User Guide for Socio-emotional Skill Measures and Manuals

A guide and measures to accompany the Outcomes for Young People Framework 2.1

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THE CENTRE FOR YOUTH IMPACT

Department for Digital, Culture Media & Sport

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 some approaches to evaluation can disrupt or undermine trust, respect and enjoyment. 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 2.1 which provides a common, evidence-informed, foundation for evaluating youth provision.

- the first approach that, along with changes in outcomes, measures quality (i.e., quality of staff practices) and engagement as drivers of long-term skill change 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 2.1** – This section introduces you to the theory of socio-emotional skill growth as outcomes for youth provision behind the Framework for Young People 2.1.

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.

Understanding Outcomes Framework 2.1

Introducing the Framework of Outcomes for Young People 2.1

The user guide is based on the Outcomes Framework 2.1, which sets out how youth provision contributes to improvements in outcomes for young people.

The Outcomes Framework 2.1 includes a theory of change that details 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 interaction, where staff and young people meet during provision, are likely to lead to higher levels of youth engagement during each session or interaction.

- 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. This affects how young people engage with youth provision.

- Over time and multiple interactions, the combination of high-quality staff practices and young people's engagement at the point of interaction promotes the growth of socio-emotional skills.

- With sufficient participation in, and intensity of exposure to, high-quality settings, the effects of social and 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: Theory of Change
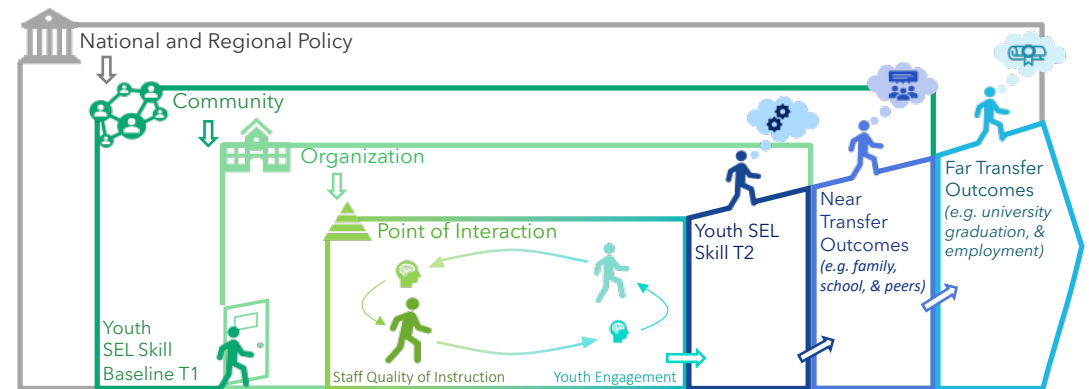
Read more about the theory of change here

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 2.1 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 social and emotional learning frameworks, and

- They describe, in plain language, mental and behavioural skills that are both developed during provision and transferred beyond provision.
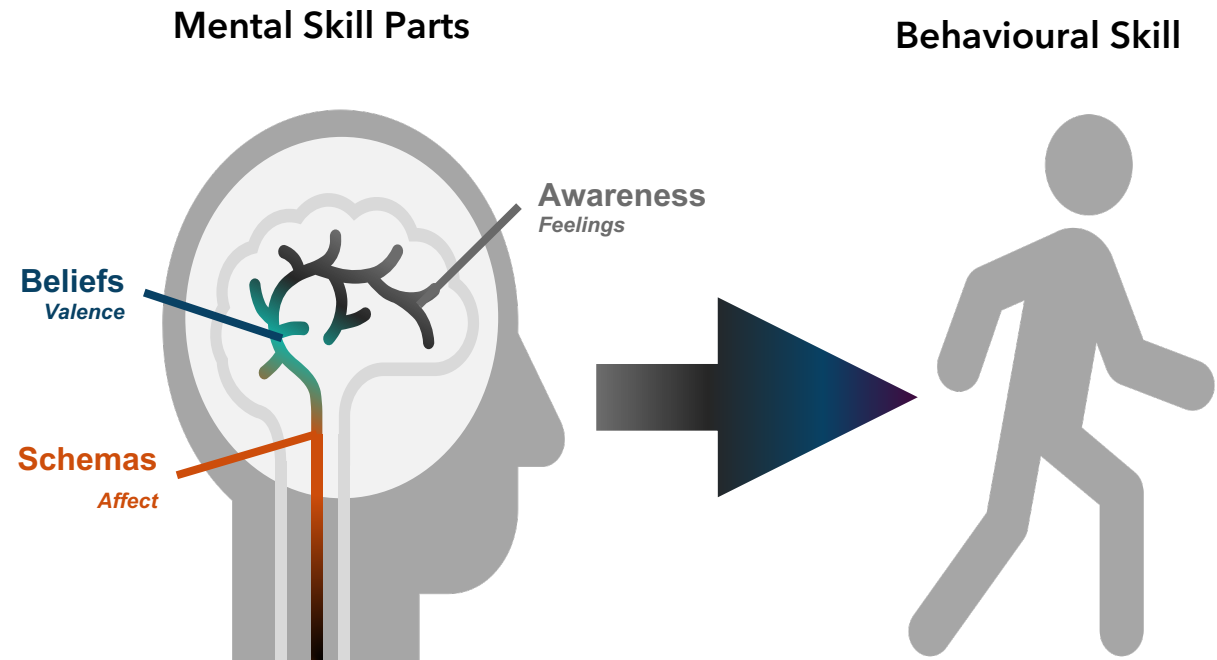
These six domains include mental and behavioural skills as well as sets of interrelated 'staff practices' (that is, how practitioners relate to young people and shape the quality of provision) that support the development of these skills. You can read more about the six social and emotional skill domains here.

Some of the measures in this suite refer to the measurement of socio-emotional skills within these six domains (ARYB, YRSS and PQA).

Socio-Emotional Domain	Description
Emotion Management	Abilities to be aware of and constructively handle both positive and challenging emotions.
Empathy	Abilities to relate to others with acceptance, understanding, and sensitivity to their diverse perspectives and experiences.
Initiative	Abilities to take action, sustain motivation, and persevere through challenge toward an identified goal.
Problem-Solving	Abilities to plan, strategise, and implement complex tasks.
Responsibility	Abilities to reliably meet commitments and fulfil obligations of challenging roles.
Teamwork	Abilities to collaborate and coordinate action with others.

The Neuroperson

- Within all the domains of socio-emotional skills sits the model of the neuroperson.

- This describes the most fundamental parts of socio-emotional skills comprised of three types of mental skills – schemas, beliefs and awareness.

- These skills produce the individual's behavioural skills in the domains.

- Schemas are non-verbal knowledge/memories with affective or emotional charge which 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 with valences which have been developed through life course experiences. These also account for the impact a person's context and prior experiences have on their behaviour and change more quickly.

- Awareness of thoughts and feelings in the moment is central in opening up moments of choice for the young person (and adult) to choose to think, feel or behave differently.

- 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 tool to help you do that is the ARY.

Mental Skill Parts

Behavioural Skill

Awareness
Feelings

Beliefs
Valence

Schemas
Affect

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 all the measures purposes and uses

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.

1. 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	
Adult Rating of Youth Behaviour (ARYB)*	Young people's optimal socio-emotional skills within the supportive environment of your provision.	The ARYB asks staff to rate young people's socio-emotional skills based on behaviour displayed within the environment of the youth provision settings, as observed during several provision sessions. This is a good indicator of how young people are likely to 'perform' 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.
Youth Report of Socio-Emotional Skills (YRSS)*	Young people's socio-emotional skills in their lives outside of your provision (e.g., with their family, in schools, and in employment).	The YRSS is a socio-emotional skill self-report questionnaire 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.
Adult Rating of Youth (ARY)	Young people' optimal socio-emotional behavioral skills based on behaviors displayed during program activities.	The ARY asks staff to rate young people's optimal socio-emotional behavioral skills, aligned to the neuroperson model. ARY scores are good indicators of how young people are likely to perform in settings where they are well supported. It is focused especially on the functioning of young people's schemas and awareness .The ARY can be used as a pre-test for program planning purposes and, also, as a post-test for assessing socio-emotional skill growth.
Programme Quality Assessment (PQA)	The quality of your provision based on observable staff behaviour that supports youth engagement and development.	The PQA is a quality framework used for observing and scoring the quality of practice. It involves an assessment team of staff in youth organisations and/or trained external assessors observing and rating provision against a detailed list of staff behaviours that promote socio-emotional skill growth as part of an assess-plan-improve cycle.
Staff Practices Intervention (SPI)	The quality of your provision based on observable teacher practices that create an environment that encourages young people's socio-emotional skill growth.	The SPI is an observational rating instrument that was designed to assess the quality of teacher practices in programming. Each of the 36 items on the SPI describes the practices teachers implement to create an environment that encourages student socio-emotional skill growth. The SPI was developed through collaborative efforts among the researchers at QTurn and the practitioners in the Flint, MI area.
Youth Engagement Survey (YES)*	Young people's mental engagement during your provision	The YES is a short self-report questionnaire that asks young people to rate 10 statements about 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 provision is expected to promote growth in socio-emotional skills. The YES can be completed regularly by young people at the end of a provision session and questionnaires can be completed anonymously.

Measures with a * are linked to our data portal allowing you to enter, access and visualize individual and organizational data.

Measures Across the Theory of Change
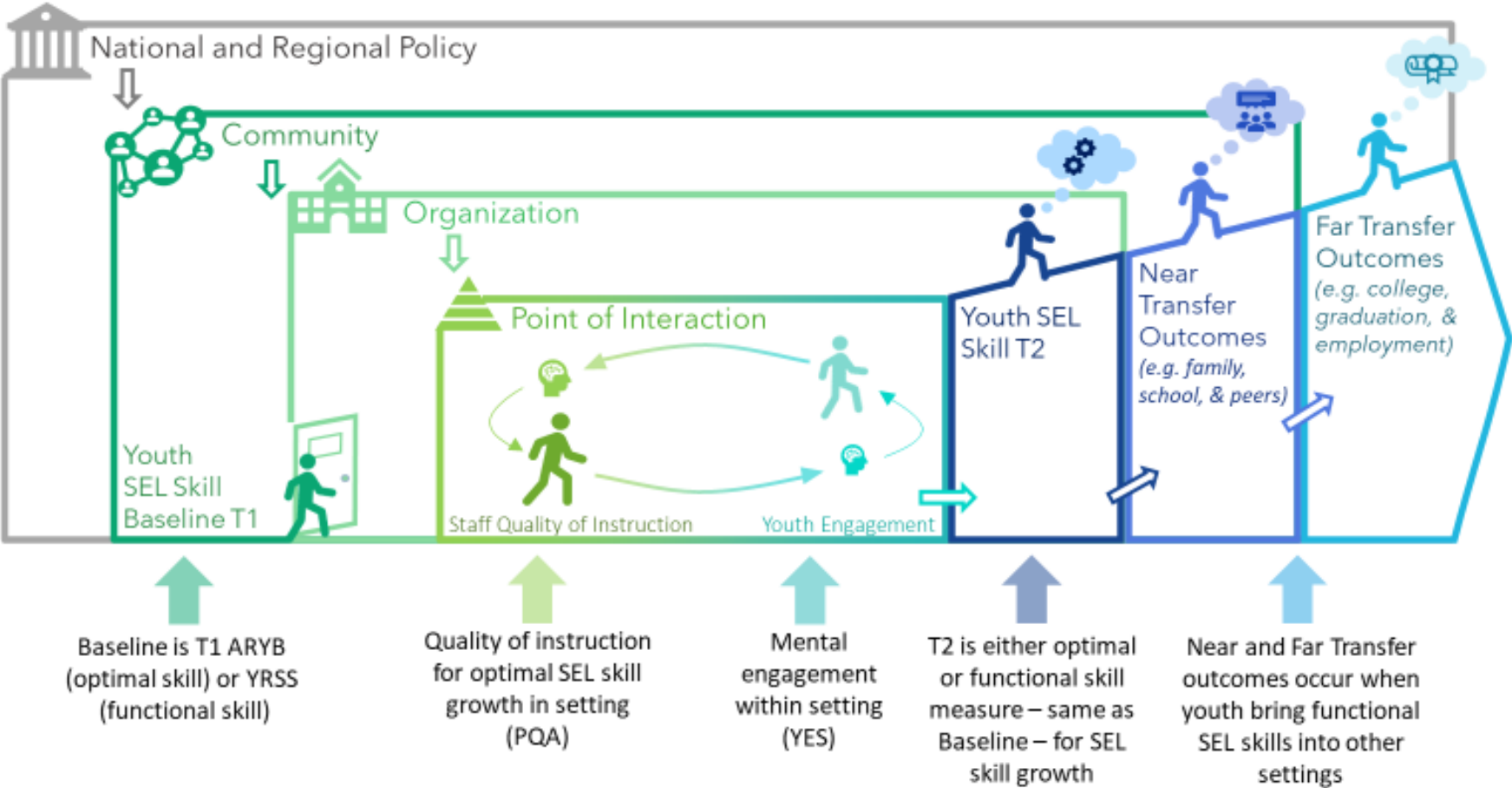
Overview of measures

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.

	Adult Rating of Yth Behaviour (ARYB)	Youth Report of SE Skills (YRSS)	Adult Rating of Youth (ARY)	Prgm Quality Assessment (PQA)	Staff Practices Instrument (SPI)	Youth Engmt Survey (YES)
How it it aligned to the Outcomes Framework 2.1						
Six Domains of Skill	✓	✓		✓		✓
Neuroperson Parts of Skill			✓		✓	✓
What does it measure?						
Young people's engagement with provision						✓
Quality of provision				✓	✓	
Socio-emotional skills in six domains (optimal)	✓		✓			
Socio-emotional skills in six domains (functional)		✓				
What type of measure is it?						
Self-report by youth		✓				✓
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 13). 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.

- 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.

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.

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

Measure

Use the YES

Use the PQA for six skill domains

Use the SPI for neuroperson parts of skill

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 interaction 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 behavioural skill growth when *working with us in our setting*.

Measure

Use the ARYB for six skill domains

Use ARY for neuroperson skills

- We want to understand young people's socio-emotional skills before they engage with our provision (i.e. at baseline)
- We want to understand young people's socio-emotional skills development in their lives outside of the youth setting over time (medium to long-term).

- 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 behavioural skill *growth in their lives outside of the youth provision setting*.

Use the YRSS

Measurement Plan

Use one or more measures?

Outcomes Framework 2.1 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 (PQA, SPI) , young people's engagement with provision (YES) and socio-emotional development (ARYB, YRSS, ARYB, ARY). Data gathered via different measures, together help to build an overall picture of what is happening. For example:

- You may want to compare your PQA 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 if you would like support: hello@youthimpact.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.

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

Baseline

Follow-up

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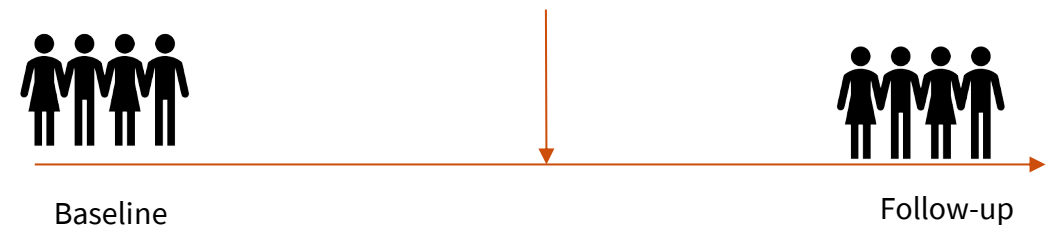
Not sure where to start?

We recommend…

Focusing on the point of interaction – by measuring the quality of your provision (PQA, SPI) 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

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

- The ARYB and ARY 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 YRSS is designed to assess *functional* mental and behavioural socio-motional 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* 3 months although change in functional social and emotional 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 over time, either in the short-term through ARYB or ARY or long-term through YRSS.

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 our strengths in data!

- The work you already do to evaluate your provision.

The Asking Good Questions framework can help you think through these and other questions (see page 19). The Centre's Resource Hub has further guides and tools to help you think your measurement plan through.

Engage people

Leadership

Leaders at all levels need to demonstrate a commitment to 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.

Asking good questions
A framework for learning, evaluation and continuous improvement

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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.

For further information or support please contact us at:

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