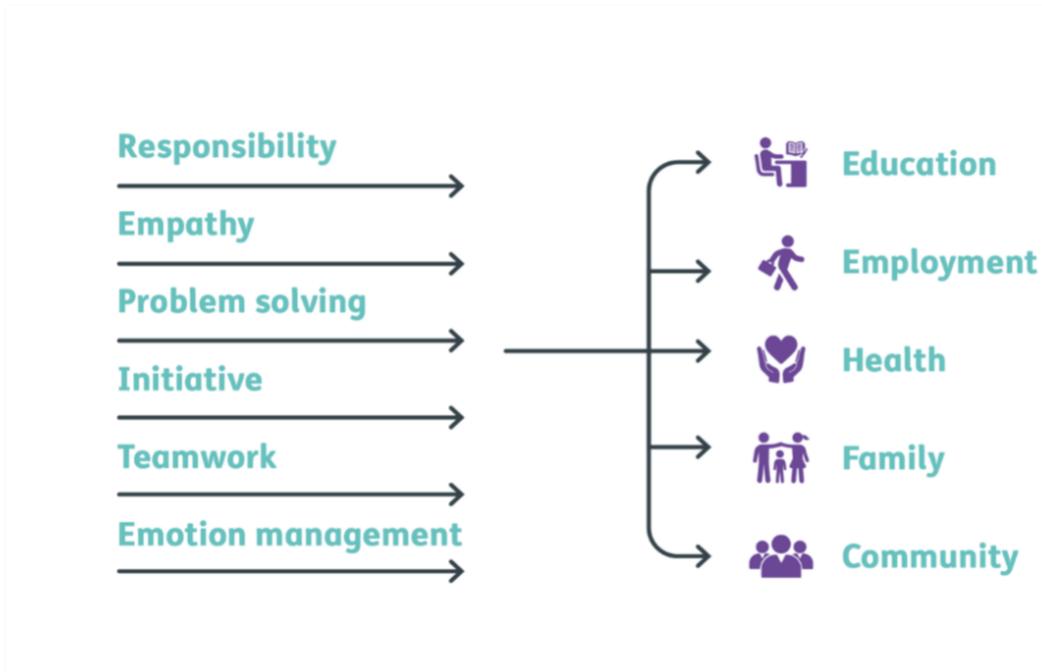


Figure 3: Six Socio-emotional Skill Domains

Supporting young people to develop socio-emotional skills in these six domains is not accidental but takes careful intentional practices. Measurement efforts should then focus on both the opportunities and staff practices offered to young people *and* the outcomes young people develop as a result. Mental and behavioural socio-emotional skills take time to develop with dependable support from staff, further adding weight to the importance of consistently measuring and observing the quality of provision.

If you would like to know more about the socio-emotional skill domains, you can read a more detailed paper about them [here](#).

We can link the mental skills of the neuroperson model with the socio-emotional skill domains as illustrated in table 1 below.

Domain	Skills
Emotion Management	<p>Young people’s socio-emotional skills: Abilities to be aware of, name, understand, and constructively handle both positive and negative emotions.</p> <p>Mental Skill Indicators: Focusing and shifting awareness; reappraisal; response inhibition.</p> <p>Behavioural Skill Indicators: Easily frustrated; remains calm in stressful situations.</p>

Empathy	<p>Young people’s socio-emotional skills: Abilities to relate to others with empathy, compassion; acceptance and understanding; and sensitivity to their diverse perspectives and experiences.</p> <p>Mental Skill Indicators: Abilities to understand how others feel; feel what others are feeling; and feel bad for others who are worse off or whose feelings are hurt.</p> <p>Behavioural Skill Indicators: Noticing when others are emotionally upset; showing empathy by reflecting others’ feelings; and responding to others’ feelings without taking them personally.</p>
Initiative	<p>Young people’s socio-emotional skills: Abilities to take action, sustain motivation; and persevere through challenges toward an identified role.</p> <p>Mental Skill Indicators: Abilities to take initiative; generate new solutions; persist during challenges; and risk failure.</p> <p>Behavioural Skill Indicators: Take initiative; set ambitious but realistic goals, stay on task despite distractions, and push through during a challenging task.</p>
Problem Solving	<p>Young people’s socio-emotional skills: Abilities to plan, strategise, and implement complex tasks, including critical thinking, goal setting, and responsible decision making.</p> <p>Mental Skill Indicators: Abilities to brainstorm and organise ideas; make alternative plans; make step-by-step plans; manage time; and keep track of goal progress.</p> <p>Behavioural Skill Indicators: Brainstorm ideas before developing a plan; evaluate alternative plans for reaching a specific goal; create plans with multiple steps; manage time; keep track of goal progress; and adjust to feedback.</p>
Responsibility	<p>Young people’s socio-emotional skills: Abilities to reliably meet commitments and fulfil obligations of challenging roles.</p> <p>Mental Skill Indicators: Abilities to take responsibility for their actions; be counted on to get their part done; do the things that they say they are going to do; and do their best when an adult asks them to do something.</p> <p>Behavioural Skill Indicators: Finish the task that they started, do the things that they said they are going to do, acknowledge mistakes and take action to address them, and do the things an adult asked them to do.</p>
Teamwork	<p>Young people’s socio-emotional skills: Abilities to collaborate and coordinate action with others, including through communication, teamwork, and leadership.</p>

	<p>Mental Skill Indicators: Abilities to do a fair share of group work, help others, seek help from others, respect others' viewpoints, and hold others accountable.</p> <p>Behavioural Skill Indicators: Help or cooperate with others who are struggling, seek help from others, remind others to do their part, and keep track of their own and others' group progress.</p>
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Table 1: The Mental and Behavioural Socio-emotional Skills by Domain

We cannot 'see' the mental skills young people are developing, but can understand them by what young people say and do. Developing the socio-emotional behavioural skills named by the six domains is highly dependent on developing young people's schemas, beliefs and awareness as described in the neuroperson model. As young people's mental skills become more developed, they are able to more easily enact the behavioural skills we can see and observe. We now progress to describe the practices that promote the development of the mental and behavioural skills associated with the six socio-emotional skill domains in our outcomes framework.

6. Quality SESD Practice

The experiences of young people in youth provision were not taken into account in the original Catalyst Framework. This was mainly a reflection of the policy and practice context at that time, which had an overwhelming focus on young people's outcomes over process or the quality of practice. As such, the original framework was focused on the articulation and measurement of outcomes for young people, instead of understanding the practices of practitioners (whether staff or volunteers), the setting and experiences that can best support the development of young people, and how. By including a focus on staff practices, settings, and quality in Framework 2.1 and 3.0, we are making links more directly between provision and socio-emotional skill development.

Socio-emotional skills associated with the six outcome domains should not be considered on their own. They exist in the context of young people's experiences, past and present, and are shaped not just by engagement in high-quality youth provision, but also by the influences of their families, peers, communities, and schools. At the neuroperson level, socio-emotional skills are mainly composed of schemas and beliefs that have been developed through previous learning and socialisation experiences. Therefore, practitioners need to recognise the socio-emotional 'histories' that young people bring into settings.

To do this effectively, practitioners need to use a trauma-informed approach to getting to know each young person individually (i.e. have a neuroscience-informed understanding of young people's mental skills) and then foster the development of young people's mental skills by implementing behaviours that are warm, responsive, scaffolded, and support awareness at the point of

engagement. Over time, these increasingly refined trauma-informed understandings and behavioural practices promote the development of deep and trusting relationships with young people.

In addition to high-quality practices, practitioners also need to create high-quality opportunities for young people to develop socio-emotional skills. Creating informal and non-formal opportunities for young people to develop, test and consolidate the six socio-emotional skills is an intentional practice. On-going experiential learning in such opportunities will enable young people to 'transfer' these skills to other domains of their lives, supporting transitions over time.

Further insight into the settings, practices, and experiences that can create the conditions for development in socio-emotional skills can support youth organisations to design provision for impact. Additionally, it can enable practitioners to focus on creating high-quality engagement experiences for young people during provision. Perhaps most importantly, emphasising the quality of staff practices reveals how the development and application of socio-emotional skills apply as much to practitioners as it does to the young people they support. It is only by being skilled in socio-emotional skills ourselves that we can create environments in which young people can also grow. This can be challenging in work environments today, and we advocate for self-care as an integral part of the professional development and support opportunities provided to all practitioners.

Quality practice is relational practice. The field of relational practice consistently cites dialogue, reflection and authenticity as its key components. Dialogue refers to the verbal or non-verbal exchanges between two or more people. All forms of quality practice require such interactions and hence dialogue (in its full verbal and non-verbal sense) is key to the quality practice behaviours (i.e. warmth, responsiveness, scaffolding and supporting awareness). Reflection as an element of relational practice refers to the practices youth workers use to promote reflection among young people. This includes cognitive forms of reflection (thinking about), and more embodied forms of reflection (mindfulness). In addition to focussing on the extent to which practitioners provide opportunities for reflective processing, we are also interested in helping practitioners to develop and apply reflective skills to their own practice (e.g. as a focus for workforce development). Authenticity refers to practitioners' understanding that young people's behaviours reflect more about a young person's history and current skill set, much of which remain unconscious, than it does about young people's conscious intentions. This understanding of the young people's hidden experiences is key to practitioners' quality behaviours; warmth, responsiveness, scaffolding and supporting awareness. Being authentic is more than 'being with' young people, it is about being intentionally there 'for' them. At its best this means practitioners have an internalised concept of trauma-informed practice, underpinning appropriate responses in the moment.

Quality practice is trauma-informed practice. The field of trauma-informed practice shows us that safety, trust, choice, collaboration, empowerment and cultural considerations are key principles that need to be enshrined in practice to support young people with prior or continued experiences of

trauma¹⁶. By trauma, we mean threats of or fear of psychological, emotional, physical or verbal harm/abuse. Examples of trauma are varying from a victim in a car accident, eco-anxiety, cost-of-living crisis, homelessness, abandonment, violence, displacement, natural disaster, food trauma and/or food insecurity, and war. In order to work in a trauma-informed way, staff teams can work together planning psychologically-informed responses to the young people they support (e.g. the neuroperson model), creating appropriate physical spaces to work in, staff training and support, developing strong relationships and evaluating outcomes (e.g. with the six socio-emotional skills). Trauma-informed approaches are also supportive of young people who self-define or are diagnosed as neurodiverse. To summarise, the key principles of quality practice are behaviours that are warm, responsive, scaffold learning and support awareness.

You may also want to add your own indicators of quality into your own theory of change that are specific to your delivery context. These are often added as the mechanisms of change, the assumption being that without these aspects of quality less or no change will happen for the young people. An example of these mechanisms of change can be found in [the evaluation of the Youth Investment Fund \(2017-2020\)](#).

Our new Quality Practice Tool enables practitioners to dig into the precise practices that support socio-emotional skill development. This includes four areas of practice that are trauma-informed: warmth, responsiveness, scaffolding and supporting awareness.

Our Centre for Quality Practice has further information and trainings on relational practice, socio-emotional skills, and how to develop them.

7. Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement in Socio-emotional Skill Development

Evaluation refers to the design and process of assessing or examining the effectiveness of provision: examining how processes and systems within provision work, and assessing whether provision is fulfilling the objectives laid out jointly by the organisation facilitating or 'delivering' provision, and the organisation that commissions or funds it. This addresses 'what works', and 'what works for whom, how, and in what circumstances'.

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice>

For example, an evaluation can reveal whether provision that sets out to improve responsibility in young people has, during that provision, improved young people's ability to take responsibility. Evaluation and monitoring activity has a key role in supporting organisations to understand whether they achieved their desired outcomes, and what they did that led to those outcomes. This is the 'proof' agenda, exploring whether what you do 'works'. Beyond this, evaluation has another significant role in organisational life. Adding a focus on 'improving' to 'proving' brings a continuous quality improvement (CQI) lens to evaluation. Anything found to work well can be dialled up or rolled out to leverage further success. Areas that worked less well or not at all are areas for innovation and development, ensuring provision becomes even better than it already is. This is also part of the equity effect – understanding whether and to what extent provision has a positive impact on *all* young people, but particularly those young people with the most to gain.

For example, an organisation that wants 'proof' their provision engages young people, has practitioners who facilitate quality provision, and secures outcomes for young people, would gain information on youth engagement using the Youth Engagement Survey (YES, detailed below), on the quality of staff practices using the Quality Practice Tool (QPT, detailed below), and on outcomes using the Young People's Survey and Practitioner Observational Tool (YPS and POT, detailed below). These data tools will enable the organisation to 'prove' (evidence) what they did worked and that it led to outcomes for the young people they support. From these data the organisation can go a step further, identifying how they could support even more young people to gain positive outcomes, or ensuring all young people gain equal outcomes, or ensuring engagement is even higher. This is using the data to improve practice. Further, using these measures over time would enable the organisation to understand the impact of any improvements made.

As introduced above, we have a socio-emotional measurement system that enables organisations to tell their story of impact and to continually improve what they do. The full scope of this system is outlined on our Socio-emotional Skill Measurement Hub. In brief, it includes demographic information and four measures that can be used to understand:

- Who attends youth provision;
- How engaged young people are in the provision;
- The socio-emotional skill outcomes practitioners observe young people gaining (via an observational tool);
- The socio-emotional skill outcomes young people believe they gain for themselves (via a self-rating); and
- The quality of staff and volunteers' practice.

These are each described briefly below. We also have a data portal that can be used to visualise these data sets and to interrogate them to understand the relationships between, for example,

quality and outcomes.

The Young People's Survey (YPS)

The YPS is a self-report survey used to assess young people's functional mental and behavioural skills (i.e. how they feel and behave in life, beyond the supportive setting of youth provision) in terms of Emotion Management, Empathy, Initiative, Problem Solving, Responsibility, and Teamwork. The YPS measures young people's socio-emotional skills by asking how they think, feel and behave in different situations, not just the youth provision setting, but also their home, community or school. The YPS can be used at the start to help plan provision and post-provision to assess growth in socio-emotional skills. The YPS is usually used alongside the adult observation or POT described below. There is also an accessible version of the Young People's Survey, which is designed for young people with a lower age or additional needs/SEND.

The Practitioner Observational Tool (POT)

The POT focuses on adult (practitioner) observations of specific behaviours of the young people linked with the six domains of socio-emotional skills. It can be used within the context of any type of provision. The POT can be used to understand both young people's baseline skills and development (i.e. the point that they 'enter' provision) and the relationship with this development to other aspects of provision (e.g. the impact of provision quality on socio-emotional behavioural skill growth). The POT is recommended as a first choice when assessing provision because it relies on adult observation rather than young people's self report, which can be prone to response bias. An accessible version of the POT is available for when the accessible version of the Young People's Survey is used with corresponding items.

The Youth Engagement Survey (YES)

The YES is a self-report survey, completed by young people, which is used to assess mental engagement (e.g. enjoyment, inclusion, attention, voice) during provision. The YES asks young people to describe the thoughts and feelings they experienced while participating in provision as a measure of mental engagement. This is important because young people's mental engagement with the provision is expected to promote growth in socio-emotional skills. The YES should be completed regularly by young people during or at the end of a session.

The Quality Practice Tool

The QPT is a tool to support practitioners and organisations to explore the quality of their practice. It can be used as a self-reflection, a peer assessment, or as an external observational tool. There are four areas of practice identified including; warmth, responsiveness, scaffolding and supporting awareness. The QPT is aligned to the neuroperson model, and as such, its practices support socio-emotional skill development. Area one is focused on practices that support the broaden and build

schema. Area two supports recovery from narrow and constrain schemas. Area three supports the development of advanced skills across the six domains, and area four leverages young people’s agency. The QPT can be completed once or at many intervals and on an individual or team basis and can help organisations to identify strengths and areas of practice development.

These measures all map onto the Young Person’s Socio-emotional Skills in Context Model as shown in Figure 4 below.

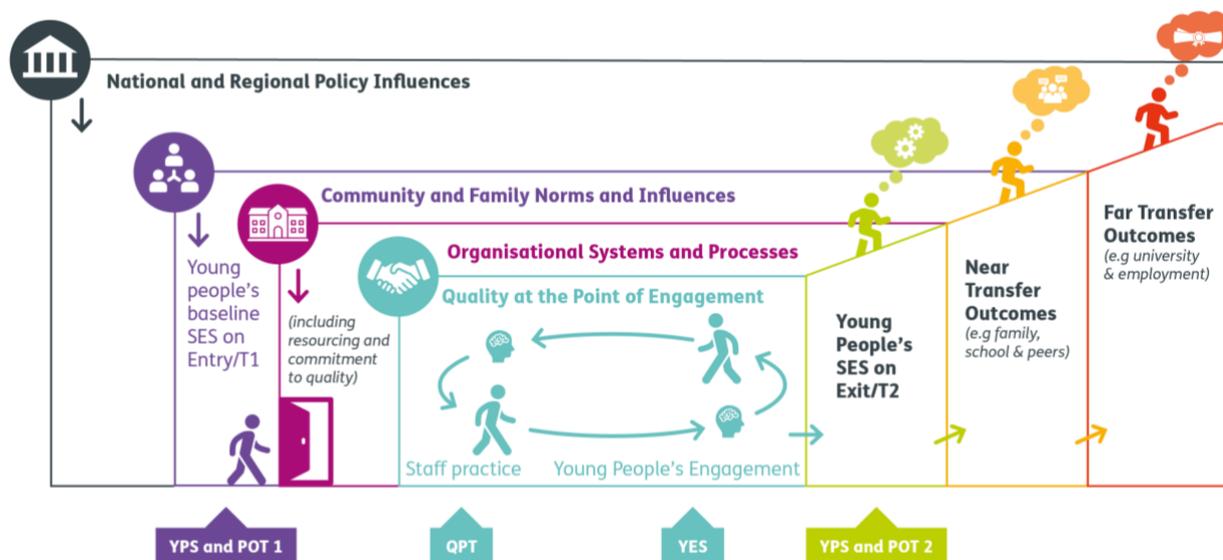


Figure 4: Measures Mapped onto the Young People’s Socio-emotional Skills in Context Model.

We have many tools and resources to support you to understand, test, and fully implement our socio-emotional skills measurement system on our [Socio-emotional Skill Measurement Hub](#). This includes:

- Our approach to SESD measurement;
- A guide to choosing from our measures;
- An implementation guide for the SESD measures;
- A guide to interpreting the results of SESD data;
- Our approach to SESD data interpretation;
- Information on our SESD measurement system to put in funding applications;
- What we hope to achieve with shared measurement;
- Frequently Asked Questions about our measures and measurement approach;
- The five measures downloadable in small and large print version;
- Practitioner overview of each measure - An easy to read quick overview of the measure and how to use it;
- Video introduction to each measure;

- Technical and user guide to each measure - If you are interested in understanding more about the theory of change, reading about the measure in depth, and the validation process, download the full guides;
- Guide to using the data portal;
- Guide to data protection and ethics; and
- SESD standards of evidence.

Our website has further information on measurement, research and evaluation, and we can provide research and evaluation services should you wish to engage an independent external evaluator.

8. Conclusion

This paper has updated A Framework of Outcomes for Young People to version 3.0, understanding socio-emotional skill development as the central outcome of youth provision. It has explained the importance of seeing a young person's socio-emotional skills in context. We have explored the mental skills and behaviours that comprise socio-emotional skills and elaborated the importance of quality practice. The *Young Person's Socio-emotional Skills in Context Model* shows how young people shape, and are shaped by, their environments. This model also shows how young people 'transfer' their enhanced socio-emotional skills to schools, communities, work, and life.

The Framework of Outcomes for Young People 3.0 has also emphasised the critical importance of quality practice. Socio-emotional skills do not develop by accident, but demand high-quality intentional practices by practitioners – volunteers and staff. Given the importance of socio-emotional skills and their equity effect, practice development *has* to become a priority concern for youth provision. We have set out our key principles and quality practice tools to support this important work, championing the process of quality practice as inherently as valuable as the outcomes it leads to.

We hope Outcomes Framework 3.0 can unite partners in local areas around a shared understanding of how and why quality youth work and provision for young people helps young people learn in all content areas, while also developing their socio-emotional skills, and creates a powerful vision with and for young people and communities.

This framework also highlights where practitioners have the greatest influence and interest: their 'in the moment' interactions with young people and the opportunities they offer in their settings over time. Through this updated framework, we make the case to shift the focus from longer-term or 'transfer' outcomes measurement and instead encourage a sharp focus on staff practices and quality, which can create the powerful conditions in which young people learn and develop.

Further papers outline how to use this outcomes framework as the basis of a theory of change and monitoring, evaluation and learning plan.

9. YMCA George Williams College Support

At YMCA George Williams College, we have three inter-related centres of expertise, each underpinned by relational practice. The Centre for Youth Impact can offer you expertise in impact evaluation and improvement, and continuous quality improvement. The Centre for Youth Voice offers you expertise in how to involve young people more fully in your service design and evidence agenda. The Centre for Quality Practice offers expertise in relational practice and socio-emotional skill development.

There are several ways you can engage with us and our centres of expertise:

1. Scan our website for information on projects, new developments, and resources;
2. Sign up to our newsletter to receive regular news, blogs, and reading lists;
3. Help yourself to one of our free web-based resource hubs;
4. Join one of our Regional Impact Networks to gain locally tailored support;
5. Get in touch and book an hour long 'office hours' support call;
6. Join us on one of our training programmes or sessions;
7. Contact us for a bespoke evaluation contract or bespoke organisational support; and/or
8. Our organisational learning team offers coaching and mentoring, training, and co-creation opportunities across our centres of expertise.

About us

YMCA GEORGE WILLIAMS COLLEGE

At YMCA George Williams College, our vision is for a just and equitable society that invests in support for all young people to learn, grow, and explore their relationships with the world around them. Established in 1970, the College works to provide transformational support to practitioners, funders, and policy makers across the sector, to improve the quality and impact of provision and outcomes for children and young people across the UK. This support is characterised by safe spaces, high quality socio-emotional skill development opportunities, and relationships with trusted adults.

As part of its work, the College now hosts three Centres of Expertise. The Centre for Youth Impact at YMCA George Williams College supports organisations to generate and act on evidence of the impact of their provision. Using a robust evidence base, The Centre for Youth Impact designs, tests, and champions shared approaches to quality and impact that facilitate collective insight and learning, consolidating and sharing open access resources, research, and training for all those working in informal and non-formal youth provision.

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