

Youth Investment Fund Quality Standards Framework



**YOUTH
INVESTMENT
FUND**

Forward from Leigh Middleton CEO of the National Youth Agency

High quality, universal youth provision supports all young people to have somewhere safe to go, to socialise and learn new skills, with a trusted adult who is skilled and trained to support them. Working with our partners Social Investment Business (SIB), Resonance and Key Fund we will create, expand and improve youth facilities and services in England to drive positive outcomes for young people.

One of the core roles of the National Youth Agency (NYA), as a delivery partner for the Youth Investment Fund (YIF) is to embed high quality youth work practice to ensure the very best outcomes for young people and for communities to thrive. The Quality Standards Framework will provide you with information, tools and guidance to help you demonstrate how your organisation provides high quality youth work as part of your YIF application.

The three quality standards outlined within this document focus on Participation, Governance and Leadership, and Youth Work Practice, and reflect the levels of good practice we expect all YIF grantees to commit to and work towards as part of their grant agreements.

Effective, high quality youth work can enhance young people's life chances, giving them the opportunity to thrive. Young people are our future. Ensuring they can access highly skilled and trained youth workers will give them the support they desperately need, and from which we will all benefit as a society.



Leigh Middleton
Chief Executive, National Youth Agency

High quality Youth Work

High quality Youth Work helps provide the best outcomes for young people. It is underpinned by a clear set of principles, practice guidance and values, led by the needs and wishes of young people and is delivered by skilled and trained youth workers and volunteers. More information on high quality Youth Work is available [here](#).

I) About the Youth Investment Fund

The YIF's objective is to create, expand and improve local youth facilities and their services, to drive positive outcomes for young people, including improved mental and physical wellbeing, and skills for life and work.

These projects will focus on

- Sustainable and self-reliant funding models
- Enabling positive activities for young people aged 11-18 (up to 25 for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)
- Improving environmental sustainability of the youth sector estate through energy effectiveness and or low carbon heating, as well as construction activities

II) Youth Investment Fund Objectives

- 1) Increase the number of **regular positive activities** undertaken by young people in the targeted areas by 45,000 per year, by 2026/27.
- 2) Provide **new and redeveloped facilities** delivering positive activities to young people, funded through **self-reliant funding models**.
- 3) Improve the **environmental sustainability of the youth sector estate** in target areas through energy efficiencies and/or low carbon heating.
- 4) **Reduce the environmental impact of construction activities** across the programme, by funding facilities with the lowest reasonable carbon footprint across their lifetime.
- 5) **Reduce build and ongoing running costs**, by supporting new or redeveloped youth facilities that demonstrate 20% reduced annual running costs by 2025/26, compared to ageing youth facilities.

III) Range of applicants

Not all youth sector providers may call themselves a youth worker but overwhelmingly across the youth sector providers are applying the same principles and values to their work with young people. The term youth work(er) applies to all projects, programmes and providers who use trusted adults to build supportive relationships with young people. Youth Work happens in a variety of spaces and places, and the trusted adults that deliver youth work range from volunteers to part time or full time professionally qualified practitioners from traditional Youth Work settings to allied sectors such as the uniformed sector, health, arts and sport.

IV) Quality Standards Framework

A set of three Quality Standards have been developed in response to the YIF objectives and aligned to the NYA's professional, statutory, and regulatory body (PRSB) functions, sector quality standards (NYA Quality Mark) and wider charitable mission: to transform the lives of young people through quality Youth Work/provision.

The National Youth Agency (NYA) is committed to quality practice and will work alongside the wider sector to ensure the framework is understood, supportive and enables all organisations to demonstrate the quality of their practice.

A tiered approach has been adopted to enable access, standard setting, bench marking and development. The Quality Standards are designed to enable organisations of all sizes and type to demonstrate good practice and strive for excellence.

The aim is to support most organisations to meet at least **GOOD** with an intention to develop **EXCELLENT** practice by the end of their grant period. It is appreciated that some organisations may require development in some areas, and an incremental development approach has been adopted. Organisations will receive access to tailored and flexible expert support that would enable them to meet the expected standards of Youth Work and to meet the need of young people.

The skills, knowledge, and attitudes that youth workers bring to their work with young people, the quality of practice and the structures that support workforce development are all essential ingredients of an effective and highly skilled sector.

People enter the workforce from many different points, and routes for progression and specialisation vary widely. Opportunities for workers to train, learn and develop new skills should be responsive to this variety, and offer access to training for all abilities and levels of learning and experience. Consideration will be given to a range of qualifications to ensure teams have the skills, knowledge, and confidence to work effectively and safely with young people. Click [here](#) for further information about Youth Work qualifications.

Access to knowledge and resources will be available to all organisations, irrespective of their bid status, this will enable organisations to prepare for future bidding rounds.

Quality Standard 1. Participation

Young people voluntarily and actively engage in participatory activity, supported by youth workers/volunteers to ensure access to resources, knowledge, and opportunity. Young people are aware of the influence they have, and the positive impact participation has on their personal, social, and political development and the wider communities to which they belong.

	Good	Excellent
a.	Structures, opportunities & support to enable young people to express their views and opinions.	a. Views and opinions are listened and responded to, clearly demonstrating how young people influence decision making and how power is shared equitably.
b.	Youth workers support young people to recognise, realise and defend their rights (National Occupational Standards for Youth Work).	b. Young people understand their rights and can advocate on behalf of other young people and respond to societal concerns in a local, national, or global context.
c.	Young people actively Participate in the co-design of the youth work programme and direction of the organisation.	c. Young people co-design the youth work strategy and direction of the organisation.
d.	Youth work identifies, challenges, and removes barriers to Participation.	d. Youth work empowers young people to respond to and challenge inequality and discrimination.
e.	Youth Work actively promotes the Convention of the Rights of the Child	e. Young people co-design safeguarding and risk management policy, procedures, and inform practice.

Quality Standard 2. Governance & Leadership

Recognition and ability to take ownership of the organisation by evidencing a clear mission and vision for the future that clearly aligns to your strategy, policies and activities for young people. Ensuring that the ethos and direction of the organisation is informed and valued by all stakeholders.

Good	Excellent
<p>a. The organisation has a plan for work with young people.</p>	<p>a. The organisation's strategy is clearly underpinned by its Vision</p>
<p>b. The organisation has the processes in place to measure the effectiveness of youth work to determine future planning.</p>	<p>b. The organisation has clear processes in support of quality assurance and measuring impact that involve young people.</p>
<p>c. The organisation has clear policies and processes that include reflective practice, supervision, and development opportunities.</p>	<p>c. The organisation has a workforce development pathway that promotes youth work qualifications and progression</p>
<p>d. The organisation can demonstrate a commitment to Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EEDI).</p>	<p>d. The organisation has an EEDI action plan in support of youth work practice.</p>
<p>e. The organisation has the relevant safeguarding and risk management policy, procedures, and practice in place to ensure that every young person, regardless of their age, disability, race, gender reassignment, religion or belief, or sexual orientation has a right to equal protection from harm.</p>	<p>e. The organisation is committed to contextual safeguarding approaches and can demonstrate how this directly improves outcomes for young people.</p>

Quality Standard 3. Youth Work Practice

Youth Work practice is underpinned by Youth Work Values and Principles

1. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE
2. VOLUNTARY ENGAGEMENT BY YOUNG PEOPLE
3. NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND INFORMAL LEARNING
4. EQUALITY, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION
5. PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL CONDUCT

	Good	Excellent
a.	Youth Workers are qualified to a minimum of L2 in Youth Work, preferably a L3 in Youth Work or an equivalent and the organisation has a workforce development plan to ensure all staff continually develop their knowledge and skills in youth work. (National Occupational Standards for Youth Work).	a. Youth Workers should be professionally qualified in Youth Work
b.	Youth work enables young people to assess risk and make informed choices to promote their wellbeing.	b. Youth work enables young people to articulate how their informed choices positively impact their wellbeing.
c.	Youth workers respond to the needs of young people and plan and deliver effective activities and programmes using asset-based approach.	c. Youth work enables young people to identify their needs, goals, interests, and concerns to co-produce programmes, and reflect on their learning to enhance their future development.
d.	Youth work supports young people to understand difference and recognise inequality and discrimination in their community	d. Youth work co-produces contextual safeguarding and risk management activity in partnership with young people.
e.	The organisation has the relevant safeguarding and risk management policy, procedures, and practice in place to ensure that every young person, regardless of their age, disability, race, gender reassignment, religion or belief, or sexual orientation has a right to equal protection from harm.	e. Youth work encourages and supports young people to take an active role in their community to challenge inequality and discrimination.

V) Young Peoples Participation

Sharing power with young people is a fundamental principle of the YIF, this includes ensuring the voices of young people are loud and clear throughout the programme, including informing decision making.

Young people have informed the development of the programme and a newly formed Youth Panel is authorised by YIF to provide independent expertise in the assessment of bids and to assess to what level the applicant involves young people in the design, development, delivery, and evaluation of the youth provision. Young people have agreed upon an assessment based on seven agreed criteria, three of which relate directly to the Youth Work Quality Standards.

1. Commitment to good youth engagement
2. Focused on a relevant and impactful need that young people have identified
3. A demonstrable approach to inclusive and equitable youth programmes and spaces

The Young People's Panel will submit the findings from their assessment to sector experts and Assessment Panel. Their assessment will provide recommendations to the Assessment Panel for deliberation, as well as informing developmental needs for consideration and inclusion in the organisation's development plan.

VI) Key sources of information

- [National Occupational Standards \(NOS\)](#)
- [NYA Quality Mark](#)
- [NYA National Youth Work Curriculum](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)
- [NYA Safeguarding and Risk Management](#)
- [iWill 'Power of Youth Charter'](#)
- [Outcomes Frameworks: a guide for providers and commissioners of youth services \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Outcomes_framework_report_final.pdf \(youthimpact.uk\)](#)
- [Convention of the Rights of the Child](#)

Youth work is also underpinned by:

1  DEFINITION OF A CHILD	2  NO DISCRIMINATION	3  BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD	4  MAKING RIGHTS REAL	5  FAMILY GUIDANCE AS CHILDREN DEVELOP	6  LIFE, SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT	7  NAME AND NATIONALITY
8  IDENTITY	9  KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER	10  CONTACT WITH PARENTS ACROSS COUNTRIES	11  PROTECTION FROM KIDNAPPING	12  RESPECT FOR CHILDREN'S VIEWS	13  SHARING THOUGHTS FREELY	14  FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND RELIGION
15  SETTING UP OR JOINING GROUPS	16  PROTECTION OF PRIVACY	17  ACCESS TO INFORMATION	18  RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS	19  PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE	20  CHILDREN WITHOUT FAMILIES	21  CHILDREN WHO ARE ADOPTED
22  REFUGEE CHILDREN	23  CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES	24  HEALTH, WATER, FOOD, ENVIRONMENT	25  REVIEW OF A CHILD'S PLACEMENT	26  SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HELP	27  FOOD, CLOTHING, A SAFE HOME	28  ACCESS TO EDUCATION
29  AIMS OF EDUCATION	30  MINORITY CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND RELIGION	31  REST, PLAY, CULTURE, ARTS	32  PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL WORK	33  PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL DRUGS	34  PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL ABUSE	35  PREVENTION OF SALE AND TRAFFICKING
36  PROTECTION FROM EXPLOITATION	37  CHILDREN IN DETENTION	38  PROTECTION IN WAR	39  RECOVERY AND REINTEGRATION	40  CHILDREN WHO BREAK THE LAW	41  BEST LAW FOR CHILDREN APPLIES	42  EVERYONE MUST KNOW CHILDREN'S RIGHTS
43-54  HOW THE CONVENTION WORKS	CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD					

Key legislation:

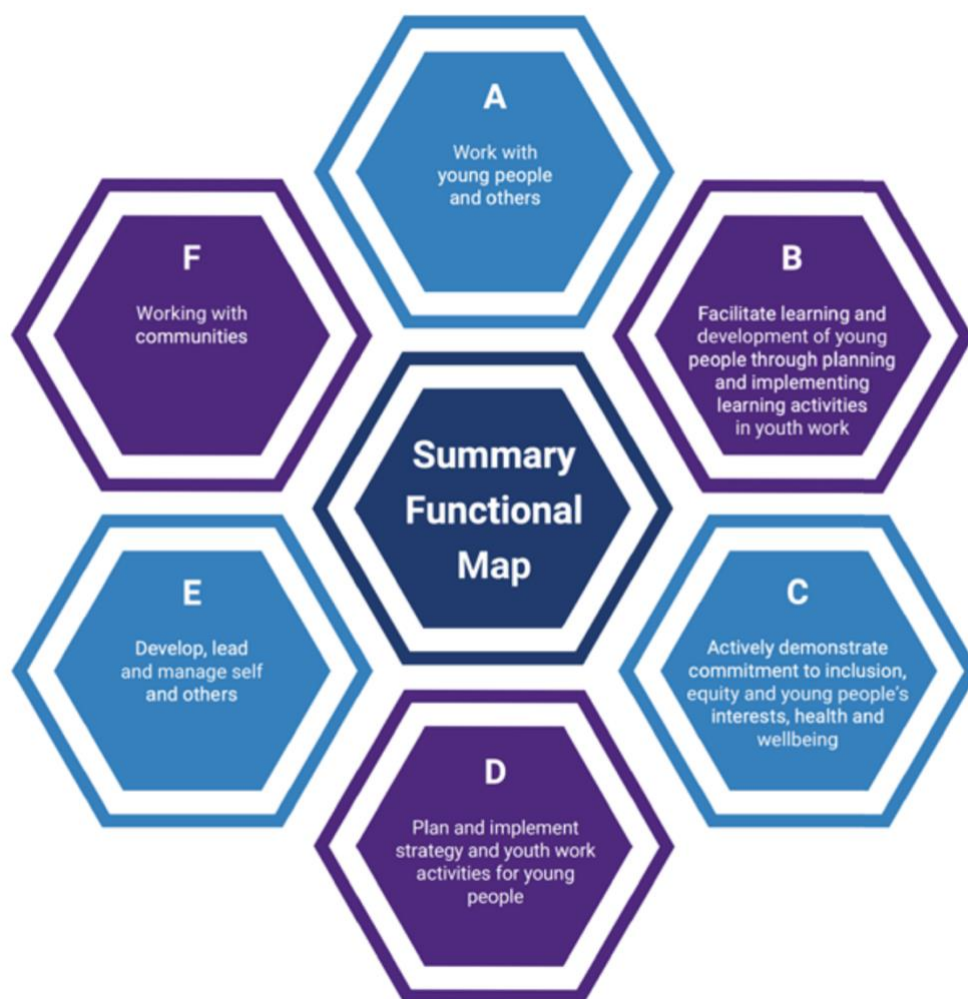
[Health & Safety at Work Act 2014](#)

[Children's Act 2004](#)

[The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR \(General Data Protection Regulations\)](#)

[The Equality Act 2010](#)

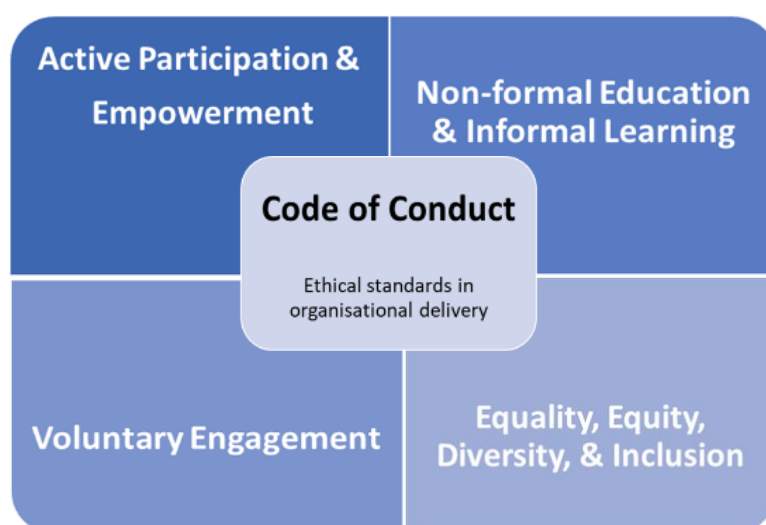
[National Occupational Standards for Youth Work](#), click on the link to access the full document.



Values and Principles of Youth Work

The four cornerstones of youth work describe the broad aims and ethos of youth work. Youth work relationships are underpinned by youth work values and principles. The values provide an ethical foundation that informs the way youth workers make decisions about their work.

Diagram 2: The Cornerstones of Youth Work.



Principles of Youth Work (see Quality Standard 3: Youth Work Practice)

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

- Starts where young people are at individually and collectively
- Builds needs-based provision, identified by young people and youth workers
- Actively involves young people in planning, delivery, and evaluation of, and reflection on activities and experiences
- Supports acquisition of new skills to empower selves and their communities
- Listens, empowers, amplifies, and promotes the voices of young people

2. VOLUNTARY ENGAGEMENT BY YOUNG PEOPLE

- Establishes voluntary and trusting relations between young people and youth workers
- Relationships are built based on mutual respect
- Young people choose to take part or opt out of engagement freely
- Ensures mutual understanding and agreement of expectations between young people and youth workers

3. NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND INFORMAL LEARNING

- Youth work can take place in a range of settings
- Builds upon skills and knowledge
- Encourages young people to reflect on their learning
- Takes a rights-based educational process
- Uses an asset-based empowerment approach

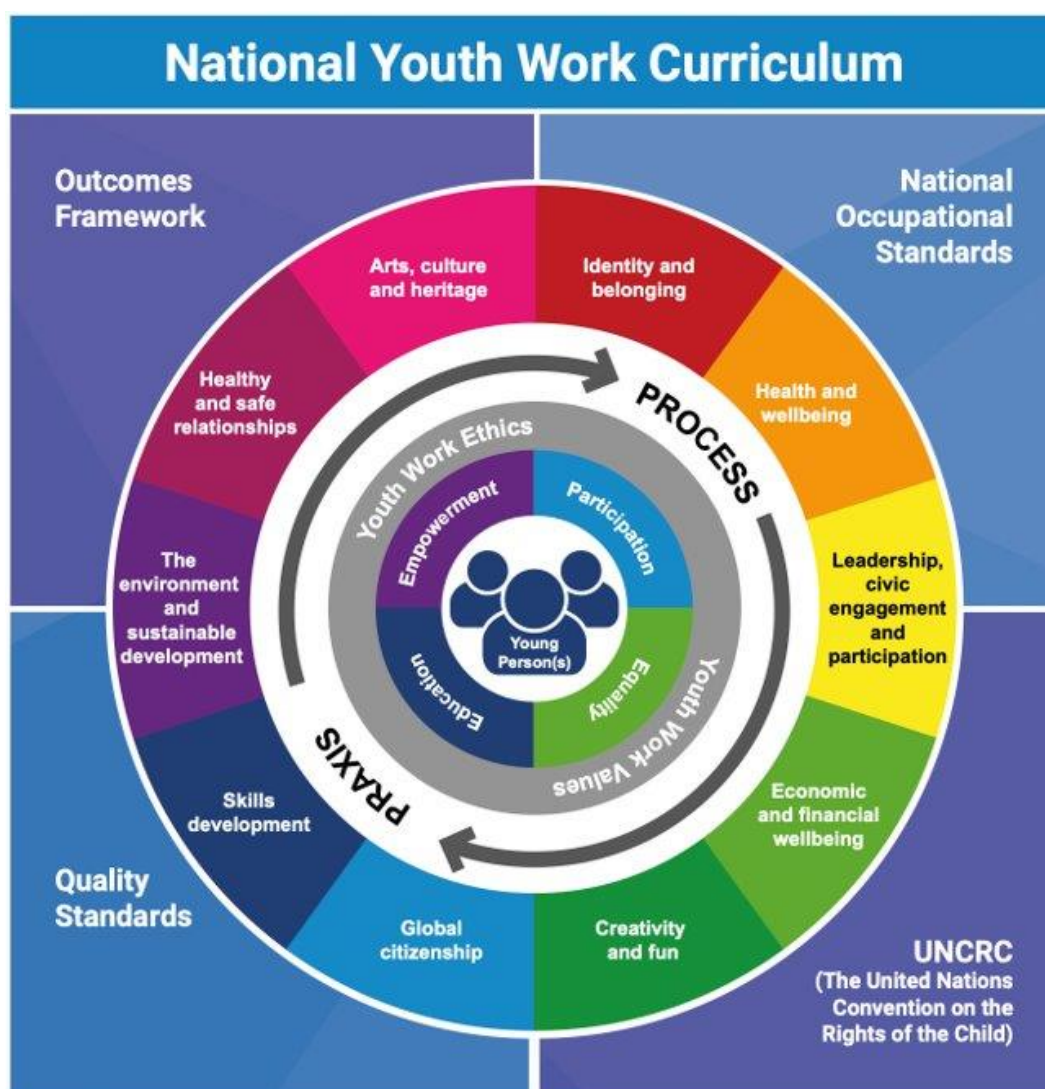
4. EQUALITY, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

- Applies principles of anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice
- Applies these to work with all oppressed or minoritised communities, groups and young people
- Values how cultural competence enables understanding and positive interaction.
- Ensures all practice is accessible, inclusive, and enabling
- Treats young people with respect, valuing differences and promoting acceptance and understanding of others

PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL CONDUCT

- Demonstrates clear professional boundaries in all interactions with young people, colleagues, and other professionals
- Ensures young people understand the role and responsibilities of youth workers
- Applies clear ethical decision making to protect young people and adults and inform all practice
- Encourages young people and colleagues to reflect on their learning.

Diagram 3: [National Youth Work Curriculum](#), click on the link to access the full document.



VII) National Youth Agency Safeguarding statement

The NYA is committed to quality safeguarding practice, please ensure you read the following statement:

Every organisation and its individual staff members have a duty of care to ensure the protection of the young people they are working with, from unnecessary risk and/or harm. The protection of young people is based on the principles outlined within the Children's Act 2004, the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and Working Together 2018 Guidance.

These principles recognise that the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults is paramount and all, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have the right to protection from all types of harm, abuse, and exploitation.

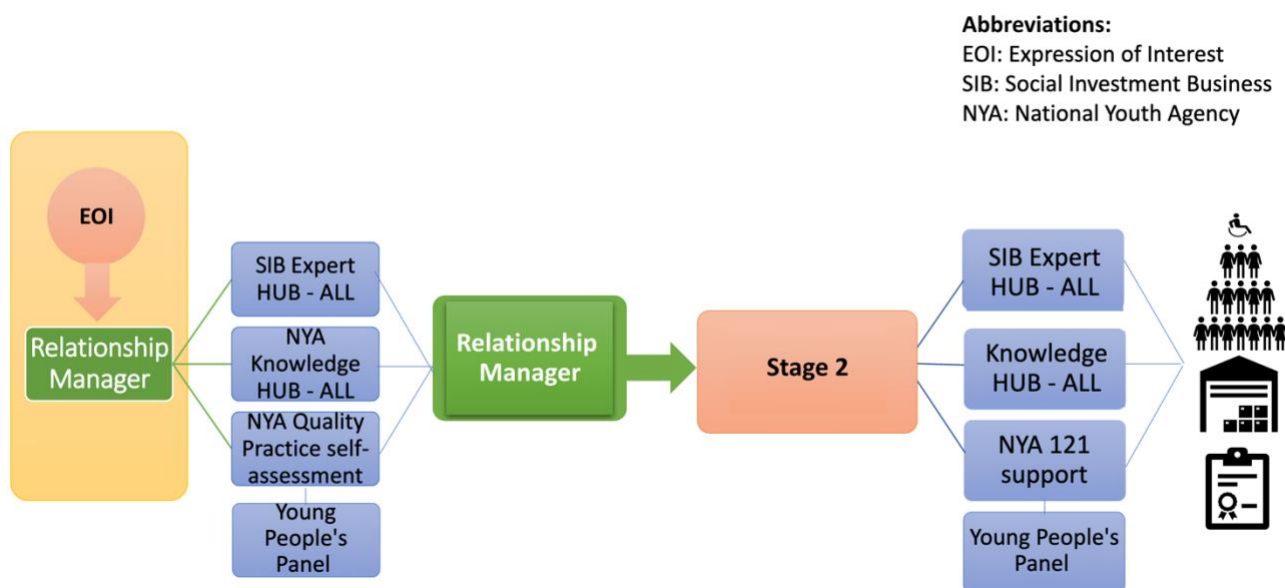
VII) Quality Standards sector support

The YIF is adopting a relational and collaborative approach to working with organisations that have applied for a grant. This is a trusted relationship that is focussed on developing excellent services for young people through the development of sustainable facilities alongside quality practice. At times the NYA may critically challenge to ensure organisations develop and thrive to achieve their vision.

The NYA will provide sector support in youth work practice, alongside the role of the YIF Relationship Manager and experts from other specialisms to support the project development. This includes access to The Knowledge Hub.

[The NYA Knowledge Hub](#) is an open access source of information, webinars, toolkits and CPD (Continuous Professional Development) for organisations to access. The information has been developed in response to the YIF Quality Standards, the Expression of Interest and the Youth Work Practice Self-Assessment. These range of resources will support you to realise your ambition and respond to the YIF requirements. The Knowledge Hub will continue to develop as we learn more about the needs of the sector. This resource is not only for organisations that are going through the application process, it is also a reliable source of information and learning for organisations that are preparing to apply for the YIF.

Flowchart 1: YIF (Youth Investment Fund) Support process



Please read the [Quality Practice self- assessment guidance](#) or more information about the processes and procedures that underpin the Quality Standards Framework, this includes what is expected of organisations applying for the YIF (Youth Investment Fund) and how the NYA (National Youth Agency) will continue to support you through the process.