



**THE CENTRE
FOR YOUTH
IMPACT**

Part of YMCA George Williams College

A Guide to Selecting the Socio- emotional Skill Measures

A guide to accompany the Outcomes for Young People Framework 3.0

Professor Kaz Stuart, Stephen Peck, PhD, Charles Smith, PhD
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Overview

How to navigate this user guide

The user guide is designed to be used flexibly depending on your needs and current practice. It guides you through the key research and theory that underpins the approach, provides an overview of the measures, and takes you through the process of selecting and using these measures alongside or instead of your existing monitoring and evaluation practices.

What are the Measures?

The user guide sets out an evidence-informed, comprehensive approach to measuring the quality and impact of youth provision through the lens of socio-emotional skills. These measures can be used individually to understand different aspects of your provision or in combination to get a comprehensive picture of the quality and impact of your provision over time. In either case, they yield data about the 'here and now' for use in continuous quality improvement.

Who are the measures for?

The measures are suitable for any organisations or institutions delivering provision and where socio-emotional skills are among the primary 'outcomes of interest' with young people aged 10 to 25. The measures can be used as your main monitoring and evaluation tools, or they can be integrated into and used alongside existing monitoring and evaluation practices.

Why use the measures?

There is rarely a standardised 'user journey' through which young people participate in all forms of provision. Attendance can be irregular and unpredictable as young people make choices about how and when to engage. Informal and non-formal youth provision works through relationships that take time, and your approach needs to reinforce respect, trust and enjoyment in the workplace. All of this makes typical approaches to measurement and evaluation problematic.

The Centre's approach to measurement is designed to address these issues and provides a set of measures that are aligned to youth provision. Specifically, the measures are:

- based on the Framework of Outcomes for Young People 3.0 which provides a common, evidence-informed, foundation for evaluating youth provision.
- an approach that, along with changes in young people's outcomes, measures staff quality (i.e., quality of staff practices) and young people's engagement as drivers of young people's skill changes that are more easily measured and provide more immediate, actionable insights.
- part of an ongoing process of working with UK practitioners to continue the development of these measures and ensure they are aligned to practice.

Overview

1. **Understanding Outcomes Framework 3.0** – This section introduces you to the theory of socio-emotional skill growth as outcomes for youth provision behind the Framework for Young People 3.0.
2. **Getting to know the measures** – This section helps you to understand the measures and which combination of measures is right for you.
3. **Putting the measures into practice** – This section helps you to think through how the measures fit with your current evaluation and learning activities regardless of whether you are new to this or have an established approach. It also includes tips for making the most of the measures.
4. **An agenda for shared measurement** – This section describes a shared measurement approach through which you can compare your data to those of others and contribute to the important body of evidence about the quality and impact of youth provision nationally.



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Understanding the Outcome Framework for Young People 3.0

Introducing the Framework of Outcomes for Young People 2.1

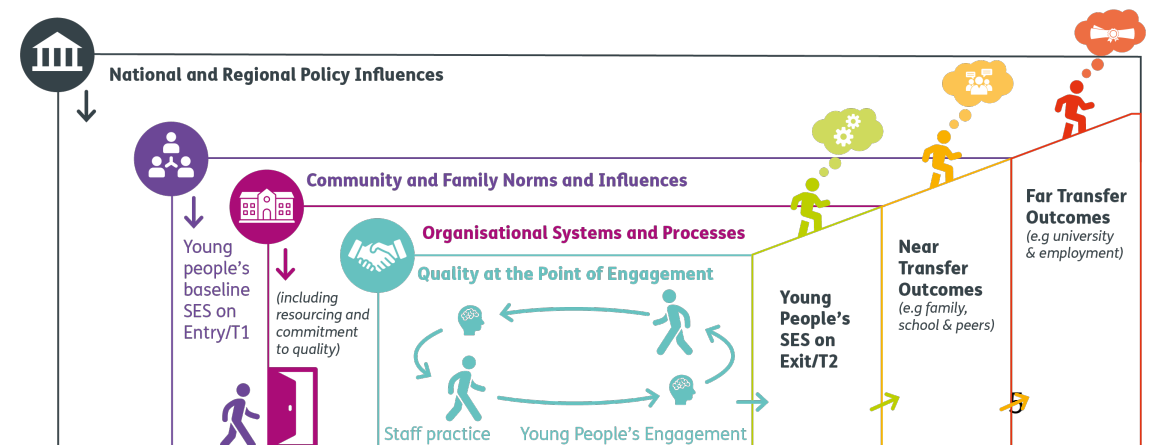
The user guide is based on the [Outcomes Framework 3.0](#), which sets out how youth provision contributes to improvements in outcomes for young people.

The Outcomes Framework 3.0 includes a theory of change detailing how quality youth provision can lead to socio-emotional skill development for young people. In summary:

- High-quality staff practices and content offered at the point of engagement, where staff and young people meet during provision, are likely to lead to higher levels of youth engagement during each session or activity.
- Young people bring with them a set of experiences and beliefs about themselves and the world around them, shaped by the contexts in which they are living and learning. These ‘pre-existing’ (or, baseline) socio-emotional skills affect how young people initially engage with youth provision.
- Over time and multiple interactions, the combination of high-quality staff practices and young people’s engagement promotes the growth of socio-emotional skills.
- With sufficient participation in, and intensity of exposure to, high-quality settings, the effects of socio-emotional skill growth will transfer to other settings such as school or home.

- This includes the ‘near transfer’ of socio-emotional skills to family, school, and peers and the ‘far transfer’ of socio-emotional skills to subsequent life course events or experiences, such as early adulthood health, education, and employment. Young people continue to further apply and grow their socio-emotional skills in these settings.
- Improvement in socio-emotional skills is linked to longer-term impacts including an improved ability to cope with the transition into adulthood, alongside long-term improvements in mental and physical health, educational attainment, sustainable employment, finances, secure housing, positive relationships and personal safety.

Figure 1: Young People’s Socio-emotional Skill Development in Context



Defining Socio-emotional Skills

Six Domains of Socio-emotional Skills

The development of young people’s socio-emotional skills is a core part of the theory of change (see page 5). The change in young people’s socio-emotional skills over time can be considered outcomes of your work. If your provision is designed to improve these skills, these are the ‘intended outcomes’.

In the Framework 3.0 and associated measures we focus on six key domains of socio-emotional skill because:

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

These six domains include mental and behavioural skills as well as sets of interrelated ‘staff practices’ (that is, how practitioners relate to young people and shape the quality of provision) that support the development of these skills. You can read more about the six socio-emotional skill domains [here](#).

Some of the measures in this suite refer to the measurement of socio-emotional skills within these six domains (POT and YPS).

Socio-Emotional Domain	Description
Emotion Management	Abilities to be aware of, name, understand, and constructively handle both positive and negative emotions.
Empathy	Abilities to relate to others with empathy, compassion, acceptance and understanding, and sensitivity to their diverse perspectives and experiences.
Initiative	Abilities to take action, sustain motivation, and persevere through challenges toward an identified goal.
Problem-Solving	Abilities to plan, strategise, and implement complex tasks, including critical thinking, goal setting, and responsible decision making.
Responsibility	Abilities to reliably meet commitments and fulfil obligations of challenging roles.
Teamwork	Abilities to collaborate and coordinate action with others, including through communication, teamwork, and leadership.

The Neuroperson Model

- Within each domain of socio-emotional skill sits the model of the neuroperson.
- This describes the most fundamental parts of socio-emotional skills comprised of three types of mental skills – schemas (mental templates), beliefs and awareness.
- These mental skills produce the individual’s behavioural skills in each domain.
- Schemas are affectively-charged non-verbal knowledge/memories that have been developed through life course experiences. These account for the impact a person’s context and prior experiences have on their behaviour and change slowly.
- Beliefs are verbal knowledge/memories that have been developed through life course experiences and reflection. These also account for the impact a person’s context and prior experiences have on their behaviour and change more quickly.
- Awareness (or *executive attention*) refers to consciously focusing on thoughts and feelings to e.g. keep information active in working memory, form new beliefs (e.g., values, plans, goals), and inhibit impulses.
- You can read more about the neuroperson model [here](#).
- As the neuroperson model describes the most fundamental socio-emotional skills, you may choose to measure them rather than the wider domains. The main tools to help you do that are the POT-Accessible and YPS-Accessible.





Getting to know the measures

Selecting Socio-emotional Skill Measures

The next pages offer you four ways to decide which measures to use:

1. A list of individual measures provides a description of each tool and what it measures.
2. A diagram of measures across the theory of change helps you to see which measures are most appropriate for the various parts of the theory of change.
3. A table of measures by use provides a comparison of the purposes and uses of all the measures.
4. A series of questions (what do you want to do? and why do you want to do it?) are plotted to guide you to the right tool.

Feel free to review all these pages or just use the ones that best suit your needs.

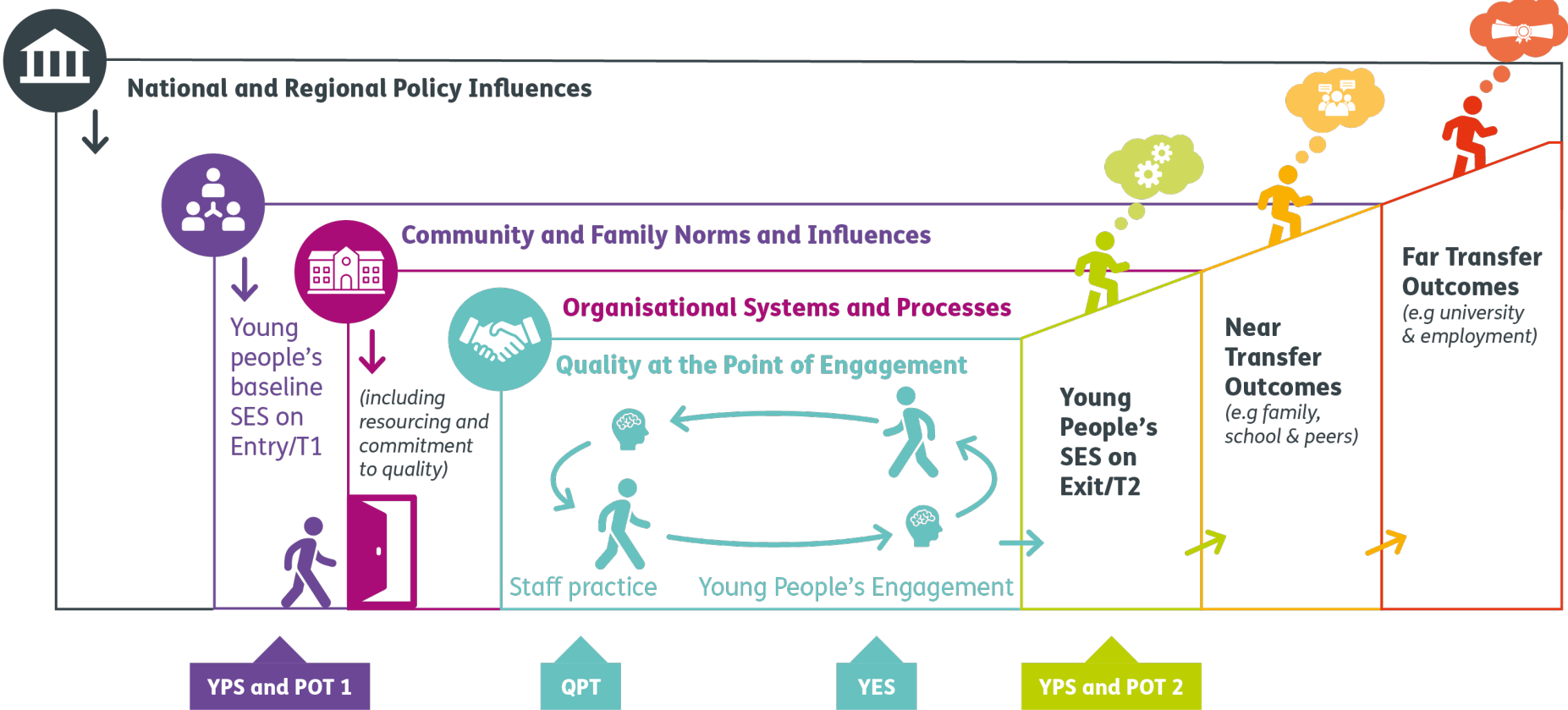
List of Individual Measures

The user guide includes six measures related to the quality and impact of provision for young people. They can be used to measure the following aspects of youth provision and can be easily integrated into your current monitoring practices (i.e., your routine learning about provision and its impact).

Name	What it Measures	Brief Description
Practitioner Observational Tool (POT)	Six domains of young people’s optimal socio-emotional skills as shown within the supportive environment of your provision.	The POT asks staff to rate young people’s socio-emotional skills based on behaviour displayed within the environment of the youth provision setting, as observed during several provision sessions. This is a good indicator of how young people are likely to behave in settings where they are well supported. It measures skills in six domains of socio-emotional functioning: Emotion Management, Empathy, Initiative, Problem Solving, Responsibility, and Teamwork.
Practitioner Observational Tool - Accessible (POT-A)	Three aspects of young people’s optimal socio-emotional mental skills as shown within the supportive environment of your provision.	The POT-A asks staff to rate three aspects of young people’s optimal socio-emotional mental skills aligned to the neuroperson model (i.e., Broaden & Build Schemas, Narrow & Constrain Schemas, & Awareness) and based on behaviour displayed within the environment of the youth provision setting, as observed during several provision sessions. This was designed specifically for use with children (aged 5 to 12) and young people with SEND (of any age).
Young People’s Survey (YPS)	Six domains of young people’s functional socio-emotional skills as shown in their lives outside of your provision (e.g., family, school, employment).	The YPS is a self-report measure that asks young people about mental and behavioural aspects of their socio-emotional skills in general (i.e., beyond the youth provision setting and into environments such as home and school). This also measures the six domains of socio-emotional skill outlined above.
Young People’s Survey - Accessible (YPS-A)	Three aspects of young people’s functional socio-emotional skills as shown in their lives outside of your provision (e.g., family, school, employment).	The YPS-A is a self-report measure that asks young people about three aspects of their functional socio-emotional mental skills aligned to the neuroperson model (i.e., Broaden & Build Schemas, Narrow & Constrain Schemas, & Awareness). YPS-A scores are good indicators of how young people are likely to behave in general (i.e., beyond the youth provision setting and into environments such as home and school). This can be used as a pre-test for program planning purposes and, also, as a post-test for assessing socio-emotional skill growth.
Quality Practice Tool (QPT)	The quality of your provision based on observable staff practices that create an environment that encourages young people’s socio-emotional skill growth.	The QPT is an observational rating measure designed to assess four aspects of staff practice quality at the point of engagement (i.e., Warmth, Responsiveness, Scaffolding, and Awareness), build a quality-focused organisational culture, develop improvement goals, and identify staff training needs. Each of the 20 items on the QPT describes practices staff implement to create an environment that promotes young people’s socio-emotional skill growth. The QPT is generally applicable to all forms of youth provision and can be used with children and youth of any age and with SEND or a similar designation. We recommend using this tool with 8 to 25 year olds.
Youth Engagement Survey (YES)	Young people’s mental engagement during your provision	The YES is a short, 10-item, self-report measure, completed by young people at the end of a provision session, that is used to assess mental engagement (e.g., enjoyment, inclusion, attention, voice) during provision. Mental engagement refers to the <i>conscious thoughts and feelings</i> that result from the interactions between the events occurring within provision and young people’s mental skills (i.e., their schemas, beliefs, and awareness). Active mental engagement is expected to promote socio-emotional skill development.

Each measure is linked to our data portal allowing you to enter, access and visualize individual and organisational data.

Measures Across the SES YP in Context Model



Overview of measures

When to use each measure

The following table provides a summary of each of the six measures and the conditions in which they can be used. All of the measures can be used to assess baseline or current levels of skill or quality. All can be used to inform planning and improvement cycles. All can be used to measure change over time.

	Practitioner Observation Tool (POT)	POT - Accessible (POT-A)	Young People's Survey (YPS)	YPS - Accessible (YPS-A)	Quality Practice Tool (QPT)	Youth Engagement Survey (YES)
How it is aligned to the Outcomes Framework 3.0						
Six Domains of Skill	✓		✓		✓	✓
Neuroperson Parts of Skill		✓		✓	✓	✓
What does it measure?						
Young people's engagement with provision						✓
Quality of provision					✓	
Socio-emotional skills (optimal)	✓	✓				
Socio-emotional skills (functional)			✓	✓		
What type of measure is it?						
Self-report by young person			✓	✓		✓
Structured observation by adult	✓	✓			✓	
What type of provision is the measure suitable for?						
Group	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
One-to-one	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Detached	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Building or site-based	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Questions to Help You Select Measures

Using multiple measures can provide you with comprehensive data about your provision (see page 15). However, you may choose to focus on one of the measures to get started. Working through the following questions will help you to decide which measures are right for you.

What do you want to do?

- We want to understand how well young people are engaging with our provision.
- We want feedback from young people about our provision.

Why do you want to do it?

- To understand what young people are thinking and feeling when taking part in our provision.
- Because young people's engagement in our provision promotes socio-emotional development.

Measure

Use the YES

- We want to understand the quality of the setting we are creating for young people.
- We want to reflect on the quality of our provision as a team.

- To reflect on what we're doing well and what could be better.
- To inform planning and improvement of the quality of our services.

Use the QPT

What do you want to do?

- We want to understand young people's baseline or current socio-emotional skills within the supported environment of our provision.
- We want to understand how young people are putting socio-emotional skills into practice through their behaviour and in their interactions and relationships.
- We want to measure socio-emotional skills without asking young people to fill in questionnaires.

Why do you want to do it?

- To inform planning and delivery (e.g. to tailor provision to the needs of young people we are working with).
- To measure change over time in young people's socio-emotional skill growth when *working with us in our setting*.

Measure

Use the POT for the six skill domains

Use the POT-A for neuroperson skills, for those who are neurodiverse and for young age groups

- We want to understand young people's socio-emotional skills before they engage with our provision (i.e. at baseline).
- We want to understand how young people's socio-emotional skills function in their lives outside of the youth setting, where they may not be as well supported.

- To inform planning and delivery (e.g. to tailor provision to the needs of young people we are working with).
- To understand how our provision may help young people in their lives outside of the youth setting, where they may not be as well supported.

Use the YPS for the six skill domains

Use the YPS-A for neuroperson skills, for those who are neurodiverse and for young age groups

Measurement Plan

Use one or more measures?

Outcomes Framework 3.0 brings together a set of integrated measures as set out in this User Guide and the six accompanying manuals. As well as using the measures individually, you can use them in combination to understand the relationships between the quality of your provision (QPT), young people's engagement with provision (YES) and socio-emotional development (POT, POT-A, YPS, YPS-A). Data gathered via different measures, together help to build an overall picture of what is happening. For example:

- You may want to compare your QPT scores for a session with YES scores to understand how your staff practices may be affecting young people's engagement or socio-emotional skill growth.
- You may want to evaluate the impact of your work on outcomes (skill growth) for young people and to understand the factors that affect this development (see Figure 2). Some knowledge of evaluation design and data analysis is needed to do this, so get in touch with the Centre for Youth Impact at George Williams College if you would like support: hello@ymcageorgewilliams.uk.

Other things to consider before engaging in this are: Is your provision of sufficient quality, duration and intensity to lead to long-term changes in outcomes?

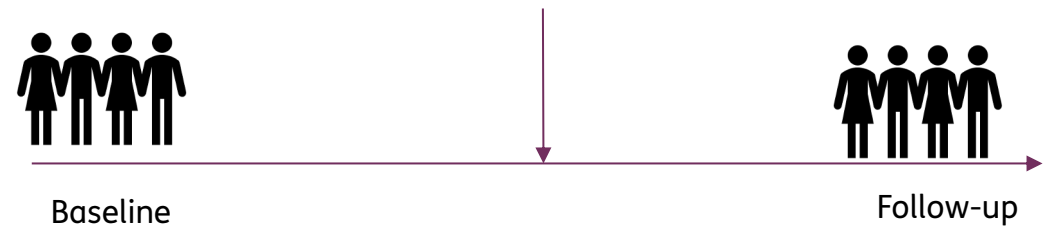
What additional information can you collect about your beneficiaries and their engagement with provision (e.g., types of activities, frequency and duration of attendance)?

For an example of this type of study see the [Youth Investment Fund evaluation](#).

Figure 2: Measuring and understanding impact

Interrelated factors affecting socio-emotional skill growth

- Individual factors (e.g., age or existing socio-emotional skills)
- Quality of provision
- Engagement with provision
- Intensity and duration of provision



Not sure where to start?

We recommend...

Focusing on the point of engagement – by measuring the quality of your provision (QPT) and young people’s engagement with it (YES) for the following reasons:

- Both measures are suitable for any organisation delivering group-based provision for young people.
- As both measures focus on the here and now, the process is not affected by how regularly or how often young people attend.
- The YES is a short survey that is easy to administer but gathers valuable information about young people’s engagement with your provision.
- You have high levels of control over programme quality and high levels of influence on young people’s engagement so can quickly act upon your findings.
- Using these measures as part of continuous quality improvement will mean that young people are more likely to develop their socio-emotional skills.

Outcomes measurement - when to use it and how

Four of the measures in the user guide can be used to measure socio-emotional outcomes (i.e., skill change as growth, stability, or decline) for young people:

- The POT and POT-A are measures of *optimal* socio-emotional behavioural skills, or the best someone can do while receiving high-quality instructional support to enact these behaviours, such as in a youth provision setting. These can be used to measure change over relatively short periods of time (e.g., using a baseline assessment and then a follow-up assessment after approximately 2 months of weekly attendance at provision).
- The YPS and YPS-A are designed to assess *functional* mental and behavioural socio-emotional skills, or the relatively-enduring socio-emotional skill *traits* that represent the best an individual can do in the *absence* of high-quality supports. This should be measured over longer time periods as these traits take longer to change (e.g., attending at least weekly for *at least* 2 months, if socio-emotional skill growth is the primary purpose of provision, although change in functional skills is more likely to be observed after a year or more and expectations of change in a shorter time-frame should be managed).

These measures should only be used when:

- a) Your provision is designed to improve socio-emotional skills.
- b) The young people you are working with are experiencing sufficient exposure to provision (as outlined above).
- c) You can practically track young people’s socio-emotional skills over time, either in the short-term through POT or POT-A or long-term through YPS or YPS-A.



Putting the measures into practice

Tips for making the most of the measures

You only need the basics covered in the previous sections to start using the measures. However, we think it's helpful to take a bit of time to think about how you'll embed them into your monitoring, evaluation and learning practices. Building on research into best practice, here we provide some tips to make the most of the measures.

This requires a focus on clarity of **purpose, process** (e.g., practically, how will you collect the data from young people? How will you record the data?) and **people** (e.g., how will you get people on-board and engaged with the process?).

Be clear about the purpose

Measurement can be used for different purposes. Take time to consider how the measures can support:

- The overarching questions that you are trying to answer (e.g., how engaged are young people, where is our practice strong and where can we improve, or what is the impact of our work?)
- Any objectives you need to fulfil through your monitoring, evaluation and learning practices (e.g. accountability, organisational learning, securing funding).
- Further understanding of the insight and knowledge you already have and seeing your strengths in data!
- The work you already do to evaluate your provision.

Our [Impact and Improvement Self-Assessment](#) can help you identify areas of strength and development. Further support for each area can be found on our [Impact and Improvement Resource Hub](#).

Engage people

Leadership

Leaders at all levels need to demonstrate a commitment to equitable and reflective evaluation that sits at the heart of the organisation and its operations. This should not be driven solely by external requirements from funders or other stakeholders.

Culture

Whilst leadership is important, organisational learning will only be successful if the commitment is shared by the whole staff team, including volunteers. This means that learning becomes a mindset rather than simply a set of practices. A culture of '**lower-stakes accountability**' is needed to get the most from the measures. This means that low scores are not penalised but supported and where most staff feel they can be successful in reaching objectives for program quality. This approach is intended to move away from 'high-stakes' accountability environments where fear of 'failure', penalties (e.g., public shaming through sharing of lower scores), unattainable targets, mandatory compliance, and insufficient supports lead many staff to feel threatened by information about outcomes.

Roles

Organisational learning is everyone's responsibility, but team members need to be clear about any specific role they have related to data collection and reporting.

Tips for making the most of the measures

Have a clear process

Start small

New ways of working take time to embed. We suggest starting with one of the measures and testing it with a small group of young people.

Work in learning cycles

The measures are part of a broader approach to learning and improvement that includes the following key stages:

- The **Assess** stage involves measuring aspects of your provision in line with your theory of change and practice.
- In the **Plan** stage, the team uses these data to identify areas that they want to focus on improving (e.g., increasing young people's engagement).
- Finally, in the **Improve** stage, the team addresses those areas they have identified as priorities. This may include, for example, staff training, changes to the design of provision or ways of reaching new young people.

Plan ways to integrate this into your current activities such as team meetings or reflective practice.

Systems

Once you are confident in the measures you may want to adopt the socio-emotional measurement system, or embed select measures into your own evaluation, monitoring and learning plan. Either way, we recommend that you are intentional and systematic about the collection, analysis and use of data.

Asking good questions – a framework for learning and continuous improvement

The Asking Good Questions framework was developed by the Centre for Youth Impact to help you reflect on your approach to evaluation, and explore how to improve it by building evidence and insight across your work. The framework also explains the benefits of collecting data about different aspects of your provision rather than focusing on one particular area (e.g. participation or outcomes).

It focuses on whether or not positive change is created through your work with and for young people, as well as why and how that change happens. The primary reason we want to understand the *what, why and how* of this change is so that we can continuously reflect on and improve the quality of the sector's work with and for young people. By doing that, we will increase the impact we collectively have on the lives of the young people with whom we work. Below is an introduction to the framework and how it links to the measures. You can read more [here](#).

Questions	Description	Link to measures
1. Why do we do what we do?	This question is about setting out the rationale for your work. It enables stakeholders (including staff, young people and the community) to understand the thinking behind your work. It is also a useful process for teams to work through together. It will highlight any assumptions that you're making about your work and any differences of opinion.	
2. What exactly are we doing?	This question builds on the thinking and planning you have done about 'why' by focusing – in detail – on the 'what'. In this framework, this is done by setting out a theory of change, which consists of the following components: aims, outcomes, mechanism of change and activities	
3. Are we doing it well?	Asking yourself this question is about consistently considering the quality of the work that you do and whether your delivery can create the expected impact you outlined in your Theory of Change. The primary focus of this question is on quality of practice – what your team of staff and/or volunteers are doing with young people, and what processes you have in place to support them to improve. It is also about checking that the basics of a quality experience for young people are in place – safeguarding, training, building and equipment checks, and so on.	PQA YES
4. Are we true to our intentions?	Asking yourself this question is about taking your core principles seriously, and working to ensure that you are delivering what you planned to deliver (in your answers to questions one and two) with fidelity. This can include particular sessions or activities, but also includes quality experiences and settings. 'Fidelity' is not just about 'sticking with the plan'.	
5. What do young people think?	This question is about committing to seeking out, listening to and acting on systematic feedback from the young people you are supporting (and maybe some you aren't). It is about measuring and cultivating the conditions that really matter in young people's development and learning.	YES
6. Are we achieving our aims?	In many cases, aims are expressed as outcomes for young people (such as 'young people will have greater resilience'), but aims are not exclusively outcomes. Many organisations exist to provide a safe space for young people to 'be young' and that is perfectly legitimate, in the same way that libraries exist to provide free access to books and parks exist to offer green spaces to communities. Aims are often related to funding – we must collectively acknowledge and name this, though ultimately your aim must be your own.	ARYB ARY YRSS



An agenda for shared measurement

Shared measurement

What is shared measurement in the youth sector?

Shared measurement involves organisations that are working towards similar goals using common ways of defining and measuring quality and impact.

The Centre for Youth Impact measures provide a shared approach to measurement for youth organisations that are aiming to improve the socio-emotional skills of young people.

This will be used to develop a shared data-set that represents organisations from across the country.

What are the benefits of shared measurement?

- Generating a shared dataset across organisations will allow you to compare your scores with those achieved by other organisations.
- It can improve understanding of collective quality and impact by building the sector-wide picture. This can be used to inform and shape funding and policy decisions as well as the development of provision for young people.
- A shared approach will support better learning across the sector.

How to take part in shared measurement

Using the Centre data portal will allow you to access your own data visualisations and will enable the Centre to develop a data set evidencing the efficacy of all provision for young people.



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Contact details

hello@ymcageorgewilliams.uk

www.ymcageorgewilliams.uk/socio-emotional-skills-measurement-hub

