

**YOUTH FOCUS WEST MIDLANDS
ANNUAL REPORT**

**2024
-2025**

Operational Report



CONTENTS

3. ABOUT YFWM

4. CHAIR'S FOREWORD

5. CEO'S REPORT

10. FINANCIAL REPORT

Abridged - Full report available on request



About YFWM

Youth Focus West Midlands is the non-aligned network lead and support for work with young people in the West Midlands & the lead for the national youth work infrastructure partnership in the West Midlands Region

YFWM was established to build upon the work of the previous West Midlands Regional Youth Work Unit; continuing to work with youth work and related youth professionals, agencies and policy makers to support the development and delivery of high quality youth work opportunities for young people across the West Midlands region.

The aim of YFWM is to encourage, promote and support both individual practitioners and organisations that look to develop and deliver youth work across the West Midlands region.

At the heart of the organisation's role is the development of clear communication routes and networks that complement a consistent understanding and approach to youth work.

We believe this approach is an essential element in ensuring that young people are offered personal development experiences regardless of where they live in the West Midlands region. YFWM leads a number of professional networks; bringing together strategic leads and specialists

from across the region as well as service and professional development learning and task groups. The range of YFWM work has been reviewed and refocused. Whilst approaches need to move with the times and reflect resourcing the priorities remain the same:

Ben Gibson - Stoke Youth Collective

"Youth Focus West Midlands plays a vital role in connecting, equipping, and empowering the regional youth sector. They bring organisations together to collaborate, share learning, and build collective strength. Their support has been instrumental in developing our local youth strategy in Stoke, helping partners across sectors to align their efforts, amplify youth voice, and co-create solutions that reflect the real needs of young people. They are also supporting us to build local capacity to deliver high-quality youth work, ensuring that services are sustainable, inclusive, and grounded in best practice."

Chair's Foreword



The economic and funding environment is still very challenging. Positive noises continue to come from government about the role that good youth work plays in supporting and developing young people and communities, but the economic situation that they are struggling with has meant that opportunities for new or increased funding have been scarce. There have been some positives where existing funding has been extended beyond original end dates and Youth Focus West Midlands has benefited from some of those.

I expressed my sadness last year about the news of the planned decimation of the Youth Service in Birmingham and it is good to look back and recognise the passion and resilience of youth workers and their supporters that fuelled the successful campaign to retain the service for the city. There is work going on across our region to keep youth work in the minds and policies of our politicians and other decision makers.

Collective voices are often stronger than isolated local ones and the networks of partners and stakeholders that YFWM supports and participates in are vital in keeping youth work on the agenda of local regional and national policy making. During the year we have extended our reach and engagement with all 14 of the local authorities in our region and have strengthened the networking and collaboration with all the other regional youth work units across the country, leading to joint working on both lobbying and specific delivery projects.

I also used the words “adapt and survive” last year, but as an organisation I think we have gone beyond that stage and have adapted and grown very effectively. This has required significant change, and that has continued throughout the year. Changes nationally have meant that our role in supporting and delivering Youth Voice work is now even more significant than it was before whilst our Training Centre has continued to be crucial in addressing the challenges of workforce development for the sector.

Every aspect of our organisation has grown and our current financial position is healthier than it has ever been. However, we recognise that this can change quickly as funding sources come and go, so we continue to be vigilant and prudent as we go forward.

***“Every aspect of our organisation has grown
and our current financial position is healthier
than it has ever been”***

We now operate as a team of staff, associates and trustees that complement and support one another very well. Recently, we said goodbye to George Stroud, who had been central to our business transformation process. We wish him well for his future.

***“We now operate as a team of staff,
associates and trustees that complement
and support one another”***

We then welcomed Emma Boundford to our team and she is already making a very positive contribution alongside Emma Keenan, Cal Williams supporting our Training Centre work and our CEO Ruth who holds it all together, is active across all our key networks and pursues development opportunities where they arise. Finally, a thank you to all our partners and stakeholders who work with Youth Focus West Midlands to enable us to continue supporting good quality youth work.

The year ahead will, no doubt, bring challenges but Youth Focus West Midlands and our partners are in a strong position to respond, grow and make a crucial contribution to the youth sector in our region.

We look forward to it!

Paul Finnemore

Chair of Board of Trustees



Annual Overview

Chief Executive Officer's Report

2024- 2025 has been a significant year for YFWM both in terms of contract delivery and organisational development

The organisation is now in a strong place, but we recognise the fragile nature of funding and policy environments.

YFWM has been pleased to support the consultation around the National Youth Strategy. The key drivers to support the Strategy are all key areas of delivery for YFWM:

- Supporting and Growing a skilled and sustainable paid and volunteer workforce
- Building effective and integrated partnerships between voluntary, public and private sectors
- Strengthening 'Youth Voice' and clarifying standards and accountability structures for youth provision

We now need to build on these solid foundations in order that YFWM sustains the capacity to provide key infrastructure support for the youth work sector across the region.

What remains important is our primary focus on the needs of young people, who continue to tell us they want safe spaces in local communities along with trusted adults and I think it goes beyond just particular safe spaces for young people; I believe

it's about safe communities for young people to grow up in.

Youth work and youth workers are not the only answer, but as a profession that moulds services around young people's needs and other provision, they are a significant part of the picture that is currently 'missing' or at best patchy. As always, we face these challenges with commitment, as facilitators, negotiators and above all passionate advocates for the young people who are our future: I look forward to continuing to work with our national partners and the youth work sector across the region to ensure that youth work is recognised, understood, and effectively financed.

DCMS support has been invaluable in helping sustain the core functions of the organisation and consolidating core organisational infrastructure

The work of the Network of Regional Youth Work Units has also been invaluable in helping grow our work nationally and raising the profile of the importance of regional infrastructure to the youth work landscape

Our Workstreams

Buisness Transformation

The work on the business transformation process is now complete. The organisation is now well placed to be able to successfully manage both staff and contracts from a range of funders as well as delivering a range of support services to the youth work sector across the west Midlands. George Stroud who successfully led this process for YFWM left us at the end of April 2025 and we have been joined by Emma Boundford who joined us as our new Business Support Officer in April 1st 2025. Emma is now picking up the range of business support functions across the organisation.

Workforce Development

Training Centre Achievements

YFWM has been an Accredited Training Centre for 7 years delivering both level 2 and 3 accredited qualifications in youth work and we have built a strong reputation, recognised by the awarding body as delivering a quality service as confirmed by feedback from our EQA at Skills Education Group

The Training Centre has registered and supported 57 learners at level 2 and 5 at level 3

Sue Wilson – EQA, Skills & Education Group Awards:

"Youth Focus West Midlands is a high functioning centre benefitting from a strong professional and competent youth work training team. The assessment and IQA practice is very strong. Learners' work is of a high standard across all courses. The assessors use a range of appropriate assessment methods to support learners collective and individual needs.

It is evident from what I have seen and discussed with the team members I met that the centre is offering its learners a very positive and rewarding learning experience. This is further validated by the end of course learner evaluations I read."

Bursary Management

The organisation has successfully delivered the management of the training bursaries programme for the last five years and look forward to a further 12 months of managing this programme delivered in partnership with the NYA

The allocation target for bursary numbers was 47 places: The YFWM Training Centre allocated 98.

Training Centre Development

YFWM has responded rapidly over the past few years to changing opportunities and demand for youth worker training, at the same time as growing and developing our own support staff and developing the training capacity of partner organisations in local authority areas.

During this time of growth we have identified the need to update, upgrade and consolidate systems, content and communications to keep pace with changes in youth work roles and settings, the benefits and challenges of developing technology and the increasing scale of our relationships and responsibilities.

With a newly created part-time coordinator role to pull the wider 'training team' together and lead on review and development we will build on our collective experience and skills to address lessons learned and ensure our training provision is high quality, accessible and professionally relevant.

IQA Support

YFWM also provides IQA support to five other centres nationally, helping them embed strong standards for delivery and achievement outcomes for learners.

We have registered and provided IQA for 87 learners at level 2 and 8 at level 3



Mark Straw – Director, Community Praxis:

"I was introduced to Ruth at YFWM and immediately felt comfortable, I was impressed in the professional outlook and the robust systems and processes in place to manage the accreditation process.

YFWM are always available to respond to my accreditation needs, they are committed to sharing best practice and actioning areas discussed in meetings. It is clear that YFWM are an organisation with integrity and a collaborative approach.

I have been impressed at the ongoing feedback to my assessing & I have been actively encouraged to be involved in standardisation and other quality assurance meetings.

Partnerships & Capacity Building

We are pleased with our capacity building programme working both in Birmingham with BAYC and Worcestershire with Young Solutions.

The organisations are now able to deliver and assess level 2 youth work programmes and we will extend this to encompass level 3 in the future.

YFWM remains as the accredited centre providing registration, administration and quality assurance for all courses.

We are also really pleased to have been able to work with Phil Pusey at SCVYS on the roll out of an Introduction to Youth Work course that signed up members of the Strategic Youth leads Network who are now able to deliver at a local level. A great piece of cross regional collaboration.

The organisation has also begun to extend it's CPD offer through its Associate Trainers. Feedback from learners has been extremely positive and we are now looking to extend the range of training sessions and Associate pool

Professional Pathways

YFWM have been keen to ensure we are able to support clear pathways for Youth Work as a career.

The West Midlands now has only one HEI provider of the level 6 qualification in youth work, a significant decrease from where we were a few years ago. This reduction is also reflected nationally.

The NYA in response to this have proposed a reform to the qualification framework, which looks at the pathway spanning levels 2 - 6, with entry and exit points all the way through thus increasing the opportunities for qualification at all levels.

There has also been the development of the level 3 and 6 degree apprenticeships although we currently don't have any regional providers for these.

We are working with the NYA through engagement in the Education and standards Committee to look at how all of this can best be supported.



Bradley Edmunds:
Youth Manager
Pershore Riverside Centre:

"It has been brilliant for my own personal journey as a Youth worker working with YFWM, as well as Organisationally.

Ruth and Cal have supported my team and colleagues with training in the past, and most recently offering the opportunity for development and impact youth workers within Worcestershire.

Communicating regularly with Ruth and Cal has provided me with a wider, trusted, support network within what is a very small (and sometimes lonely) Youth work world within Worcestershire.

They have supported me by providing my TAQA (Assessment and quality assurance) training. Regular standardisations, meetings and the support network in general with wider colleagues has proved so helpful for my confidence as a trainer & assessor.

It is without a doubt that this network will then go on to inspire and impact many people heading for a career in youth work."

Local Youth Partnerships & Youth Offer

YFWM has been pleased to be able to work in partnership with the Young People's Foundation Trust. This has enabled us to broker support from YPFT to local areas that are looking to build their local youth partnership.

Areas include: Staffordshire, Solihull, Birmingham, Shropshire, Stoke and Dudley

Chris Murray - CEO,
Young People's
Foundation Trust

"This year has been a testament to the power of collaboration & shared vision in youth work. My most recent experiences of working in partnership with YFWM has been both inspiring and impactful. Together, we have fostered a dynamic and supportive environment for youth workers, informal education for & with young people across the region, delivering targeted opportunities for growth of the sector, amplifying youth voices and strengthening community engagement.

The partnership has proven to be a cornerstone of our joint working and also successful, combining local insight with regional strategy to ensure that youth services are responsive, inclusive, and forward-thinking. Through joint initiatives, training opportunities, and advocacy efforts, we envisage not only enhancing the quality of youth work but also building a resilient network of practitioners committed to empowering the next generation"

Strategic Youth Leads

The Strategic Youth Leads Network brings together key leads from across the region to look at a range of issues including; policy into practice, horizon scanning, sharing management and practice perspectives and local developments.

Feedback from members of the network has



been extremely positive with colleagues welcoming the opportunity to come together and share information, intelligence and learning.

The network now covers all 14 of the local authority areas across the region.

Phil Pusey – CEO, SCVYS

“SCVYS has always valued the regional connections facilitated by Youth Focus West Midlands. They enable more in-depth conversations to happen that can’t happen nationally because the national cohort size is larger and more diverse in terms of core business.

The network also facilitates quantifiable actions, for example taking the Introduction to Youth Work content from Staffordshire and adopting it for the region saving other local authority areas time and resources.

This is in addition to the general sharing of local news and updates which often inspire us here in Staffordshire to innovate and continuously improve.”

Youth Voice

YFWM has been pleased to continue to support Youth Voice across the region; bringing together key strategic youth voice leads to look at sharing information and practice from across the range of youth voice programmes in delivery.

Youth Parliament & Regional Youth Engagement

YFWM is committed to supporting an inclusive approach to youth voice across the region, and led by Aimee Sharpe provides both the opportunity for youth voice involvement and representation across all local authority areas and the platform for those authorities engaging in the UKYP programme.

YFWM supports the UKYP programme across both the West and East Midlands, building connections through digital engagement and regular online ‘catch-ups’ as well as a regional youth conference, supporting MYP elections, induction and their engagement in the national MYP conference.

Through this work two MYPs are elected to the Youth Select Committee, ensuring that regional voices contribute to national policy discussions. MYP’s from the Midlands achieved 100% turnout for the national House of Commons Debate strengthening the representation of young people’s views and aspirations across the regions.

Ongoing advocacy through regional networks and the NYA aims to increase government engagement and influence policy including working to address policy gaps in mental health, climate change, and poverty.

Midlands MYPs were actively engaged in the House of Commons debate and the Youth Select Committee and regionally through the young people’s Poverty Postcards campaign initiative they created a strengthened evidence base to bring the voice of young people directly into policy conversations.

Key stakeholders are brought together through Regional Youth Voice Network meetings to provide vital cross-sector collaboration through strong networks of local authorities and youth organisations.

This creates a platform to share resources and best practice, to review and respond to feedback and changing youth needs to promote youth engagement and to press for increased investment in youth services.

Despite challenges such as reduced funding, logistical barriers, and uneven representation, Youth Focus West Midlands has successfully sustained and advanced the UKYP program.

Through innovative strategies young people have been equipped with skills, platforms, and confidence to influence local and national policy.

Importantly, participation must be recognised in the wider context beyond the elected MYPs, ensuring broader inclusivity and valuing the contributions of all young people in the Midlands. The year has demonstrated that, even under constraints, youth voice remains a powerful driver of democratic engagement and policy change.

West Midlands Combined Authority Area

The WMCA Area has had three strategic youth voice groups over the last few years covering the West Midlands Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Violence Reduction Partnership and the WMCA itself. YFWM is now working with these key stakeholders to develop a more joined up approach to Youth Voice across the WMCA area.

Inspire

YFWM has also been working on a large international project on participatory democracy for the WMCA, being led by an Associate professor from the University of Birmingham, Juliette Foulkner has led YFWM's work to support young people's recruitment and safeguarding.

The project aims to work with young people to plan a legislative theatre process, supported by other creative methods, including the use of a digital participatory platform.

It provides an opportunity to help embed a more participatory culture in policymaking and strengthening inclusive participation of young people from diverse backgrounds.

With Dr Sonia Bussu leading the project, the University of Birmingham (UoB) partnered with Youth Focus West Midlands (YFWM) in January 2025 to deliver the Inspire project in the West Midlands.

Inspire is a project funded by the EU under Horizon Europe, and it involved 17 partners across Europe.

The aim is to strengthen democracy by developing inclusive approaches to participation that centre the lived experience of groups often marginalised in policymaking.

In the West Midlands, UoB and YFWM collaborated with the Young Combined Authority and institutional partners to recruit 15 young people (14-17 years old) from diverse backgrounds to influence policies on work experience and youth employment. The young people worked over several months with Legislative Theatre practitioners and UoB researchers to co-create a play representing their experience of navigating career choices and (lack of) support.

During two events, hosted with WMCA and Birmingham City Council, the young people co-created policy ideas to respond to the problems they experience, working with audiences of community members and policymakers.

The group produced a short film on the project which can be found on Youtube and all the policy proposals and commitments from policymakers can be found on the Inspire website.



Dr Sonia Bussu – Inspire Project Leader, University of Birmingham

“YFWM played a crucial role in development; they supported recruitment and provided safeguarding and pastoral care for the select 15 young people throughout the project, which in the West Midlands ends in September 2025. Their passion, commitment, professionalism and flexibility has been key to the success of this work. Ruth Rickman-Williams is also a member the Inspire Advisory Board and her expertise will continue to inform the wider project, which concludes in March 2027.”



Data / Impact Networks

YFWM was saddened to hear of the closure of the Centre for Youth Impact/ George Williams College in March 2025. YFWM has enjoyed a long and rich relationship with the centre for many years, with YFWM leading regional impact network meetings along with training and support for the sector more widely.

The national network of regional youth work units is now exploring with DCMS how this work and its legacy could be continued and maintained moving forwards.

Ruth Rickman-Williams
Chief Executive Officer

2024-25 Annual Financial Report (Abridged)

YOUTH FOCUS WEST MIDLANDS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total funds 2025 £	Total funds 2024 £
Income and endowments					
from:					
Charitable activities	4	90,584	47,667	138,251	117,355
Investments	5	2,926	-	2,926	1,743
Total		93,510	47,667	141,177	119,098
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities	6	81,336	64,477	145,813	88,430
Other	7	313	-	313	347
Total		81,649	64,477	146,126	88,777
Net gains on investments		-	-	-	-
Net (expenditure)/income	8	11,861	(16,810)	(4,949)	30,321
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-
Net (expenditure)/income before other gains/(losses)		11,861	(16,810)	(4,949)	30,321
Other gains and losses					
Net movement in funds		11,861	(16,810)	(4,949)	30,321
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward		122,446	84,237	206,683	176,362
Total funds carried forward		134,307	67,427	201,734	206,683

YOUTH FOCUS WEST MIDLANDS
BALANCE SHEET
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

Company No. 08114745	Notes	2025 £	2024 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	10	2,815	3,128
		<u>2,815</u>	<u>3,128</u>
Current assets			
Debtors	11	22,190	76,781
Cash at bank and in hand		199,683	127,748
		<u>221,873</u>	<u>204,529</u>
Creditors: Amount falling due within one year	12	(22,954)	(974)
Net current assets		<u>198,919</u>	<u>203,555</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		<u>201,734</u>	<u>206,683</u>
Net assets excluding pension asset or liability		<u>201,734</u>	<u>206,683</u>
Total net assets		<u><u>201,734</u></u>	<u><u>206,683</u></u>
The funds of the charity			
Restricted funds	13		
Restricted income funds		67,427	84,237
		<u>67,427</u>	<u>84,237</u>
Unrestricted funds	13		
General funds		134,307	122,446
		<u>134,307</u>	<u>122,446</u>
Reserves	13		
Total funds		<u><u>201,734</u></u>	<u><u>206,683</u></u>

These accounts have been prepared by KC Accountancy Services in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

For the year ended 31 March 2025 the company was entitled to exemption under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts.

Approved by the board on 23rd September 2025

And signed on its behalf by:

P. Finnemore

Trustee

23rd September 2025

STAFF / WORKSTREAM LEADS:

Ruth Rickman-Williams
Chief Executive Officer
ruth@yfwm.org.uk

Emma Boundford
Business Support Officer
emmab@yfwm.org.uk

Emma Keenan
Training & Finance Administrator
emma@yfwm.org.uk

Cal Williams
Training Centre Coordinator
cal@yfwm.org.uk

Aimee Sharpe
Youth Voice Network
aimee@yfwm.org.uk

TRUSTEES:

Paul Finnemore

Kerry Barnes

Amanda Groves

John Boagey

Simon Gillings

ASSOCIATES:

Ed Wright
Lead Trainer/Assessor

Bradley Edmunds
Lead Trainer/Assessor

REGISTERED OFFICE:

32 Ombersley Street West
Droitwich
WR9 8QZ

www.yfwm.org.uk



Charity# 1148687

Company# 8114745