

UK YOUTH

Latest youth work evidence

13 March 2024

Around half a million young people aged 16-24 are not in education or employment

The number of young people with mental health problems has doubled in a decade

15 year-olds in the UK are the saddest in Europe

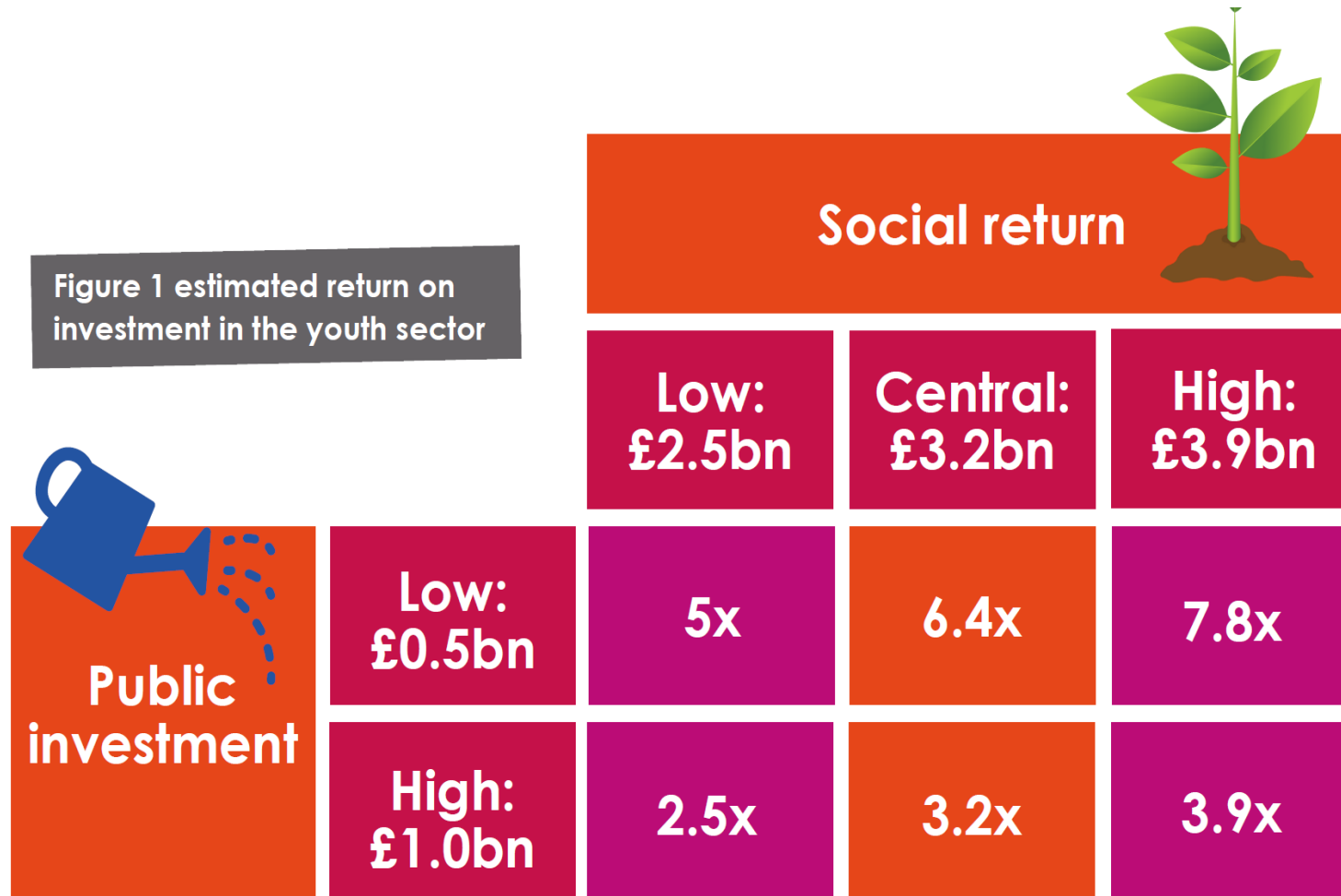
30% of young people feel they will never achieve their career aspirations and over 200,000 young people feel they will never work

The number of young women self-harming has tripled since 2000

More than 1 in 4 children in the UK now live in poverty

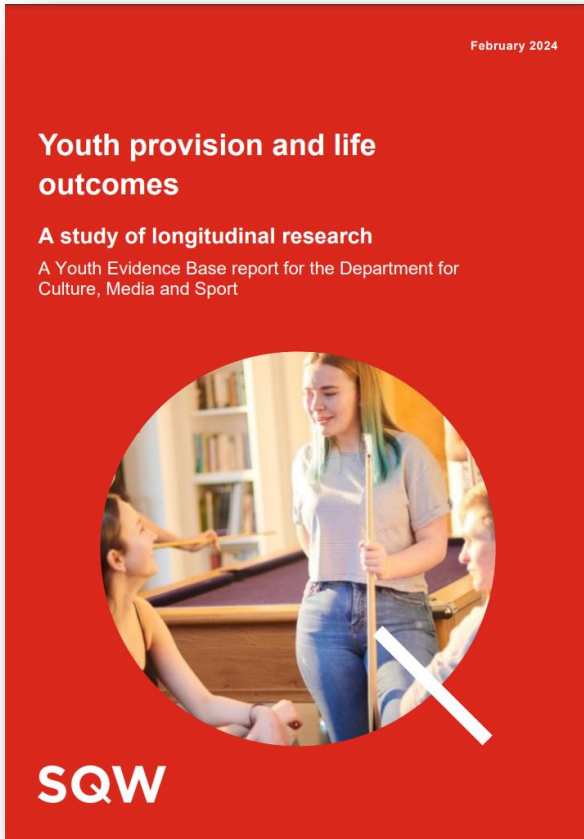
Untapped Report

Figure 1 estimated return on investment in the youth sector



Source: UK Youth & Frontier Economics, 2022





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Research and analysis

Youth provision and life outcomes research

Three independent studies of the youth sector and its impact on local areas and young people's life outcomes.

From: [Department for Culture, Media and Sport](#)

Published 29 February 2024

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BREAKING NEWS

Link to the full reports:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/
youth-provision-and-life-outcomes-research](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-provision-and-life-outcomes-research)

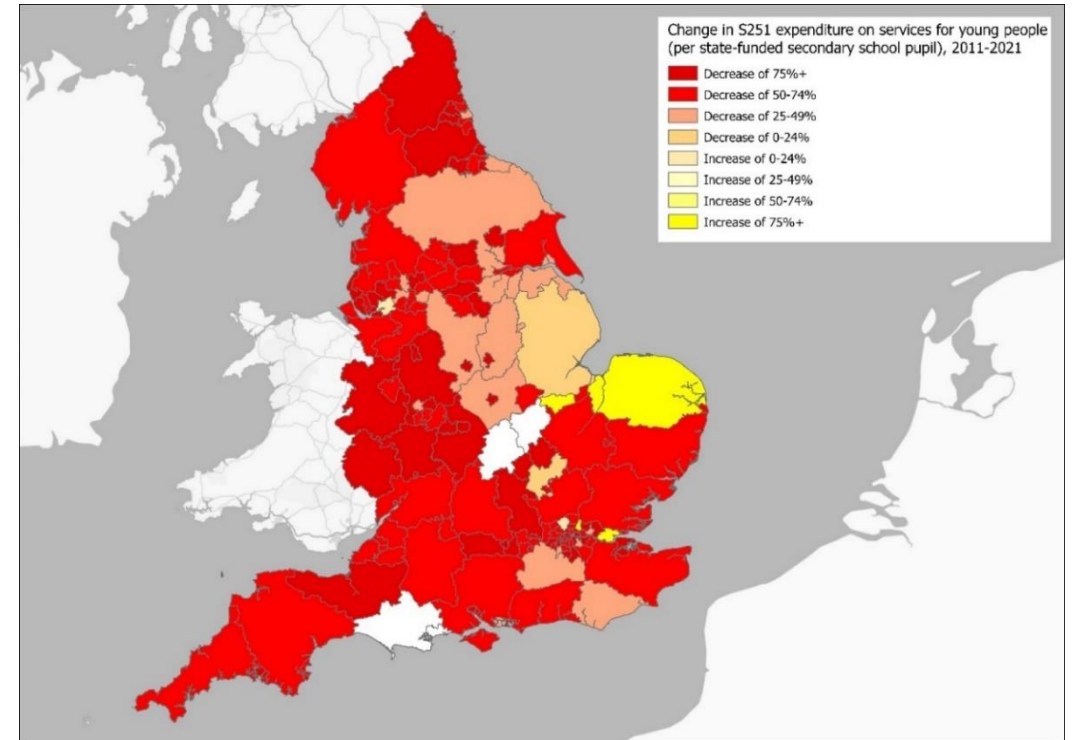
Impact of youth centre closures

UK Youth partnered with SQW, funded by DCMS, to research **local variation in youth work funding and the impact of youth centre closures on young people's outcomes**

95% of local authorities reduced their real terms spending on youth services by at least a quarter between 2011 and 2021. The average number of youth work orgs supported **has reduced from 14 to 8 per local authority**. The decline in spending has disproportionately affected universal, open-access provision.

Reduction in local youth provision is associated with a rise in certain types of crime and anti-social behaviour: the number of children cautioned or sentenced; the proportion of young people who reoffend; the number of bicycle theft offences; the number of weapon possession offences; the number of shoplifting offences.

Changes to local funding of youth work in the past decade



Long-term impact of youth work

UK Youth has partnered with SQW and University of Essex to analyse data from five cohort studies, which have tracked people from 1970s-2000s until today. Our research has looked at the **impact of weekly participation in youth work on outcomes in later life**. This research was one of our recommendations of the Untapped research and was funded by DCMS.

- Positive outcomes associated with youth work participation in short-term, relating to: **physical health, wellbeing, pro-social behaviours, and education**.
- There is also strong evidence that these short-term outcomes are sustained over decades and remain more positive than peers who did not access youth provision. **People who had participated in youth work earlier in life were happier, healthier, wealthier, and more actively involved in their communities.**
- No significant differences in outcomes between demographic groups (gender; ethnicity; socio-economic status) – **youth work was equally beneficial for all**

Five cohort studies analysed:

- Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children
- British Cohort Study
- Millennium Cohort Study
- Next Steps Generational Study
- Understanding Society

International learning

UK Youth has partnered with SQW and University of Warwick to systematically review international evidence of the impact of youth work interventions. Most relevant evidence has been drawn from USA, New Zealand, Australia, and Scandinavia.

- Specific focus of review on research using experimental methods (e.g. RCTs).
- The review provides evidence showing that youth activities have positive impacts on young people across a range of personal, social, educational, and economic outcomes.
- The review identified several programmes with positive evidence of impact that had been tested at scale, well designed, sustained over time and delivered across multiple contexts. Mentoring and summer jobs programmes had particularly strong evidence of impact.
- A lot of research has been focused on large-scale, structured programmes (e.g. National Citizens Service in UK) but there is also evidence of positive impact of community-based, open access youth work.

How you can support

Youth work is proven to be effective in the short term – improving young people's wellbeing, essential skills, and educational outcomes

These benefits last for decades and set young people up for life making them happier, healthier, and wealthier adults than those who did not receive youth work

Despite these important benefits, youth work funding has dramatically reduced over the last 15 years. We cannot afford not to invest in youth work.

- Share the research and our key messages
- Use the evidence in your own case for support
- Talk to us if you want to support further high profile evidence building

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