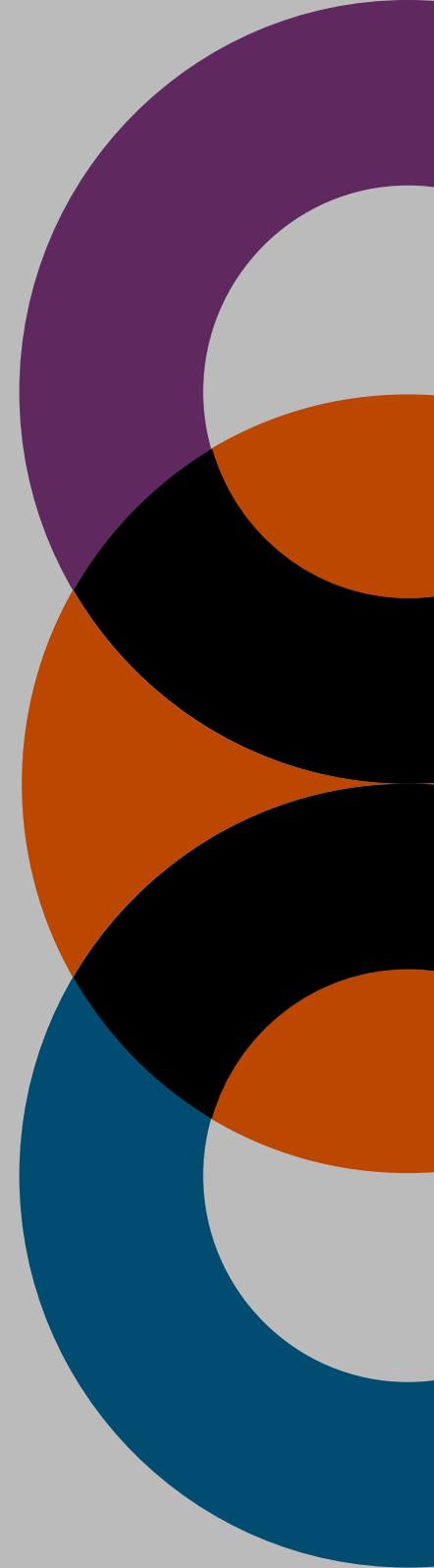# A Framework of Outcomes for Young People 2.0

**Revisiting and revising the Catalyst
Framework of Outcomes 2012**

Bethia McNeil, Gill Millar and Sara Fernandez
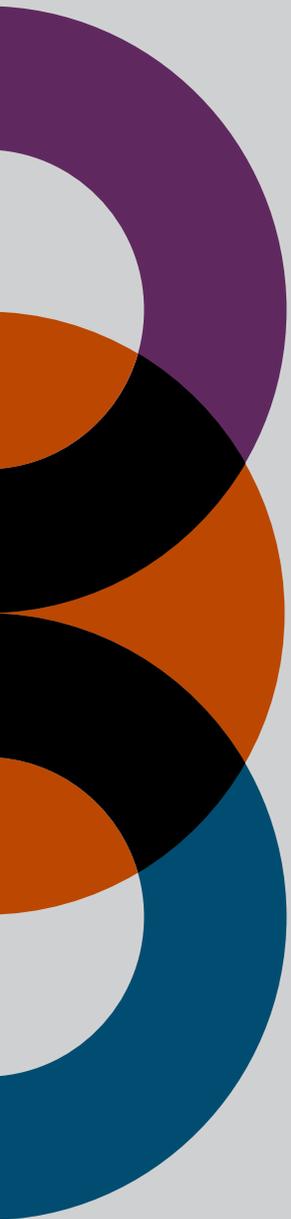
November 2019

THE CENTRE
FOR YOUTH
IMPACT

Local
Government
Association

Contents

Acknowledgements

Section 1:
Introduction

Background and context

In the summer of 2018, the Local Government Association (LGA) commissioned the Centre for Youth Impact to produce an outcomes framework to help organisations and agencies across the youth sector to develop and agree mutual aims to support young people in their local areas. The work was commissioned in response to the LGA's consultations that fed into its vision statement, Bright Futures: our vision for youth services, published at the end of 2017. *Bright Futures* notes:

> "A clear outcomes framework can help to effectively monitor the impact of a service at key milestones to spot where things aren't working and provide opportunities to make changes where needed. It can also support evidence of collective impact across the system."

The LGA's consultation process highlighted the value of a common outcomes framework for provision for young people. This is to inform both commissioning and provision through local authorities and their partners, and to ensure that their work with young people is focused on long-term positive change in their lives. Bright Futures encourages local authorities and their partners to use a clear and common outcomes framework as the basis for developing, monitoring, and evaluating youth provision in their areas. The LGA subsequently commissioned the Centre for Youth Impact to develop this framework.

This document is far from the first attempt to produce a framework of outcomes for young people (and it probably won't be the last!). Multiple such frameworks exist, many relating to a specific field of practice or area of work with young people. Most frameworks take a broadly similar approach, but differ slightly in the language used, the importance attached to different outcome areas, and the extent to which they draw from specific bodies of research.

Existing frameworks also differ in their origins and intent: some are produced by funders or commissioners seeking to standardise approaches to delivery and monitoring; others by providers hoping to better communicate about and advocate for their particular approach or area of work. This proliferation of frameworks is unhelpful.

Providers are left unclear about which framework to use or follow, and some even end up producing their own in frustration. Funders and commissioners are nervous about recommending one framework over another, and so avoid being definitive, or once again, produce their own. Individual providers may end up working to multiple, slightly overlapping frameworks.

Along the way, clarity over terminology gets eroded and language becomes muddled.

Our starting point for developing this framework was The Catalyst Framework of Outcomes for Young People, produced in 2012. It was developed by the Young Foundation as one element of the work programme of the DfE-funded Catalyst Consortium[1].

The Catalyst Framework took as its starting point the emerging evidence that social and emotional skills play a key part in young people's ability to make successful transitions to adulthood and achieve positive life outcomes including educational attainment, employment, and good health. It was an attempt to make clear connections between what are often considered to be the short-term or 'soft' outcomes of provision for young people and the longer-term impacts.

---

[1] Catalyst was a consortium of four organisations (led by the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services, working with the Young Foundation, the National Youth Agency and Social Enterprise UK) that worked with the Department for Education (DfE) as the strategic partner for young people, as part of the Department's wider transition programme for the sector. Catalyst worked to deliver three key objectives over the two-year period 2011-13: to strengthen the youth sector market, equip the sector to work in partnership with Government, and coordinate a skills development strategy for the youth sector's workforce.

The seven 'clusters of capabilities' (see Figure 1, below) identified in the Catalyst framework provided a common language for work with young people to help them build their capacity and resilience. The framework was based on an extensive review of research and was applied across a wide range of provision for young people in informal and non-formal settings, as well as targeted support for young people facing particular challenges.

Managing feelings

- Reviewing,
- Self-awareness
- Self-regulating
- Self-accepting

Communication

- Explaining
- Expressing
- Presenting
- Listening
- Questioning
- Using different ways of communicating

Confidence & agency

- Self-reliance
- Self-esteem
- Self-efficacy
- Self-belief
- Ability to shape your own life and the world around you

Resilience & determination

- Self-disciplined
- Self-management
- Concentrating
- Having a sense of purpose
- Persistent
- Self-controlled

Creativity

- Imagining alternative ways of doing things
- Applying learning in new contexts
- Enterprising
- Innovating
- Remaining open to new ideas

Relationships & leadership

- Motivating others
- Valuing and contributing to team-working
- Negotiating
- Establishing positive relationships
- Managing conflict
- Empathising

Planning & problem solving

- Navigating resources
- Organising
- Setting and achieving goals
- Decision-making
- Researching
- Analysing
- Critical thinking
- Questioning & challenging
- Evaluating risks
- Reliability

The framework was well-received by the youth sector initially, and many practitioners started to use it as the basis for defining and measuring the outcomes they hoped to achieve with young people, assisted by the matrix of measurement tools included with the framework.

However, the Catalyst Framework ultimately failed to make as great an impact on the sector as had been hoped, emerging as it did into an environment of severe reductions in resources available for youth work and other forms of developmental work with young people[2]. As well as reducing the actual offer available to young people, budget reductions led to a significant decline in leadership roles within the youth sector, both locally and nationally. As a result, the Catalyst Framework lacked advocates in senior roles in local authorities and national organisations, and has lost traction in the last five years.

Despite this, contributors to the LGA *Bright Futures* consultation praised the work that was done on the Catalyst Framework and its relevance to their work with young people. As such, when the LGA designed the specification for work on an updated framework of outcomes, contributors encouraged a revision of the Catalyst Framework as an option. The Centre for Youth Impact has embraced this as a positive evolution for the original Catalyst Framework, and a new opportunity to revisit and update the thinking that underpinned previous work.

In undertaking this new piece of work, the Centre has listened to practitioners, commissioners and managers from across the youth sector who have welcomed the opportunity to revise and refresh the Catalyst Framework. Those who are familiar with that Framework recognise that it continues to provide a useful exploration of the key skills that help young people make successful transitions and respond to challenges along the way, and – with a research-informed update - it has the potential to underpin commissioning and provision of services for young people.

[2] All Party Parliamentary Group Report on Youth Work, 2019

Methodology

This document is the result of two phases of work:

1 → an **initial scoping phase**, including desk research and widespread consultation with practitioners, commissioners and elected members,

2 → and a second phase to **test the proposed framework in action**. This document has been significantly refined and updated in response to our learning along the way. The work was undertaken by the Centre's network of regional impact leads, and its central team.

Accompanying this document is a technical report, which goes much deeper into the research and theory that underpins the framework. A 'user guide', developed during the second phase of the project, will be published in late 2019.

The purpose of the Outcomes Framework

This revised Framework is for everyone working with and for young people. It is particularly designed for practitioners – to support their thinking about planning, designing, delivering, and evaluating their provision for young people – and commissioners – to support their local mapping, planning, commissioning, monitoring, and evaluation activity. It is intended to be used collectively and collaboratively: the primary goal is to connect and strengthen provision for young people at a local level, rather than drive the agenda of any single organisation acting alone.

The framework is focused specifically on outcomes for young people, rather than the provision in which they engage/participate. It starts with a focus on young people's development, considering the skills and capabilities that research suggests support positive and healthy development through adolescence and into adulthood. The framework also seeks to go further, to consider the conditions and experiences through which young people develop these skills, and in which they grow and thrive.

It is informed by key principles that are common to youth work and non-formal education, including:

- **Taking a holistic, young person-centred approach: 'meeting young people where they are at'**
- **Building on young people's positive assets rather than 'solving problems'**
- **Engaging young people as active partners in their learning and development**

The revised framework aims to:

Understand and share current research findings about young people's development and key skills that help them to achieve positive outcomes in different areas of their lives	Bring clarity to debates about outcomes for young people through a focus on 'measurability' (the extent to which change in a specific construct can be meaningfully captured) and 'malleability' (the extent to which a specific construct can be changed through engagement in youth provision)	Enable delivery organisations and practitioners to improve and adapt the conditions in which young people can develop key skills	Use common language and models, anchored in science, that can be easily understood by practitioners, commissioners and young people	Provide a framework that can be used by local and national commissioners for collaborative, high quality commissioning	Encourage delivery organisations to reflect on, and plan for, how they continuously improve the quality of their provision to build skills and promote longer-term positive impact.

In addition to identifying key 'outcome domains' that make a positive contribution to young people's development and transition to adulthood, the framework should assist practitioners, managers and commissioners to clarify the 'theory of change' underpinning their provision, identify and use appropriate forms of evaluation to measure the impact of their work for young people.

The scope of the Outcomes Framework

This framework will focus on young people aged 13-19 (or up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities). The skill domains in this Framework support outcomes for individuals and groups, rather than through any specific 'intervention'.

Much of the original impetus to create an outcomes framework for young people emerged from debates about youth work and the challenges of evidencing the impact of informal learning on young people's lives. Youth work with young people where they choose to engage in informal settings providing opportunities for non-formal learning, using activities and conversation as tools for learning remains central to the thinking that underpins this Framework, and we believe that the Framework will help youth work practitioners to design, explain, evaluate, and improve their offer to young people.

The Framework is relevant across a wider field, however, and we will refer to 'provision for young people' to mean provision to support young people that is not part of the formal education curriculum, but is nevertheless creating educational opportunities for and with young people and developing their skills, awareness, and personal and social capabilities in non-formal and informal settings.

> The Framework is relevant to open access work with young people in communities, youth voice and social action projects, and to targeted work with young people experiencing a wide range of needs and challenges. This includes both one-to-one and group- based approaches. As it focuses on the skills and knowledge that support young people to make successful transitions to adulthood, it will be relevant to programmes that support young people at key transitions such as leaving care and moving from education to employment.

The Framework is intended to be useful for commissioners in local authorities and elsewhere, and for practitioners and organisations directly working with young people. This feedback has directly informed our work on developing the outcomes framework.

Contributors to the consultation highlighted features that they felt were important in an outcomes framework, including:

- ✓ **Clear presentation of the outcomes that are most important for young people**

- ✓ **Applicability to a range of forms of work with young people, including open-access youth work in particular**

- ✓ **Able to unite agencies, providers, and professionals around shared goals for young people**

- ✓ **Helpful to commissioners in moving away from 'service-based' commissioning towards a greater focus on impact**

- ✓ **Simple and easy to use, with language that everyone can understand**

- ✓ **Providing guidance on ways of measuring the achievement of positive outcomes**

- ✓ **Sustainable, having enduring relevance, and avoiding being tied to specific political viewpoints or policy initiatives.**

Section 2:
Putting the Outcomes Framework in practice

There are limits to what can be achieved through an outcomes framework on its own. Outcomes frameworks, theories of change, evaluation designs, and 'on the ground' practice are inextricably interwoven. By definition, an outcomes framework tends to focus on 'the result': **an outcome is a consequence of something that happens as a result of something else.**

A traditional outcomes framework does not usually focus on the methods or process followed to achieve or contribute to the outcome, whether positive or negative. Equally, an outcomes framework (particularly one that takes a deliberately broad approach) usually says little about 'need' or demand.

A framework cannot, by itself, be used to evidence or prove the effectiveness of a single approach, for example, youth work, or residential experiences. Organisations will need to explain to themselves and others, preferably through a theory of change, how their methodology is intended to lead or contribute

to young people achieving particular outcomes, and why this is something that young people both need and want.

Therefore, a theory of change sits usefully alongside an outcomes framework to frame the processes involved. Further evaluation will also be needed to explore the extent to which provision then achieves its aims with and for young people.

We found the diagram on the following page[3] helpful in understanding how an outcomes framework supports a broad perspective on evaluation, as it underpins all the elements of the evaluation approach.

In this model, an outcomes framework is integrated into the evaluation framework. It is an important backdrop to considering need and demand, and should inform programme design – that is, the activities that are offered, and the active ingredients (or 'mechanisms') that are likely to be significant in affecting change.

There should be a close relationship between how a youth organisation thinks about *outcomes for young people* and how it thinks about *its own role* (the quality of setting and relationship) in contributing to those outcomes.

An outcomes framework can most clearly help in identifying outcomes of value, and their relationship to one another. This can help to plan when and where to evaluate. An outcomes framework can also support the design of large scale and robust impact and economic evaluations, which are intended to measure the impact of provision on specific outcomes that are identified in advance.

---

[3] Adapted from the American Evaluation Association Needs Assessment Topical Interest Group blog, Hamann, S (18 June 2019)

How an outcomes framework supports a broad perspective on evaluation

Theory of Change →	Context	Mechanisms of change	Activities	Quality	Short-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes	Sustained impact
Evaluation Framework →	• Needs assessment	• Evaluation of program design theory • Evaluability assessment		• Evaluation of implementation and process • Observation of quality • Performance monitoring	• Evaluation of early and intermediate outcomes	• Impact evaluation	• Economic evaluation • Longitudinal research

We believe that it is more beneficial and meaningful for youth organisations to start from the left-hand side of this model, and for their funders and commissioners to support this. The left-hand side of this model focuses on context and setting – the needs, interests and experiences that young people bring, the relationships that practitioners develop with young people, and the engagement of those young people in provision. All of these factors can be influenced and mediated by youth organisations, unlike longer-term impact and cost savings, which cannot.

Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that an organisation that can demonstrate the efficacy of its approach in enabling young people to achieve key skills and outcomes will be successful in gaining funding for its work. Neither should this be a key driver in an organisation's decision to explore and reflect on the quality and impact of its work.

Whilst we hope that a range of funding bodies and local authority commissioners will use this framework to inform the way they make decisions about resourcing, we know that other factors will also affect those decisions.

However, we strongly believe that organisations that embed meaningful approaches to evaluation and learning at the heart of their culture, and strive to gather a rich body of evidence of how their approach supports young people's development, are much better placed to enable young people to achieve positive change in their lives and the communities in which they live.

We recommend that providers and commissioners embed the Outcomes Framework in practice through:

- Using it to identify beneficial outcomes for young people that can be achieved or enhanced through youth work and non-formal learning provision;

- Developing a theory of change that sets out the relationships between outcomes, mechanisms of change and context;

- Adopting an approach to evaluation that explores these relationships; and

- Regularly reviewing and reflecting on insights that are emerging through the evaluation approach, to inform adaptation and improvement.

Section 3:
A Framework of Outcomes 2.0

Capabilities vs skills

The original Catalyst Framework focused on social and emotional capabilities: the ability to function in important ways, to create valuable outcomes, and to navigate choices and challenges.

> In Framework 2.0, we use the term *skill* as practically synonymous with *capability*. Rather than trying to distinguish between abilities, capabilities, capacities, competencies, and skills – all of which can be viewed as referring to the same set of psychological and behavioural processes – we focus on what appear to be a more fundamental set of distinctions relevant to understanding, promoting, and measuring social and emotional skills.

The quality of staff practices and settings

The experiences of young people in youth provision were not taken into account in the Catalyst Framework. This was mainly a reflection of policy and practice context at that time, which had an overwhelming focus on young people's outcomes over process or the quality of practice. As such, the original Framework was focused on the articulation and measurement of outcomes for young people, instead of understanding the practices of practitioners, the setting and

experiences that can best support the development of young people, and how. By including a focus on staff practices, settings, and quality in this revised Framework, we can begin to make links more directly between provision and social and emotional skill development.

Further insight into the settings, practices, and experiences that can create the conditions for development in skills can support youth organisations to design provision for impact[4]. Additionally, it can enable practitioners to focus more on creating high quality engagement rather than focusing on more the transactional and problematic measurement of individual skills amongst individual young people.

It is important to recognise that most experiences in youth work and provision for young people are rooted in relationships (with practitioners or peers), but there are also other aspects of the experience that matter. The work of the Youth Investment Fund on mechanisms of change – or young people's 'in the moment' experiences - provides three different areas of focus, which should inform the focus of evaluation:

---

[4] See Appendix 1: Standards for Social and Emotional Learning Practice and Practice Indicators in Six Social and Emotional Learning Domains, taken from *Deconstructing Social Emotional Learning Practice: A Thought Leader Conversation* (2015) David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality

1 Environment and relationships: young people trust and feel trusted; young people feel respected; young people don't feel judged or punished; young people feel safe and secure.

2 Nature and delivery of activity: young people feel positively challenged, young people feel a sense of enjoyment (including fun and a deeper satisfaction); young people feel a sense of purpose, achievement and contribution.

3 Empowerment and community: young people are empowered to create change in their lives and in the world around them; young people feel included and a greater sense of connection with their community.

The three elements of the Framework of Outcomes 2.0

We wanted to make the model at the heart of Framework 2.0 more concise, align it better with the latest research, and clarify the language it uses. Most importantly, a revised framework needs to focus on the social and emotional skills and behaviours that matter most to young people, and how they are supported and motivated to intentionally master them. **Following this, Framework of Outcomes 2.0 consists of three elements:**

1

A set of **Outcome Domains** that describe key social and emotional learning skills

2

A **Theory of Change** that describes the relationship between social and emotional learning skills, how they are experienced and developed in youth settings, how they are 'transferred' into other areas of young people's lives, and the features of provision and staff practices that support their growth

3

Guidance for Applied Measurement that describes how to use the outcome domains and theory of change to measure and evaluate, further the continuous improvement process, and produce clear accounts of the impact of youth provision in the lives of young people.

1

Element one:
Outcome domains

The term 'outcome' is widely, and often loosely, used in discussions about impact and evaluation. We like the definition proposed by Eccles and Gootman (2002:67): the term outcome should be understood not as "final outcomes per se but rather indicators of progress along a successful life path". Critically, this helps us to understand that 'outcomes' include both social and emotional learning skills themselves, as well as the positive life events that they are associated with, such as gaining qualifications, sustaining fulfilling employment, positive relationships with family and friends, and good health and wellbeing.

Our approach to defining outcome domains is shaped by the following:

- The University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (CCSR) model, which highlights how young people develop capabilities through an action and reflection cycle as they engage in different experiences;

- The Multilevel Person-in-Context: Neuroperson framework developed by Smith and Peck (2019), which focuses on how mental skills support young people to become more behaviourally skilled; and

- The six clusters of social and emotional skills that are supported by a range of research and are linked to the original 'clusters of capability' within the Catalyst Framework.

We deliberately do not refer to the content of the framework as 'outcomes'– instead they are domains of practice. The domains are intended to offer young people intentional opportunities to develop and practice specific skills. Measurement efforts should then focus both on the opportunities offered to young people, and the development of skills and behaviours amongst young people. Skills and behaviours in particular will develop and grow over different 'arcs of developmental time'[5], further adding weight to the importance of consistently measuring and observing the quality of provision.

Reviewing international work on social and emotional learning highlights the importance of a wide range of psychological and behavioural skills: from specific processes that happen in the brain in milliseconds, to patterns of behaviour that develop over minutes, days and months. There have been many attempts to organise this vast array of skills into frameworks. Research in 2017 found over 100 different, but slightly overlapping, social and emotional learning frameworks[6]. The sheer number of frameworks, and use of similar (but not exactly the same) terms, is confusing and makes it difficult put any one framework into practice.

The CCSR model for the development of social and emotional learning skills

In developing the Framework of Outcomes 2.0, we looked at a number of social and emotional learning frameworks. We found the recent youth development framework from work led by the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (CCSR), presented below, very helpful. This framework reviews the way in which children and young people develop into adulthood. It is important to note that this is not a

---

[5] Larson et al (2006)

[6] Berg et al (2017) American Institutes for Research

UChicago Framework for what young people need to make a successful transition to adulthood

Developmental experiences can happen in all settings: — Home — ⌂ — School — 🏫 — Organised activities — 👥

Developmental experiences Require action and reflection

Action | **Reflection**

- Contribute
- Practice
- Choose
- Tinker
- Encounter
- Integrate
- Envision
- Connect
- Evaluate
- Describe

Foundational components

Over time, through developmental experiences, children build four foundational components

Self-regulation includes awareness of oneself and one's surroundings, and managing one's attention, emotions, and behaviours in goal-directed ways

Knowledge is sets of facts, information, or understanding about self, others, and the world. Skills are the learned ability to carry out a task with intended results or goals, and can be either general or domain-specific.

Mindsets are beliefs and attitudes about oneself, the world, and the interaction between the two. They are the lenses we use to process everyday experience.

Values are enduring, often culturally-defined beliefs about what is good or bad and what one thinks important in life. Values serve as broad guidelines for living and provide orientation for one's desired future.

The foundational components underlie three 'key factors' to success

Source: Nagaoka, J et al (2015) *Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework*

Key factors

Being successful means:

having the **Agency** to make active choices about one's life path

possessing the **Competencies** to adapt to the demands of different contexts,

and incorporating different aspects of oneself into an **Integrated Identity**.

Key factors

Foundational components

Developmental experiences

Agency
Self-regulation
Values — Action — Reflection — Knowledge
Integrated Identity
Mindsets
Competencies
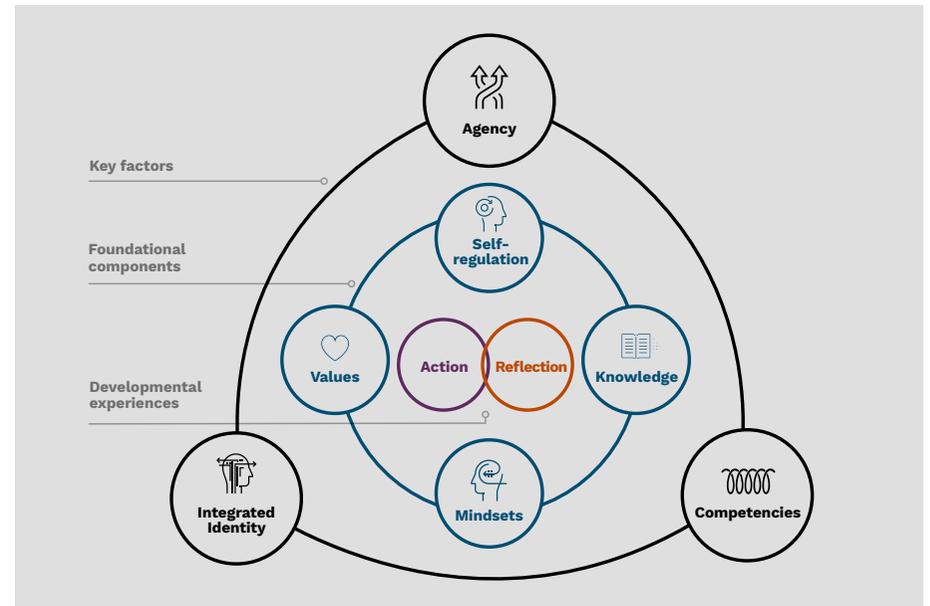
framework about youth work, or any particular provision for young people. Instead, it reviews information arising from different disciplines, including theories of learning, neuroscience and child development. Insights from the CCSR research are applicable across a variety of settings, including home, school, and informal/non-formal learning activities.
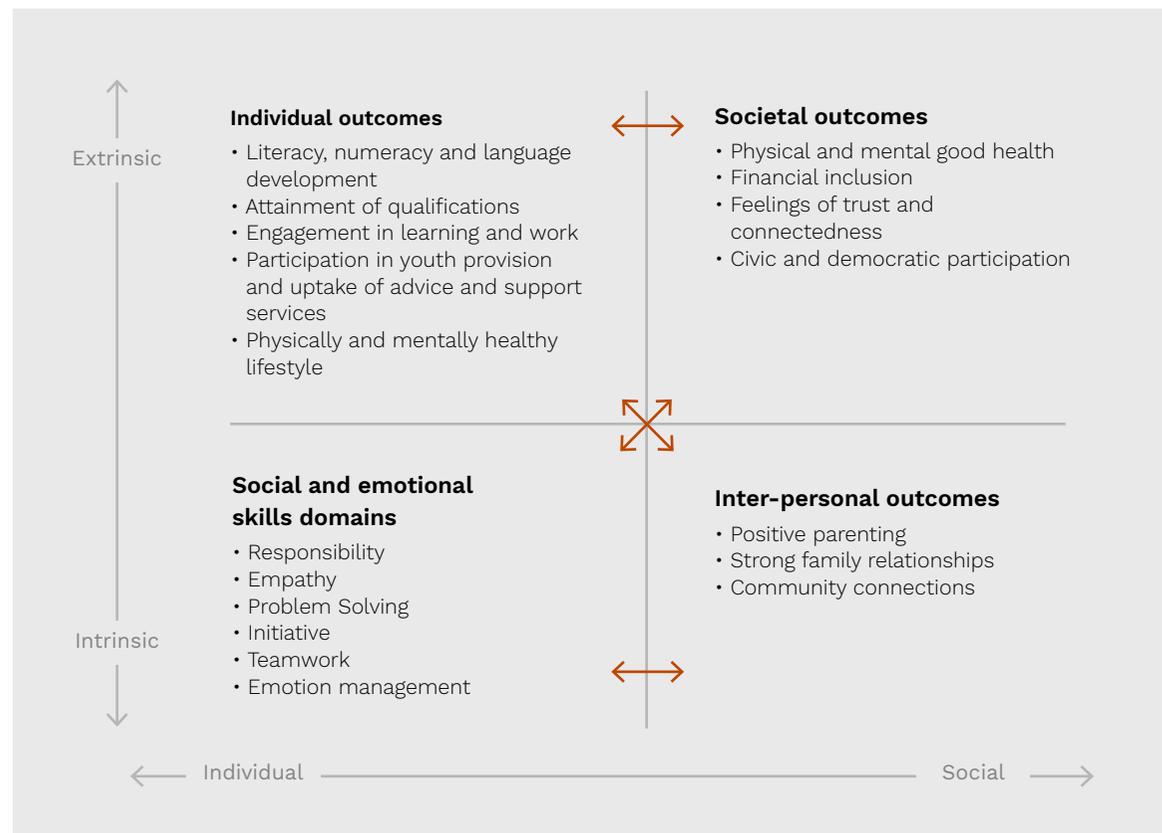
The CCSR model presents a detailed understanding of how different factors interact to support young people's development, including their interaction with the world around them. The CCSR model suggests a way forward in refining the Catalyst Framework, including a continued focus on building young people's skills and increasing their experiences of agency. Growing these skills requires learning by doing, developing increasingly rich perspectives on oneself and others, having opportunities to test and refine an internal compass for decisions that are consistent with one's values and beliefs, and making intentional choices about one's path in life.

Developmental experiences in youth settings – and the staff practices and relationships that help to create them – provide opportunities to learn social and emotional skills by doing, and this experiential learning provides a strong basis for transferring these skills to other settings (such as home, school or work). The social and emotional learning skills that transfer then support the achievement of a broad set of outcomes across different settings and moments in the life course.

These connections were set out in the original Catalyst Framework in the diagram below, which we've updated to reflect the content of the Framework 2.0, and a more asset-based approach:

Extrinsic

Individual outcomes
- Literacy, numeracy and language development
- Attainment of qualifications
- Engagement in learning and work
- Participation in youth provision and uptake of advice and support services
- Physically and mentally healthy lifestyle

Societal outcomes
- Physical and mental good health
- Financial inclusion
- Feelings of trust and connectedness
- Civic and democratic participation

Social and emotional skills domains
- Responsibility
- Empathy
- Problem Solving
- Initiative
- Teamwork
- Emotion management

Inter-personal outcomes
- Positive parenting
- Strong family relationships
- Community connections

Intrinsic

Individual

Social

The Multilevel Person-in-context: Neuroperson model

The second model we found particularly helpful is the multilevel person-in-context model of youth development programs (Smith, McGovern, Peck, et al., 2016; Smith and Peck, 2019). The model helps us think about how the social and emotional skills developed within youth settings are both embedded within the wider context of policy decisions, family background, and the quality of provision and are related to shorter-term and longer-term outcomes and achievements. This reminds us that we cannot separate outcomes for young people from the context in which young people are living and learning.

> The multilevel person-in-context model includes a 'neuroperson' model that focuses on three kinds of mental skills involved with young people becoming more behaviourally skilled in areas like self-regulation and social interaction. This model advances the Catalyst Framework by highlighting the role of prior learning, clarifying two different forms of agency, and focusing especially on skills that enable young people to intentionally author their own development.

The BLoS Model:
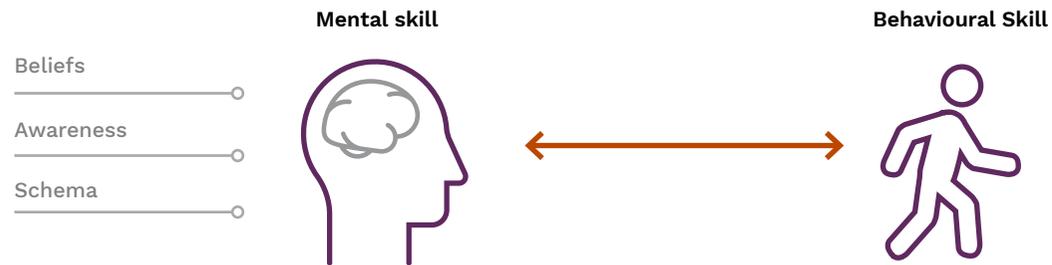
A **schema** is a non-verbal and non-symbolic[7], affectively-charged[8] mental representation of the self and the world. Schemas are initially formed in early childhood, and are important and enduring parts of one's identity. The schema influences how a young person will initially engage in and respond to provision. For example, many young people enter provision having had a wide range of adverse childhood experiences and 'meeting young people where they are at' means being sensitive to their feelings and understanding that they may be emotionally triggered in a way that makes it difficult or impossible for them to be mentally present and engaged. Schemas tend to be stable, and change mainly through repeated social interactions.

Beliefs are verbal, symbolic, and evaluative representations of one's self and the world. Basic beliefs form over time into complex belief systems, such as attitudes, goals and plans. Values, opinions and mindsets are also examples of beliefs. Beliefs are formed automatically by social interactions and intentionally during self-reflection. Beliefs are relatively malleable and can change as a result of a single social interaction, or even just reflecting on a previous or anticipated social interaction.

Both schemas and beliefs are generally unconscious. They only influence feeling and behaviours when they have been 'activated', by an environmental trigger or self-reflection.

---

[7] This is where there is no shared meaning with others through the use of symbols (like number or words)

[8] This means characterised by emotion

Awareness refers specifically to consciously focusing attention in relation to thoughts and feelings. Awareness is where executive functions (like memory, planning and impulse control) interact with the schemas and beliefs that have been activated. This is the basis for all self-reflection. Young people use awareness to reflect, evaluate, plan, problem solve, and develop their own personal and social identities.

Finally, the neuroperson model distinguishes between two different types of agency: automatic and intentional. All young people have automatic agency. This comes from their prior experiences and their knowledge of the world around them – their schema and beliefs. Consciously engaging in personal and social learning is intentional agency. This occurs best when young people are in the right conditions for them and when practitioners 'meet them where they are at': they feel safe and supported, interested and challenged, and have opportunities to consciously and actively reflect on information and its meaning. Mediating processes are intended to help young people intentionally reflect on information and experiences 'in the moment'. This is particularly important for young people who have experienced chronic stress or trauma, which may mean that they respond unintentionally to triggers or challenge. Young people are powerful when they are supported to consciously focus their attention and awareness of what's happening around them and what that means for their social and personal development.

The multilevel person-in-context and embedded neuroperson models allow us to understand the critical inter-relationships between staff practices, young people's experiences, young people's social and emotional skills, and their behaviours. Because young people arrive in provision with very different prior experiences and ways of seeing the world, effectively engaging young people's learning and agency depends on practitioners building and maintaining relationships with young people and their communities, which means getting to know young people deeply.

> Social and emotional learning, then, is a process of self-organisation and self-regulation that promotes young people's experience of agency, or the experience of control, efficacy, and esteem that follow from being supported and trusted to make decisions about things that affect them[9].

[9] Smith, McGovern, Larson, et al. (2016) Preparing Youth to Thrive: Promising Practices for Social Emotional Learning. Forum for Youth Investment, Washington, D.C.
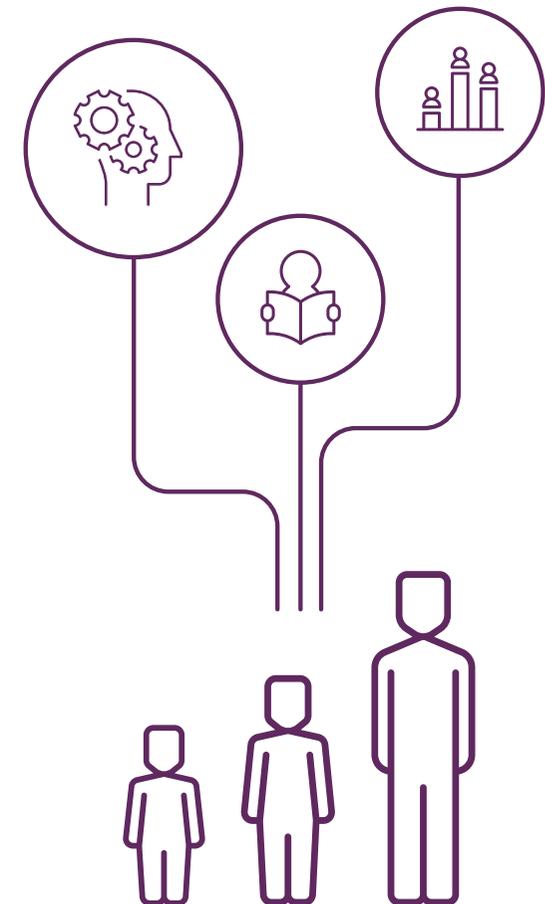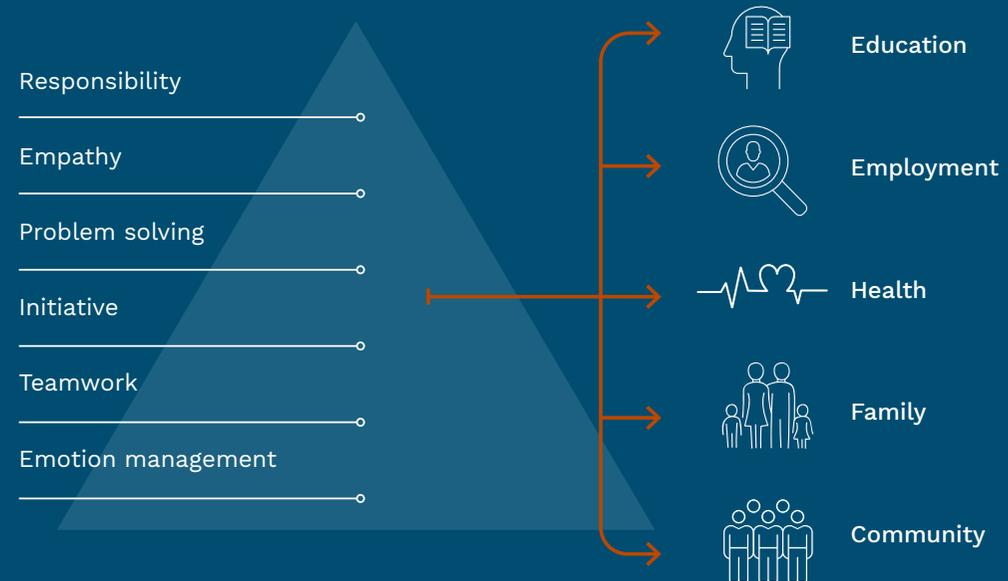
Six domains of social and emotional skills

We have organised the Framework of Outcomes 2.0 around six domains of social and emotional skill. We have selected these domains because:

- They emerged directly from practice and the voices of young people about the experiences that build social and emotional learning skills and how skills transfer beyond the setting and into the early adult life course[10];

- They have extensive overlap with many other social and emotional learning frameworks, including the Catalyst Framework; and

- They describe, in plain language, social and emotional mental and behavioural skills that are both developed during provision and transferred beyond provision.

These six domains reflect sets of interrelated 'staff practices' (that is, how practitioners relate to young people and shape the quality of provision), young people's experiences, as well as the social and emotional skills that young people both bring into settings and transfer to other areas of their lives.

[10] Smith, McGovern, Peck, et al., 2016

Responsibility

Empathy

Problem solving

Initiative

Teamwork

Emotion management

Education

Employment

Health

Family

Community

Outcome domains should not be considered on their own. They exist in the context of young people's experiences, past and present, and are shaped not just be engagement in high quality youth provision, but also by the influence of young people's experiences on how they see the world. At the individual 'neuro-person' level, social and emotional learning skills are interpreted through deep seated schema and beliefs: practitioners need to recognise the social and emotional 'histories' that young people bring into settings. To do this effectively, they need to build deep and trusting relationships with young people. Creating high quality opportunities for young people to develop the social and emotional skills above will enable young people to 'transfer' these skills to other domains of their lives, supporting transitions over time.

Domain	Youth SEL Skills	Mental Skill Indicators:	Behavioural Skill Indicators:
Responsibility	Abilities to reliably meet commitments and fulfil obligations of challenging roles	Abilities to take responsibility for their actions, finish tasks that are started, be counted on to get their part done, do the things that they say they are going to do, and do their best when an adult asks them to do something	Finish the task that they started, do the things that they said they are going to do, acknowledge mistakes and take action to address them, and do the things an adult asked them to do
Empathy	Relating to others with empathy, compassion, acceptance and understanding, and sensitivity to their diverse perspectives and experiences	Relating to others with empathy, compassion, acceptance and understanding, and sensitivity to their diverse perspectives and experiences	Relating to others with empathy, compassion, acceptance and understanding, and sensitivity to their diverse perspectives and experiences
Problem Solving	Abilities to plan, strategise and implement complex tasks, including critical thinking, goal setting and responsible decision making	Abilities to brainstorm and organise ideas, make alternative plans, make step-by-step plans, manage time, and keep track of goal progress	Abilities to brainstorm and organise ideas, make alternative plans, make step-by-step plans, manage time, and keep track of goal progress

Domain	Youth SEL Skills	Mental Skill Indicators:	Behavioural Skill Indicators:
Initiative	Abilities to take action, sustain motivation, and persevere through challenge toward an identified role	Abilities to take the initiative, generate new solutions, persist during challenge, and risk failure	Take the initiative, set ambitious but realistic goals, stay on-task despite distractions, and push through during a challenging task
Teamwork	Abilities to collaborate and coordinate action with others, including communication, teamwork and leadership	Abilities to do fair share of group work, help others, seek help from others, respect others' viewpoints, and hold others accountable	Help or cooperate with others who are struggling, seek help from others, remind others to do their part, and keep track of own and others' group progress
Emotion Management	Abilities to be aware of, name, understand, and constructively handle both positive and negative emotions	Focusing and shifting awareness; reappraisal; response inhibition	Easily frustrated; remains calm in stressful situations

2

Element two:
Theory of change

The process of developing a theory of change is a highly beneficial and reflective process, which we recommend to both commissioners and youth organisations. Taken together, the parts of the person-in-context model can be arranged into a theory of change that is applicable to most youth settings. The theory of change provides an overview of how the various parts and processes associated with provision and social and emotional development go together. It also helps to inform approaches to evaluating both young people's learning and growth, and the quality of provision.

The elements set out in the diagram on the following page provide the basis for a theory of change, either for an individual project or a broader strategic partnership approach. It is likely that a strategic approach (for example, to addressing the street harassment of young women and LGBTQ young people) will engage a range of partners including police, community activists, transport agencies and youth services. The diagram also suggests the forms of evaluation that are most likely to be appropriate for different elements of the theory of change.

This theory of change shows the main pathways through which young people develop and learn in youth provision, and transfer this learning to other contexts of their lives. The theory of change helps providers' thinking about quality improvement and young people's development in ways that support intentional action and inform meaningful evaluation.

This theory of change is also designed to help providers think clearly about the outcomes they are focused on, and which are most within their 'sphere of influence': young people's engagement 'in the moment' and quality relationships, rather than measurable change in social and emotional skills. This should empower practitioners to focus on, review, and discuss how social and emotional skills are developed and experienced by young people, rather than the more abstract domain names.

According to the theory of change, high quality staff practices and content offered in a setting where staff and young people meet will encourage higher levels of engagement from young people during provision. **Over time, the combination of high quality staff practices and engagement supports the growth of social and emotional skills**. With longer-term participation in, and intensity of exposure to, high-quality settings, these social and emotional skills will transfer to other areas of young people's lives.

The basis for a theory of change

A National and regional policy

B Community
Time 1

C Organisation

D Staff behaviour at point of engagement

E Youth engagement

F Youth SEL skill
Time 2

Functional

G Youth SEL skill
Time 3

Near transfer (e.g. family, school & peers)

H Youth SEL skill
Time 4

Far transfer (e.g. college education, employment)

3

Element three:
Guidance for applied measurement

The theory of change shows the key elements of and relationships between the personal and social 'systems' involved in young people's social and emotional development. The theory of change can be used to identify the kinds of measures needed to help answer a wide range of research and evaluative questions. We are going to focus here on the elements of the theory of change most relevant to helping understand the development of young people's social and emotional skills.

There are three different approaches that can be taken: measuring the skills themselves (as an indicator of skill growth), measuring the behaviour of young people (as an indicator of skills), and measuring the engagement of young people in provision (as an indicator of the dynamics of skill growth). These are explored separately below.

Measuring social and emotional skills

Measuring the development of young people's social and emotional skills involves looking for significant, medium- to long-term change. This kind of change should not be measured more than once a year, and where this level of change is an interest, it is likely to be shared: across providers, commissioners, schools, health authorities and so on. Every effort should be made to join up data gathering and analysis across youth organisations and providers, and commissioners have a particularly important role to play in enabling this.

The first place highlighted in the theory of change that could help understand young people's social and emotional skills is the community level: this relates to the social and emotional skills that young people have and use in community settings, like the family, in a formal learning setting, or at work. Measures of young people's social and emotional skills in community settings could be part of a needs assessment or a pre-test – when you are interested

in understanding young people's social and emotional skills before they start participating in your provision. If you're using measures as part of a pre-test, you'll need to use the same measures at a later timepoint: the post-test.

If you want to understand young people's social and emotional skill development when they've engaged with you for a period of time, you need to start looking at areas of 'near transfer': we would expect to see how these social and emotional skills were starting to 'show up' in other areas of young people's lives. This might be in the family home (through relationships with parents and carers, for example), in a formal learning environment (through attendance or attainment at school or college, for example) or in independent living (through seeking out advice and guidance, for example).

If these are areas of interest, you would need to use the same measures before the young person starts to engage with your provision (so you can look at any change). The 'near transfer' of social and emotional skills to other areas of young people's lives takes time and sustained engagement in high quality youth provision. Remember that you are looking to see how young people perceive their social and emotional skills outside youth provision – in learning, work or family relationships, for example.

Long-term change results from the 'far transfer' of social and emotional skill development. Measures of the far transfer of social and emotional skills include the attainment of qualifications; securing, sustaining and progressing in employment; and developing a physically and mentally healthy lifestyle. These types of measures don't have pre-tests, but they are helpful in understanding the impact of quality youth provision across the life course of young people. Gathering data on these areas is time- and resource-intensive. Again, it should be a shared endeavour across a range of agencies, with the burden primarily carried by the public agencies most interested in long-term outcomes.

> When seeking to measure social and emotional skills, it is important to understand the difference between skills that emerge from engagement in high quality provision (sometimes referred to as 'states'), and skills that transfer in and out of provision (sometimes referred to as 'traits'). States refer to optimal skills levels: that is, the 'best' a young person can do when experiencing the highest quality provision.

Traits refer to functional skills: the 'best' a young person can do when they have no support. Most measures of social and emotional skills reflect the functional:

how young people think they 'perform' in general, often without high quality support. Most providers are more interested in the effect of *their* provision on young people's social and emotional skills. This is where measurement of young people's engagement and behaviour is much more helpful, rather than administering self-report surveys.

Measuring behaviour

We recommend using measures exploring young people's social and emotional skills in setting – the spaces and places where young people are engaging with provision. Measuring social and emotional skills in youth settings is fraught with practical and ethical challenges, as set out above. However, young people's behaviours, which are influenced by their social and emotional skills, can be observed by practitioners over hours and weeks. Observing behaviour also enables practitioners to understand young people's 'state': the skills that are emerging as a result of engaging in provision, and the relationship with the quality of that provision.

The multilevel person-in-context model highlights that behaviour is an external manifestation of mental skills developed through mental and behavioural engagement with the context (which includes both activities and social relationships).
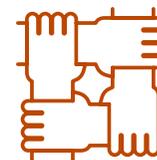
Behaviour provides an important and easily accessible source of information about how young people are developing and applying social and emotional skills.

Measuring engagement

Young people's engagement in provision can also be understood through feedback: feedback from young people on their experiences in provision reflects how their social and emotional skills interact with what's happening in settings, and how individual practitioners are relating to young people. Young people's experiences in settings directly influence how their personal and social skills develop, so feedback helps us to understand this growth.

Selecting measurement tools

In some senses, local providers should feel free to use whatever measures they feel best fit their circumstances. However, some measures are likely to be more reliable, valid, and appropriate than others, and there is much to be gained in using shared or common measures.

It is both impractical and empirically unsound to recommend any particular tool as appropriate to all provision and purposes – there is no one tool that can be universally promoted above others. We encourage providers to think carefully about the specific skills they intend to support and develop in provision, and then select tools that are designed explicitly to focus on those skills, have known reliability and validity, and have been shown empirically to be sensitive to changes predicted to occur within the span of time during which they are able to collect pre-test and post-test data. **The selected measures must also be feasible to administer, meaning both providers and young people must have the time, motivation, and infrastructure necessary to complete the measures.**

Commissioners have a critical role to play in guiding practitioners towards reliable, robust and shared measurement tools, alongside welcoming dialogue about expectations for measurement and the scale of change.

During the winter of 2019/20, we will be publishing a suite of three measures aligned to the three areas above: social and emotional skills, behaviour and engagement. We would encourage practitioners and commissioners to work together to test these measures in practice.

Section 4:
Bringing it all together

This document has set out the background and process for developing the Framework of Outcomes for Young People 2.0. The document has focused on models for understanding how young people develop and grow social and emotional skills, a set of outcome domains to help build a common language and shared understanding, a theory of change connecting engagement in provision with skill development, and guidance on measurement.

> **Critically, the document has also emphasised the importance of staff practices and setting quality in both supporting social and emotional development and measuring it.**

We hope that the Framework 2.0 can unite partners in local areas around a shared understanding of how and why quality youth work and provision for young people develops social and emotional skills, and creates a powerful vision with and for young people and communities. A strong feature of more recent work on developmental experiences and skills is the recognition of the importance of integrated identity and the interaction of young people's lives and relationships across home, family, community, peer groups and learning environments.

We also hope that the different agencies and actors in the lives of young people will take a more shared approach to thinking about outcomes, while also differentiating their focus depending on the type of provision. Decisions about measurement should be taken carefully and in collaboration – with young people and partners. Approaches to measurement should be integrated into quality practice, and the data shared to build collective knowledge and insight.

This Framework also highlights where practitioners have the greatest influence and interest – their 'in the moment' interactions with young people, the opportunities they offer in their settings, and the relationships they form over time.

Through this updated framework, we make the case to shift the focus from longer-term or 'transfer' outcomes measurement, and instead encourage a sharp focus on staff practices and quality, which can create the powerful conditions in which young people learn and develop.

Appendix 1: **Standards for Social and Emotional Learning Practice and Practice Indicators in six Social and Emotional Learning domains**

Taken from *Deconstructing Social Emotional Learning Practice: A Thought Leader Conversation* (2015)
David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality

Emotion Management

Abilities to be aware of and constructively handle both positive and challenging emotions.

Young people's key experiences:

• Young people experience a range of positive and negative emotions in a safe context.

• Young people have opportunities to practice and develop healthy and functional emotion skills.

Staff practices

• Staff create and adjust the structure of daily activities to accommodate young people's processing of emotion.

• Staff model healthy emotion strategies within the context of caring, mutually-respectful relationships with young people.

• Staff provide coaching to youth about handling and learning from their ongoing emotional experiences.

Empathy

Relating to others with acceptance, understanding, and sensitivity to their diverse perspectives and experiences.

Young people's key experiences:

• Young people explore social structure and power in relation to themselves and others.

• Young people share their stories and listen to the stories of others.

• Young people practice relating to others with acceptance and understanding.

Staff practices

• Staff provide activities with appropriate structure for sharing experience and promoting equity.

• Staff model empathy skills with young people.

Teamwork

Abilities to collaborate and coordinate action with others.

Young people's key experiences:

• Young people develop group cohesion and trust.

• Young people participate in successful collaboration.

• Young people manage challenges to creating and maintaining effective working relationships.

Staff practices

• Staff provide activities with norms and structure.

• Staff model teamwork skills with young people.

• Staff facilitate or intervene as needed to foster or sustain youth-led group dynamics and successful collaboration.

Responsibility

Dispositions and abilities to reliably meet commitments and fulfil obligations of challenging roles.

Young people's key experiences:

- Young people take on roles and obligations within activities.

- Young people encounter difficult demands.

- Young people draw on resources to fulfil challenging roles and internalize accomplishment.

Staff Practices

- Staff provide structured but open-ended roles for young people.

- Staff model and fulfil their own roles.

- Staff promote high expectations, respect young people ownership of their roles, and provide help only as needed.

Initiative

Capacities to take action, sustain motivation, and persevere through challenge toward an identified goal.

Young people's key experiences:

- Young people set ambitious and realistic goals.

- Young people develop and sustain motivation by doing activities that matter to them.

- Young people have experiences persevering through the ups and downs of difficult activities or challenges.

Staff practices

- Staff provide ongoing assistance to help young people develop motivation within the activities.

- Staff encourage youth to persist through challenging activities, making sure that the effort behind young people's achievement is recognised.

Problem-solving

Abilities to plan, strategise, and implement complex tasks.

Young people's key experiences:

- Young people engage in projects that involve organising actions over time.

- Young people learn through cycles of strategic planning, execution, responding to emergent problems, trial and error, and reflection on outcomes.

- Young people reflect on how outcomes of their activities provide information that helps build and verify their skills.

Staff practices

- Staff provide sufficient structure to youth-driven projects.

- Staff create opportunities for young people to observe models of successful activity or challenge.

- Staff provide assistance, as needed, to help young people learn and solve problems on their own.

- Staff offer young people opportunities for reflection on outcomes.

Further reading

- BOP Consulting & Aesop (2018) *Active Ingredients: the Aesop planning and evaluation model for Arts with a Social Purpose* https://ae-sop.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/63/2018/09/Active-Ingredients-Report-Sept-2018-Final-low-res.pdf

- Eccles, J. S., & Gootman, J. A. (2002). *Community programs to promote youth development.* Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

- Jones, S. et al (2017). *Navigating SEL from the Inside Out.* Harvard School of Education with funding from the Wallace Foundation, 2017

- Larson, R. W., Hansen, D., & Moneta, G. (2006). Differing profiles of developmental experiences across types of organized youth activities. *Developmental Psychology,* 42, 849-863.

- Loeb, P et al (2016) *Social and emotional learning: feedback and communications insights from the field* Wallace Foundation https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/sel-feedback-and-communications-insights-from-the-field.aspx

- McNeil, B., Reeder, N., & Rich, J. (2012). A framework of outcomes for young people. https://youngfoundation.org/publications/framework-of-outcomes-for-young-people

- Nagaoka, J., Farrington, C. A., Ehrlich, S. B., & Heath, R. D. (2015). Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework. Concept Paper for Research and Practice. *University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research.*

- Ord, Jon & Marc, Carletti & Cooper, Susan & Dansac, Christophe & Morciano, Daniele & Marti, Taru. (2018). *The Impact of Youth Work in Europe: A Study of Five European Countries.*

- Park, Daeun & Tsukayama, Eli & Goodwin, Geoffrey & Patrick, Sarah & Duckworth, Angela. (2016). *A Tripartite Taxonomy of Character: Evidence for Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, and Intellectual Competencies in Children. Contemporary Educational Psychology.* 48. 10.1016/j.cedpsych.2016.08.001.

- Peck, S. C., & Smith, C. S. (2019). The multilevel person-in-context: neuroperson (MPCn) model: Guidance for quality improvement systems (QIS) focused on socio-emotional skill growth and transfer outcomes [QTurn White Paper #1]. https://qturngroup.com/MPCn

- Smith, C., Akiva, T., Sugar, S., Lo, Y. J., Frank, K. A., Peck, S. C., & Cortina, K. S. (2012). Continuous quality improvement in afterschool settings: Impact findings from the *Youth Program Quality Intervention study.* Ypsilanti, MI: David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality.

- Smith, C., McGovern, G., Larson, R. W., Hillaker, B., & Peck, S. C. (2016). *Preparing youth to thrive: Promising practices for social emotional learning.* Ypsilanti, MI: David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality.

- Smith, C., McGovern, G., Peck, S. C., Larson, R. W., Hillaker, B., & Roy, L. (2016). *Preparing youth to thrive: Methodology and findings from the social and emotional learning challenge.* Ypsilanti, MI: David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality.

THE **CENTRE**
FOR **YOUTH**
IMPACT

Local
Government
Association