

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

8 January 2026

Medway Council Youth Service Peer Review Report

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Summary

This report provides an update on the Youth Service Peer Review conducted by the National Youth Agency (NYA) in July 2025. The review was part of a national programme funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and aimed to support Medway Council in strengthening its youth service provision. The findings highlight both strengths and areas for development, with a set of recommendations to guide future improvements.

1. Recommendation

1.1. The Committee is asked to note the report and that the National Youth Agency Peer review team made the following key recommendations:

- Co-produce a youth service strategy with young people and partners.
- Develop a rights-based participation strategy across children's services.
- Continue developing a model evidencing quality and sufficiency.
- Clarify youth worker roles in targeted projects and formalise referral routes.
- Map services and make information accessible to stakeholders.
- Review data collection and information sharing systems.
- Invest in Young Medway to support cross-sector collaboration.
- Continue the development of digital youth work.

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1. The recommendations are consistent with the Council's plans and fall within the existing policy framework. Some actions may require additional investment, particularly in digital youth work and infrastructure support for Young Medway. These will be explored further in partnership with finance colleagues.

3. Background

- 3.1. Medway Council invited the NYA to conduct a peer review of its Youth Service in July 2025. The review involved over 50 professionals and visits to six youth provisions. It focused on Practice & Impact and Partnerships, with additional insights into leadership, sufficiency, and youth voice. The review was not an inspection but a constructive evaluation by experienced peers.

4. Options

- 4.1. The following options were considered:

- **Do nothing:** Maintain current service delivery without change. This risks missing opportunities for improvement and may not address identified concerns.
- **Implement all recommendations:** Aligns with best practice and supports strategic development. May require additional resources.
- **Selective implementation:** Focus on priority areas such as strategy development and data systems. Balances improvement with resource constraints.

5. Advice and analysis

- 5.1. It is recommended that the council adopts all NYA recommendations, phased appropriately. This approach supports:

- **Sustainability:** Strengthening infrastructure and partnerships will improve long-term service resilience.
- **Diversity:** A Diversity Impact Assessment will be completed to ensure inclusive service development, particularly in participation and youth voice strategies.

6. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Lack of strategic direction	Without a youth service strategy, service identity and priorities may remain unclear	Co-produce strategy with stakeholders	B III
Over-reliance on youth workers	Risk of burnout and service gaps	Clarify roles and referral processes	B II
Inadequate data systems	Limits ability to evidence impact and share information	Review and align systems with wider council	B III

For risk rating, please refer to the following table:

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare	I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor

7. Consultation

- 7.1. The NYA consulted widely with professionals, young people, and partners. Feedback was constructive and informed the recommendations. Young people expressed a desire for clearer feedback loops and dedicated youth spaces.

8. Climate change implications

- 8.1. There are no direct climate change implications arising from this report. However, digital youth work development may reduce travel and carbon emissions associated with service delivery.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1. For the 2025-26 financial year, the youth service was allocated a budget of £1.256million and as at the round two monitoring, it's forecasting a small overspend of £14,925.
- 9.2. Where possible it is anticipated the recommendations outlined in section 1.1 – 1.8, can be implemented within existing resources. However, three of these recommendations may require additional resources:
- Investment in digital youth work infrastructure.
 - Support for Young Medway to lead VCSE mapping and collaboration.
 - Review and potential replacement of data systems.
- 9.3. Discussions are ongoing to identify what (if any) additional resources may be required and to identify any potential external funding sources. However, if these recommendations cannot be managed within existing resources or an alternative external funding source can't be found, a report will be presented to cabinet requesting additional resources.
- ## 10. Legal implications
- 10.1. The recommendations support the council's statutory duties under the Education Act 1996 and align with constitutional powers to improve outcomes for children and young people.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Medway Council Youth Service Peer Review Report – National Youth Agency July 2025

Background papers

None