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Young Person's Guarantee: evaluability assessment and proposed evaluation framework

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Young Person's Guarantee: evaluability assessment and proposed evaluation framework

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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Glossary

AIF	Active Inclusion Fund
APS	Annual Population Survey
BW	Business Wales
CA	Capabilities Approach
CIE	Counterfactual Impact Evaluation
CFW	Communities for Work
CFW+	Communities for Work Plus
CoE	Council of Europe
CW	Careers Wales
CWRE	Careers and Work Related Experiences
DID	Difference in differences
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
EA	Evaluability Assessment
EEB	Employment and Enterprise Bureau
EET	Education, Employment and Training
EETSE	Education, Employment, Training or Self-Employment
EMA	Education Maintenance Allowance
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JCP	Job Centre Plus
JETS	Job Entry Targeted Support
JGW+	Jobs Growth Wales Plus
KAS	Knowledge and Analytical Services
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LA	Local Authority
LEO	Longitudinal Educational Outcomes
LLWR	Lifelong Learning Wales Record
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MI	Management Information

NATCEN	National Centre for Social Research
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
OoWS	Out of Work Service
PaCE	Parents Childcare and Employment (PaCE)
PLA	Personal Learning Account
PSM	Propensity Score Matching
QCA	Qualitative Comparative Analysis
RDD	Regression Discontinuity Design
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SFR	Statistical First Release
WG	Welsh Government
WW	Working Wales
WBFGA	Well-being of Future Generations Act Wales
YEI	Youth Employment Initiative
YEPF	Youth Engagement and Progression Framework
YG	Youth Guarantee
YP	Young People
YPG	Young Person's Guarantee
YTS	Youth Training Scheme

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) is a Welsh Government Programme for Government commitment, launched by the then Minister for Economy in November 2021. The YPG aims to provide young people aged between 16 and 24 in Wales with an offer of support to gain a place in education or training, find a job or become self-employed. It 'provides an umbrella structure that sits above Welsh Government funded programmes for young people, aiming to create a straightforward support journey for young people regardless of circumstances and background.' (p. 3 Welsh Government, 2024a)
- 1.2 The [Youth Engagement and Progression Framework](#) (YEPPF), which was first published in 2013, and refreshed in 2022, complements the YPG and aims to support the

 '...early identification of young people aged 11 to 18 who are at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) or homeless, understanding their needs, putting appropriate support and/or provision in place and monitoring their progression.' (Welsh Government, 2022a, p. 3).
- 1.3 The processes required to identify, support and monitor the progression of young people at risk are 'led by local authorities, working with their delivery partners.' (Welsh Government, 2022a, p. 6).
- 1.4 The policy context for this evaluability assessment also includes broader Welsh Government aims set out in the [Well-being of Future Generations Act](#) (WBFGA) 2015, the [Children and Young People's Plan](#) (2022) and the [Plan for Employability and Skills](#) (2022b). Both the YPG and YEPPF aim to contribute to meeting the WBFGA [national indicators and milestones](#) (used to measure progress against the Well-being goals), such as the milestone of at least 90% of 16 to 24 year-olds being in education, employment or training by 2050 (Welsh Government, 2021a; Welsh Government, 2022a).

The scope of the YPG

- 1.5 The YPG is composed of multiple parts, and defining its boundaries and scope is challenging. For the purposes of this Evaluability Assessment (EA) and accompanying evaluation framework, the YPG is defined as the offer of support to find a place in employment, education or training (EET), rather than the offer of a job or a specific place in education or training in itself. Apprenticeships, which offer support to young people to gain the skills and qualifications they need to progress are a partial exception to this definition (and are included in the YPG, see for example, Welsh Government, 2023a). The YPG offer of support also includes employability support programmes like Jobs Growth Wales+ (JGW+) and Communities for Work+ (CfW+) which offer education and training, some of which is delivered in education and training settings such as schools and colleges. In 2023, for example, YPG policy action included expanding the age range for the JGW+ programme to 19 years and an increased training allowance and a broader allowance for transport support costs for participants on this programme (Welsh Government, 2024a). [Working Wales](#), the independent careers advice and guidance service, delivered by Careers Wales, is another principal delivery mechanism for the YPG (Welsh Government, 2022a).
- 1.6 For the purposes of the EA and evaluation framework, a YPG “participant” (or beneficiary) is defined as someone accessing or taking up support from one of the programmes that enable delivery of, or, in the case of the YEPPF, work in conjunction with, the YPG (see boxed text). For the purposes of economic evaluation, the costs of the YPG would also be based in large part upon expenditure upon these programmes.¹

¹ It would also, for example, include the costs of the YPG policy team and research and evaluation.

The main programmes, funding and services that deliver or complement the YPG's offer of support to gain a place in education or training, or an apprenticeship, find a job or become self employed

- Marketing: 'Feed your Positivity' campaign.
- Education: core sixth form funding, core further education funding, Careers and Work-Related Experiences (CWRE) toolkit, additional innovation and transition funding for schools and colleges.
- Work based learning: apprenticeships, Personal Learning Accounts (PLAs).
- Early identification and support: the YEPPF.
- Employability programmes: JGW+, CfW+, ReAct+, the Out of Work Service (OoWS), Working Wales.
- Self-employment Support: Business Wales, Employment and Enterprise Bureaux (EEB), Big Ideas Wales, the Young Person's Start Up Grant
- Careers and employment advice and support: Careers Wales and Working Wales, EEB.
- Employer engagement: Business Wales, Disabled People's Employment Champions.
- Financial support; Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), Student Finance Wales, Further Education Financial Contingency Fund.

1.7 Since the launch of the YPG in November 2021, nearly 43,000 young people have started on employability and skills programmes associated with it. Of these, more than 5,000 young people have progressed into employment, over 500 business start-up grants have been approved, more than 650 young people have started their own business, and over 20,000 have started an apprenticeship. (Provisional Welsh Government internal monitoring figures as of November 2024).

1.8 The YEPF has six core components:

- **‘Early identification’** of young people aged 11 to 18 who are at risk of becoming NEET, who are NEET, and/or at risk of becoming homeless;
- **‘Brokerage’**, introducing and linking young people to appropriate support (including working with services to ensure they work together and are able to respond to young people’s needs);
- **‘Monitoring’** and evaluating support, provision, progression and outcomes for young people;
- Harnessing appropriate **‘provision’** to support young people at risk of becoming NEET, who are NEET and/or who are at risk of being homeless²;
- Access to **‘employability and employment opportunities’**; and
- ‘Shared responsibility and **accountability** amongst partners for delivering the Framework’ (emphasis added, Welsh Government, 2022a, p. 8).

1.9 As outlined above, ‘Local authorities provide the strategic and operational leadership for implementing the [Youth Engagement and Progression] Framework, while local partnerships have a critical role in supporting its delivery.’ (Welsh Government, 2022a, p. 8). To support delivery of the YEPF, the Welsh Government funds local authorities via the Youth Support Grant and delivery of the YEPF is underpinned by three main roles at local authority level:

- The Engagement and Progression Co-ordinator (EPC), who oversees delivery of the Framework;
- lead workers, drawn from different services, such as the Youth Service and Careers Wales, who support young people ‘who need ongoing support’; and
- the Youth Homelessness Co-ordinator, focused on prevention of youth homelessness (Welsh Government, 2022a, p. 9).

² This includes, for example, mainstream and alternative education, further education and work based learning and pre-engagement programmes,’ ‘support to boost a young person’s mental health, well-being and self-esteem’ and ‘interventions for preventing youth homelessness’ (Welsh Government, 2022a, p. 8).

- 1.10 The YEPF and YPG ‘overlap’ for young people aged 16 to 18, providing ‘a safety net for young people at a key transition point in their lives’ (Welsh Government, 2022a, p. 3) and consequently, this EA covers evaluation of both frameworks.

The Evaluability Assessment

- 1.11 The aims of the YPG EA are (1) to assess the feasibility of evaluating the YPG’s implementation, delivery and long-term impacts and (2) to develop a framework to support the evaluation of the ‘whole-system’ approach to delivering the YPG’ (Welsh Government, 2022c, p. 11). This reflects the nature of the YPG, which is an ‘umbrella structure that sits above all programmes for young people, aiming to fully utilise existing interventions, in order to create a straightforward journey for young people regardless of circumstances and background’ (Welsh Government, 2022d, p. 3). Understanding how these different programmes (that make up the YPG) interact with each other and young people, and how they have been shaped by the YPG, is therefore central to evaluating the delivery of the YPG.

- 1.12 The objectives of the YPG EA are:

- Further development of a robust programme theory for the YPG setting out the main evidence and assumptions and providing a clear picture of the ‘system of services’ available to young people and the main stakeholders involved in the YPG.
- Reviewing emerging evidence from Welsh Government’s National Conversation with a diverse range of young people to understand the lived experience of facing barriers to accessing and sustaining education, training and employment.
- Identification of the evaluation questions and exploration of the extent to which they can be met credibly and reliably using existing, and new, data sources.

- Identify and set out options for research and data gathering activities required for effective evaluation.
- Appraisal of options and a detailed monitoring and evaluation strategy (including KPIs³) for addressing the evaluation questions.

This paper

1.13 The YPG is a complex policy to evaluate and this EA and evaluation framework are inevitably also somewhat complicated. Following this introduction:

- Section 2 outlines the study approach and methodology.
- Sections 3 to 5 outline the YPG's theory of change, detailing the context and the challenge the YPG aimed to address (section 3), the intended outcomes (section 4), and mechanisms which the YPG was expected to use to generate these outcomes (section 5).
- Section 6 outlines the proposed evaluation questions for each of the three levels at which change is expected (that is, policy, young people's behaviour and societal outcomes).
- Section 7 considers system-wide measures of change, such as the proportion of young people who are NEET, as well as programme level measures that focus upon a single component of the YPG, most commonly a programme like CfW+ or Big Ideas Wales.
- Section 8 outlines the proposed performance framework for the YPG. It considers how changes in young people's behaviour can be measured at both a system and a programme level. It focuses upon two types of behaviour: engaging with support, and participation in EET, both of which are central to the aims of the YPG. In addition, the appendices discuss the anticipated scope to set key performance indicators (KPIs) focused upon equalities, another principal concern for the framework.

³ We acknowledge the difficulties of identifying a single indicator that can be taken in isolation to establish YPG performance due to the complexities and multiple variables that can impact on, and determine, youth transitions to education and work

- Section 9 discusses the availability and adequacy of existing or potential data to answer the evaluation questions outlined in section 6. This includes performance data (as discussed in section 7) as well as other types of data potentially needed to explore change at policy and societal levels, and how and why observed changes can be explored at each of the three levels (that is, policy, young people's behaviour and society).
- Given the issues outlined in sections 3 to 9, section 10 then considers the evaluability of the YPG as a whole.
- Section 11 considers the related issue of the evaluability of the YEPP as part of the evaluation of the YPG.
- Section 12 considers the strengths and weakness of the approaches proposed.
- Section 13 outlines the estimated timeframes for evaluation.
- Section 14 outlines the conclusions of this report and recommendations for next steps.

2. Approach and methods

2.1 The YPG's theories of change, EA and evaluation framework have been developed through:

- discussions and consultations with Welsh Government stakeholders involved in developing and implementing the YPG and YEPF (including those with responsibilities in areas such as further education (FE) and apprenticeships, Fair Work, Careers Wales and employability policy) (see boxed text, 'Stakeholder Engagement');
- a desk-based review of policy-related documents including, for example, the YPG Impact Assessment (Welsh Government, 2022d) and annual reports (Welsh Government, 2023a);
- a desk-based review of research and evidence relating to the YPG's focus upon young people who are, or are at risk of becoming, NEET (see boxed text, 'Desk-based Evidence Review');
- a desk-based review of research and evidence on evaluation of complex systems⁴ (see e.g. HM Treasury, 2020a; Skivington, et al., 2021), impact evaluation (see e.g. HM Treasury, 2020b; Bond, 2015), and evaluations of Young People's Guarantees in Scotland and the European Union (EU) (see, for example, Scottish Government, 2022; European Commission, 2017) (outlined in Appendix E);
- a desk-based review of relevant data,⁵ including national statistics (such as the Statistical First Release, or SFR, on young people who are NEET), administrative data (such as the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) and Careers Wales Categorization data), and programme data (such as Management Information (MI) data); and

⁴ A complex system is one characterised by many different interacting components (which collectively make up the system) which are not centrally controlled nor working toward a predetermined plan. The interactions between these components shape the attributes of the system as a whole, meaning the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and these interactions can create non-linear effects, making changes in systems and their attributes unpredictable (HM Treasury, 2020a).

⁵ The EA built upon the initial review of data undertaken as part of the [Rapid Evidence Review](#) (Welsh Government 2024b, 2024c) to map and appraise the different potential sources of data which could be drawn upon for the process evaluation and any future impact evaluation.

- a desk-based review of current and planned evaluations of component programmes that make up the YPG, such as CfW+, JGW+ and Working Wales, complemented by interviews and discussions with the teams undertaking the evaluations and members of Welsh Government Knowledge and Analytical Services (KAS).

Stakeholder Engagement

An understanding of how the YPG is expected to work is vital to inform the development of a programme's theory of change (HM Treasury, 2020b). This needs to include:

- the context and problem the YPG aims to address, such as the anticipated effects of the pandemic upon young people's transitions to EET;
- the intended outcomes of the YPG, such as an increase in the numbers of young people in EET; and
- the mechanisms expected to bring about the change, such as extending the offer of support to young people.

To inform and test this set of assumptions (or expectations), an initial round of interviews was conducted with Welsh Government policy and research officials in May and June 2023 (a copy of the interview schedule is included in Appendix F). The interviews were used, alongside other types of data, such as those generated through a desk-based document review, to:

- explore and map the context, including policy landscape and system of support for young people, in order to inform the development of the systems map (see section 3);
- assess how the YPG was developed and to identify expectations of the YPG, to inform the development of the theory of change (see section 5); and
- identify stakeholders' views on evaluation of the YPG, and, for example, the research questions and methodology (see section 6).

The theory of change was discussed and refined further through a series of workshops with stakeholders in October 2023. These brought together a range of staff from across the Welsh Government, including members of the YPG and YEPF

policy teams, and staff with responsibilities in area such as entrepreneurship and Business Wales, employment support, health related employability support, knowledge and analytical services, post-16 education, training and skills and staff from partners such as Careers Wales and Regional Skills Partnerships.

Developing a theory of change for the YPG

2.2 Given the breadth and complexity of the YPG, rather than a single overarching theory of change that seeks to do everything (all at once), a series of interlinked theories of change that focus upon different aspects of the YPG's context, mechanisms and outcomes were developed.⁶ These are outlined in sections 3 to 5. As outlined above, this drew upon data from a desk-based review of research (Welsh Government 2024b, 2024c) and policy along with discussions and workshops with stakeholders (outlined above).

Desk-based evidence review

The Magenta Book guidance on evaluation identifies that a synthesis of existing evidence can help stress test a theory of change by, for example, highlighting areas where the evidential base is weaker, and help to identify important lines of inquiry for the evaluation (HM Treasury, 2020b).

Therefore, [the Rapid Evidence Review: supporting young people who are Not in Employment Education or Training](#) (Welsh Government 2024b, 2024c), which synthesizes existing evidence, was the main foundation for the development of the theory of change for the YPG. The review also informs the EA and evaluation framework, for example by providing insight into evaluations of comparable interventions.

⁶ Understanding the relationships and interplay between the context and mechanisms for changing provision and young people's behaviour, and for generating outcomes, will be critical in understanding how, why and for whom the YPG 'works' (see, for example, Pawson and Tilly, 1997; Westhorpe, 2014).

Developing the evaluability assessment and evaluation framework

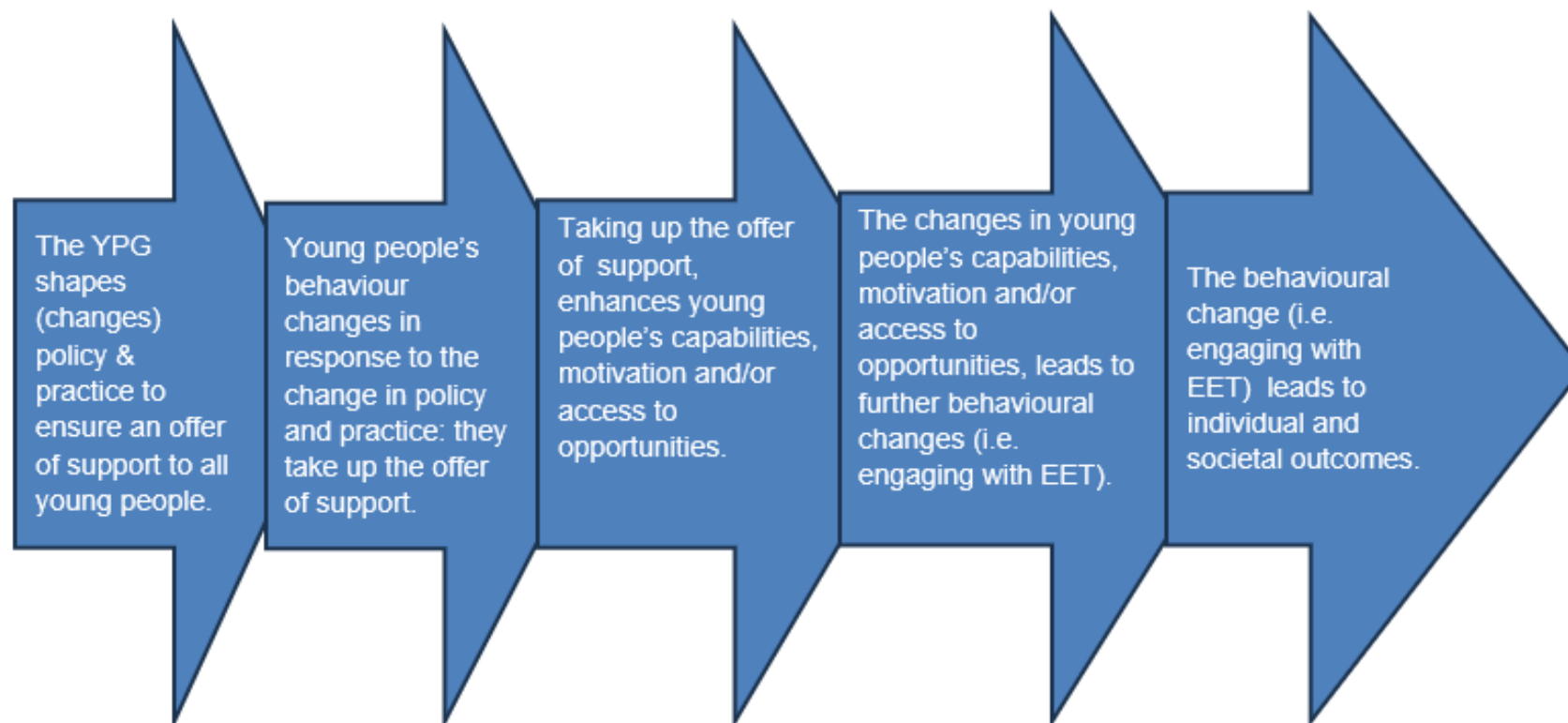
2.3 This EA and proposed evaluation framework report draws upon the theories of change. For example, the theories of change provide a focus in the EA and proposed evaluation framework upon evaluating change at three interlinked levels:

- **Policy and practice:** how the offer of support to 16 to 24 year-olds changes (policy outcomes⁷);
- **Young people's behaviour:** how the behaviour of 16 to 24 year-olds changes in response to changes in the offer of support (behavioural outcomes); and
- **Societal outcomes:** how changes in the behaviour of 16 to 24 year-olds contributes to wider outcomes, such as strengthening Wales' prosperity, health and language in alignment with the national WBFGA goals.

2.4 Figure 2.1. illustrates the high-level ('meta') theory of change for the YPG that links the three theories of change presented in Section 5. It shows how change at policy level is expected to generate changes in young people's capabilities, access to opportunities and motivations and, thereby, their behaviours. These changes in young people's behaviour are in turn expected to lead to societal outcomes.

⁷ This will need to consider policy both on paper and in practice (for example, considering delivery / implementation).

Figure 2.1. YPG’s high-level (‘meta’) theory of change



2.5 In order to explore how (and why) the behaviour of 16 to 24 year-olds changes, the evaluation framework uses the COM-B model of behavioural change, which was used in the Rapid Evidence Review referenced above. This is discussed further in section 4.

3. The problem (or challenge) the YPG aims to address and the context in which it operates

Introduction

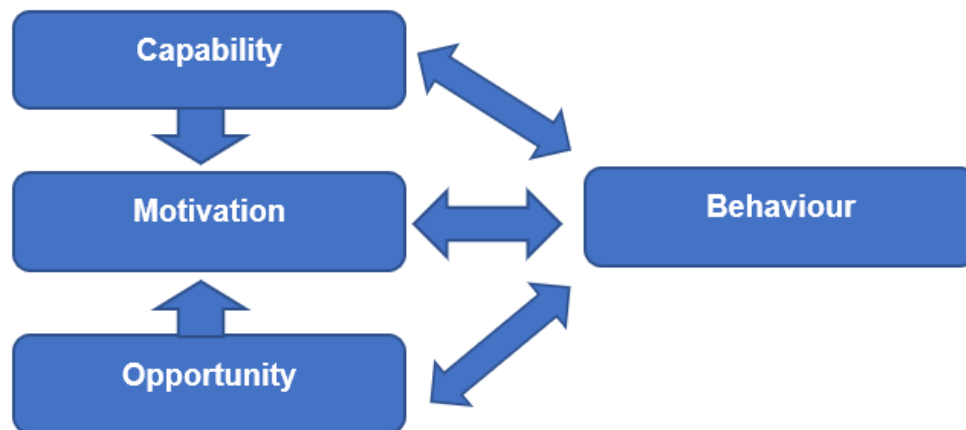
- 3.1 Youth unemployment or economic inactivity, and/or the early exit from education (or training) is damaging for individuals, Wales' economy and society. For example, unemployment and economic inactivity are associated with lower levels of well-being and poorer mental and physical health. These effects can persist through a lifetime, described as 'scarring' (Arulampalam et al., 2001) and similar negative impacts are associated with an early exit from education (Schuller, 2017).
- 3.2 These short and long term effects associated with disengagement from EET are discussed in more detail in the [Rapid Evidence Review: supporting young people who are not in employment, education, or training](#) (Welsh Government 2024b, 2024c) and are not rehearsed again in this report. They represent the main challenge the YPG originally aimed to address, given the concerns that the COVID-19 pandemic would lead to a sharp increase in youth unemployment. It was feared that without decisive action, this would create a 'lost generation', and formed an important part of the context when the YPG was developed (see for example, Senedd Research, 2021).

The rationale for focusing upon young people's behaviour

- 3.3 Young people's behaviours, such as applying for jobs or educational or training courses, and continuing to work or study, are necessary, even if not sufficient, conditions for young people entering and sustaining EET. For example, as well as applying for jobs or courses, or wanting to continue working or studying, young people also need the capability and opportunity to do so. Therefore, changing the numbers (or proportion) of young people in EET will require changes in young people's behaviour. However, these changes in behaviour will only lead to outcomes, such as an increased proportion of young people in EET, if other conditions, such as there being sufficient EET opportunities open to young people, are also met.

- 3.4 As figure 3.1 below illustrates, a young person's behaviour such as effectively searching for work and applying for jobs, requires:
- the ability - or **capability** - to perform the behaviour (for example, having the skills, knowledge and self-efficacy or self-belief required);
 - the intention - or **motivation** - to perform the behaviour; and
 - the absence of environmental constraints (for example, not facing barriers such as lack of childcare) or, conversely, having the **opportunity** to perform the behaviour (Michie et al., 2011).
- 3.5 As the single headed arrows in figure 3.1 illustrate, capability and opportunity both influence motivation. For example:
- having confidence in the ability to successfully perform a behaviour such as searching for work, and the opportunity to do so, can increase a young person's motivation to search for work.
 - conversely, having limited capability (for example, due to ill health or limited experience and/or understanding of the labour market) and/or facing barriers to accessing opportunities (for example, due to caring responsibilities or digital exclusion) can undermine motivation.
- 3.6 As the double-headed arrows in figure 3.1 illustrate, capability, motivation and opportunities both influence and are influenced by behaviours. For example, a behaviour, such as participation in EET, can increase capabilities (for example, if new skills are learnt), can increase access to opportunities (for example, by providing income to pay for private transport) and can increase motivation (for example, as a result of realising the benefits of engaging in EET, such as gaining skills and income).

Figure 3.1. The COM-B (Capability, Opportunity, Motivation – Behaviour) Framework



Source: Michie et al., 2011, reproduced with permission from the author.

3.7 This is the COM-B model (Michie, et al., 2011), a well-established model of behavioural change that was used in the [Rapid Evidence Review: Supporting Young People who are Not in Employment Education or Training](#) (Welsh Government 2024b, 2024c) to help explore and understand how young people’s behaviour changes (or not) in response to policies like the YPG. In this report it will be used as the ‘golden thread’ that links the analysis of:

- the **context** for the YPG, including the problem or challenge the YPG aims to address, discussed in this section;
- the YPG’s intended **outcomes**, discussed in section 5; and
- the **mechanisms** expected to generate these outcomes, discussed in section 6.

3.8 It should be noted that one of the strengths, but also potential weaknesses, of the model is its focus upon the individual. In the COM-B model, ‘capabilities’ relate to individual psychological and physical capabilities, in the sense of having the ability to do something, while opportunities are dependent on environmental factors. This conception can be contrasted with the conception of ‘capability’ in the ‘Capabilities Approach’ (CA) developed by Amartya Sen and others. The CA focuses upon a person’s capabilities in

the sense of their freedom and ability to act (that is, their opportunities), given both their individual resources and circumstances, such as their health, knowledge and skills, and external factors such as social and environmental conditions (Lewis, 2012). Both theoretical approaches highlight the need to consider environmental constraints, or barriers to opportunity.

3.9 This raises questions about how support is conceptualised in the COM-B model. Support can increase people's 'capabilities', in the sense of their freedom to act (as defined by the CA). Importantly though, in the COM-B model, it may do so by:

- enhancing an individual's internal 'capability', for example, where support increases an individual's knowledge or confidence; and/or
- enhancing an individual's 'opportunity' to act, for example, where support helps an individual overcome, or removes barriers, that they would otherwise face.

3.10 In addition, support may enhance an individual's motivation to act, either directly, for example, through encouragement, or indirectly, by enhancing an individual's capabilities and/or access to opportunities.

The COVID-19 pandemic

3.11 The COVID-19 pandemic was in many ways a singular experience for Generation Z (Gen-Z).⁸ The period was unlike any other experienced by young people in modern times and the impact upon young people's capabilities, motivations and access to opportunities (and therefore their education, training and transitions to, and ability to sustain, employment) was considerable. As outlined in the introduction, the YPG was initially developed in response to the expected impact of the pandemic upon youth unemployment.

⁸ Gen-Z describes the cohort of young people born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s. They follow earlier cohorts such as Millennials, Generation X and Baby Boomers.

3.12 However, while in many ways the pandemic was a singular experience for young people, increases in youth unemployment following a contraction of economic opportunities are not⁹ and have been experienced by previous generations. The ‘baby boomers’ may have entered a buoyant labour market in the 1970s, when most young people left school at 16 and entered employment. However, the experiences of subsequent generations, Gen-X (those born in the second half of the 1960s or any time in the 1970s), Millennials (those born in the 1980s and early 1990s), and Gen-Z (who are the focus of the YPG) have been very different. In particular from the 1980s onwards:

- deindustrialisation disrupted youth labour markets;
- government concern with, and support and intervention to address, rising youth unemployment increased sharply; and
- further and higher education opportunities were expanded, and increasing numbers of young people continued in FE and higher education (HE) (McGuire, 2022; Jones, 2005; Roberts, 1995).

The social and economic context for Gen Z and the YPG

3.13 The social and economic changes since the 1980s have created a wider range of EET opportunities, but also more risks, for young people, who are increasingly responsible for navigating a complex structure of opportunities and challenges (see, for example, Jones, 2005; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005; Roberts, 1995). The economy and society up to the 1980s could be likened to an ‘opt out’ model, where the expectation was that most young people would follow narrow and often gender segregated employment pathways after school. For example, for young men, pathways to the steel works, factory or mine, and for young women, pathways to administrative or secretarial work, catering or cleaning. The economy subsequently moved to

⁹ Young people are particularly vulnerable to economic downturns, and when there are fewer employment opportunities, some young people, who would not otherwise have done so, may choose to stay on in post-16 education or training, but those who either do not stay on in, drop out of, or complete and then exit post-16 education or training are more likely to end up NEET during a recession (Department for Business innovation and Skills, 2015).

more of an 'opt in' model, where pathways to employment, and also post-16 education and training, splintered and proliferated. As a consequence, the importance of young people's own agency (and therefore their individual capabilities, motivations and opportunities) has increased.¹⁰

3.14 These socioeconomic changes, coupled with the rise in youth unemployment in the 1980s, led to the establishment of new programmes to support young people's transitions into employment, such as the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) - programmes that have continued to evolve and develop to the present day (see boxed text below). The pandemic led to a further development of programmes, by both the Welsh Government and UK Government's Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and the YPG was developed in this crowded landscape.

Youth employment support programmes in 2021

The Welsh employment support landscape in 2021 was composed of a mix of Welsh Government, DWP, local authority and third sector projects and programmes (Senedd Research, 2021). The projects and programmes had different target groups (and eligibility criteria) with some, for example, targeted upon young people aged 16 to 24 and others open to those aged 16 and over, and different support offers, ranging from light touch to intensive. Programmes included:

- Traineeships, which were succeeded by Jobs Growth Wales+ (JGW+), a training and development programme for 16-19 year-olds;
- ReAct (now ReAct+) offering tailored support to those who are at risk of redundancy, or whose jobs have been made redundant;
- Parents, Childcare, Employment (PaCE), offering employment support for those with caring responsibilities;
- Communities for Work (CfW), and CfW+ - specialist employment advisory support and intensive mentoring for those aged 16 and over who are furthest from the labour market.

¹⁰ Roberts (1995) likened this to young people in a particular area catching the same (metaphorical) train when making transition from school to work, contrasting this with the situation in the 1990s, when young people had to choose and make their own journeys from school to work.

- DWP support by work coaches, and also targeted programmes, such as the Work and Health Programme for the longer-term unemployed¹¹ and those with health conditions, and programmes developed in response to the pandemic such as Kickstart, Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS) and Restart.
- National, regional and local European Social Fund (ESF) employability programmes and projects, such as the Wales Council for Voluntary Action's (WCVA) Active Inclusion Fund (AIF), helping disadvantaged people to get back into employment.

3.15 Since 2021, the landscape has continued to develop. ESF funded programmes such as CfW, AIF and PaCE have ended, as have some DWP programmes, such as Kickstart and JETS, while new local and regional Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)¹² programmes have begun. More recently, Welsh Government has streamlined its programmes, for example, with the eligibility age for CfW+ and ReAct+ being raised to 20.

3.16 The changes in post-16 education and training, the labour market and support services intersect with changes in young people's aspirations. For example, inflation (and the cost-of-living crisis) and increases in house and rental prices have increased many young people's reliance upon parental support and left many unable to live independently (delaying this dimension of their transition to adulthood) (see, for example, Resolution Foundation, 2023). This may, in turn, have depressed employment-related aspirations (as, for example, the possibility of using employment to achieve independent living becomes harder to achieve).

The wider policy context

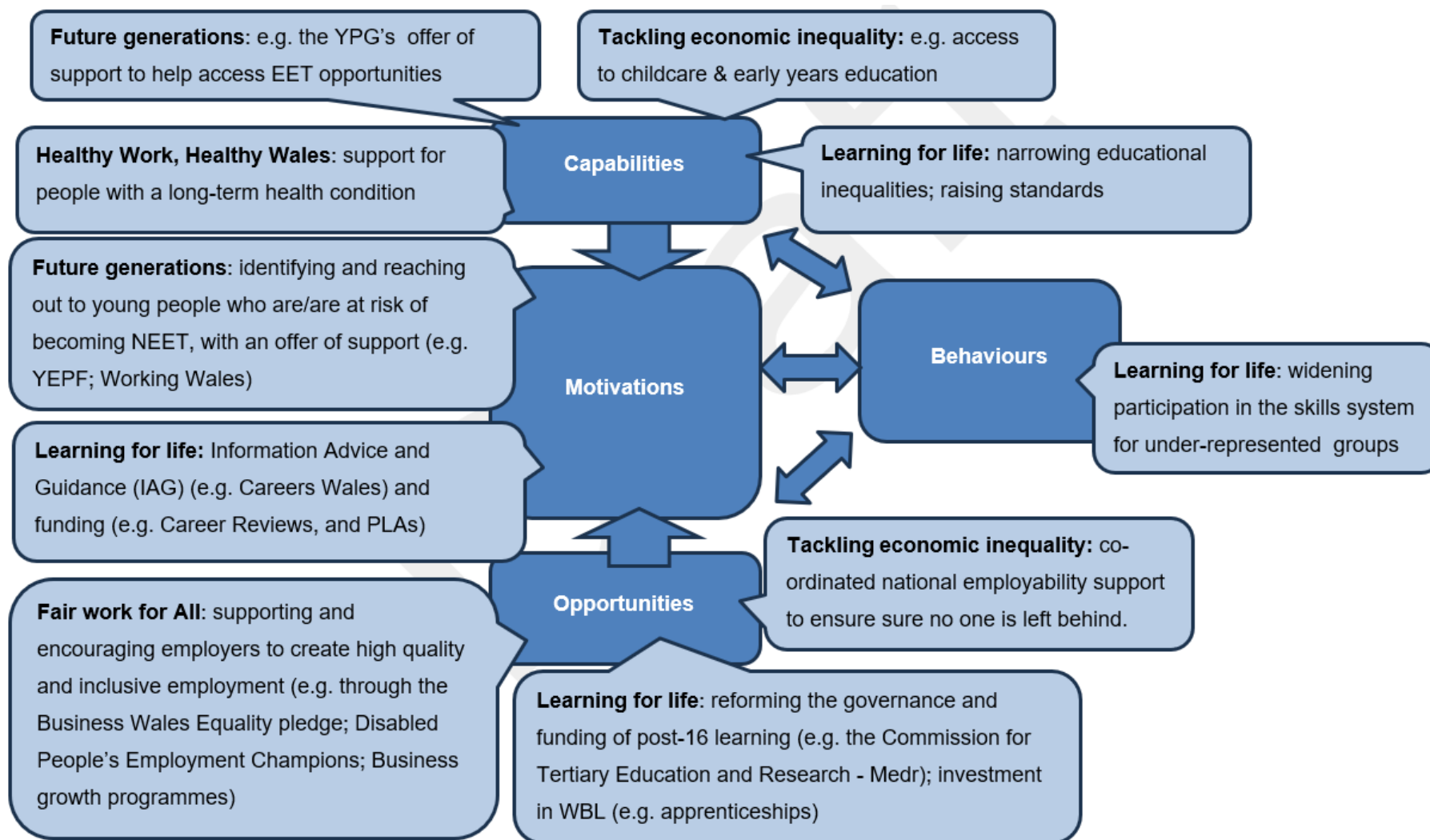
3.17 As figure 3.2. illustrates, the policy context for the YPG extends beyond employability programmes, to encompass policy in areas such as education, health and childcare. These wider policy areas often address more 'distal'

¹¹ Young people claiming Job Seeker's Allowance could be mandated to the programme if NEET or aged 18 to 24 and unemployed for more than nine months.

¹² The SPF was developed following the UK's exit from the European Union, which meant the end of the European structural funding. It is intended to support the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda.

factors, such as low levels of educational attainment or poor health, which limit young people's capabilities, rather than the more 'proximal' factors like access to support to access EET (Welsh Government, 2024b).

Figure 3.2. Welsh Government Policy Map: support for young people to engage with EET

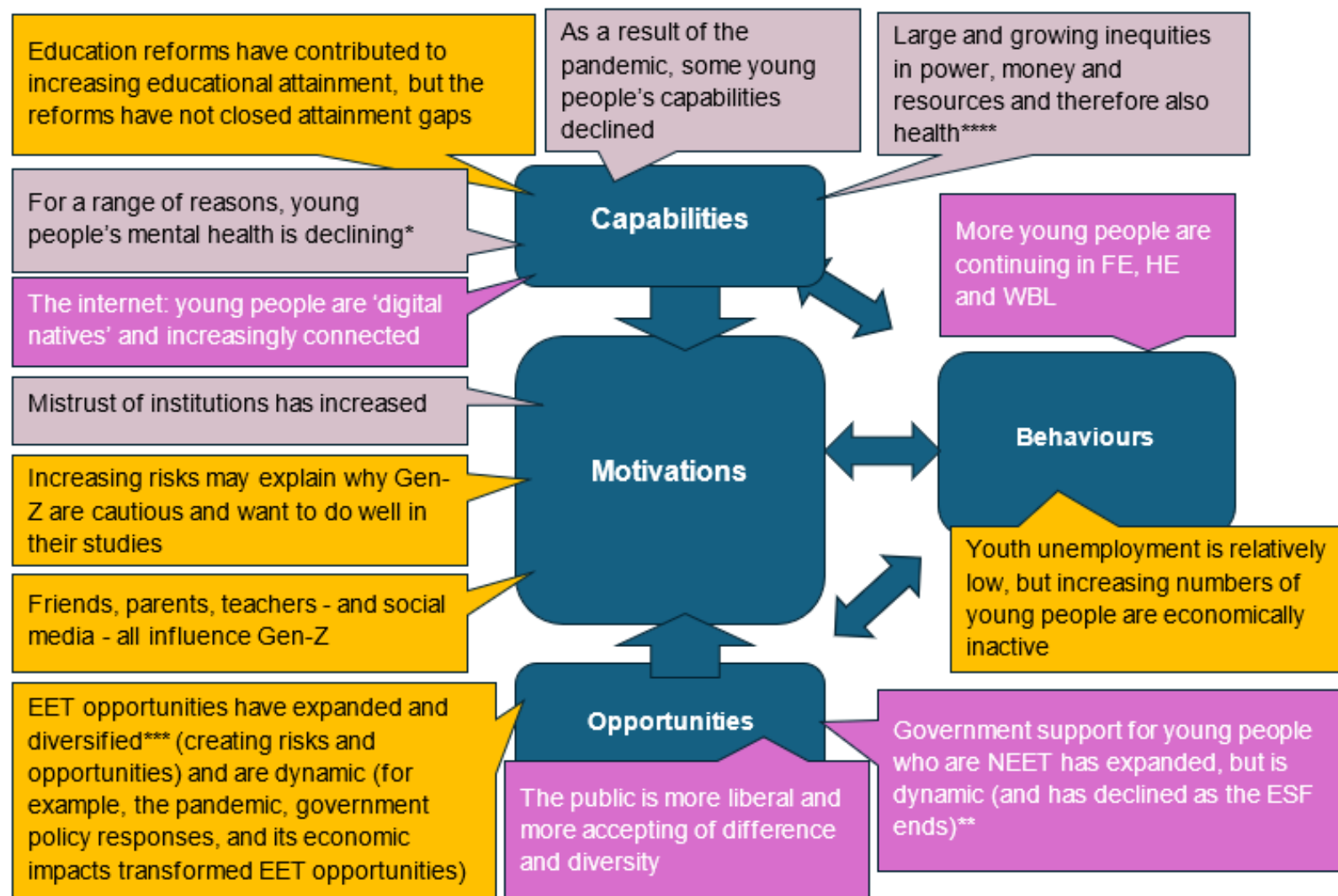


Source: adapted from [Stronger, fairer, greener Wales](#)

Young people's agency

- 3.18 As figure 3.3. illustrates, young people's **capability** to navigate these **opportunities** and challenges created by the socio-economic-policy context, and the choices they make (given their **motivation**), and therefore ultimately their **behaviours** are shaped by a range of different external factors and forces.

Figure 3.3. Examples of the ways in which the social, political, economic and cultural context shapes Generation Z's capabilities, opportunities, motivation and behaviours



Key	Factors that generally support young people's engagement with EET	Factors whose impact upon young people's engagement with EET is mixed	Factors that generally hinder young people's engagement with EET
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Sources: Welsh Government, 2024b; Golley Slater, 2022; McGuire, 2022, NatCen, 2022; Public Health Wales, 2021; Institute of Health Equity, 2020; Jones, 2005.

* Declines in young people's mental health predated the pandemic but may have been accelerated by the pandemic for some groups (Public Health Wales, 2021).

** Cuts in Welsh Government funding for EET support services are forecast as a result of the end of EU funding for Wales and moves toward new funding streams such as the Shared Prosperity Fund (Senedd Research, 2023).

*** Changes in both the number of jobs and the type or character of jobs (for example, in terms of pay, security, training and progression opportunities), as well as the number and type of education and training opportunities, are all important contextual factors.

**** These are identified as the 'social determinants of health' (Institute of Health Equity, 2020).

3.19 Although these factors may shape young people's capabilities, access to opportunities, motivation and behaviours, they are not determinative of these outcomes. Instead, it is the interplay between these external factors and young people's capabilities, access to opportunities, motivation and behaviours that shapes outcomes. For example, during an economic downturn, the young person who has struggled at school and has poor literacy and numeracy (and therefore constrained capabilities) is likely to struggle to find a job with training (and therefore to forgo opportunities to enhance their capabilities) compared to a young person who has thrived at school. Young people's exposure to these different factors also differs over time and place. For example, the impacts of deindustrialisation were felt more sharply in areas such as the South Wales valleys, where heavy industry was concentrated.

3.20 An analysis that considers both external factors and forces, and the ways they shape and interact with young people’s capabilities, access to opportunities, motivation, and behaviours, can help explain why:

- most young people remain in EET, but a sizeable minority disengage and become NEET; and
- some groups, such as disabled young people, those with health conditions and those with no or low qualifications, are exposed to a much higher risk of being NEET than other groups.

3.21 As already noted, these issues are explored in depth in the [Rapid Evidence Review: Supporting young people who are Not in Employment Education or Training](#) (Welsh Government 2024b, 2024c) and are not rehearsed further here.

4. Outcomes: The change the YPG aims to bring about

4.1 Although there is no overarching policy or strategy document for the YPG, the [Young Person's Guarantee: impact assessment](#) (Welsh Government, 2022d, pp. 8-9) describes the main intended outcomes of the YPG. They are:

- 'more 16 to 24 year-olds feel better prepared for work and life;
- more 16 to 24 year-olds have access to pathways back into education, training and employment for all young people who are unemployed;
- 16 to 24 year-olds have access to support if they are interested in becoming self-employed;
- employers have the confidence and support to recruit 16 to 24 year-olds into quality jobs and apprenticeships;
- more employers are offering workplace experiences to 16 to 24 year-olds; [and]
- more disadvantaged 16 to 24 year-olds are benefiting from the availability of paid employment opportunities and learning opportunities.'

Contribution to the WBFGA national milestones

4.2 As outlined in the impact assessment (ibid., p. 4), the YPG is expected to contribute to the following [national indicators and milestones](#) (used to measure progress against the WBFGA goals):

- 'At least 90% of 16 to 24 year-olds will be in education, employment, or training by 2050'
- 'Eradicate the gap between the employment rate in Wales and the UK by 2050, with a focus on fair work and raising labour market participation of under-represented groups.' (Welsh Government, 2021a, pp 8-9).

4.3 However, in discussions for this EA, the YPG policy team identified that these long-term goals could benefit from intermediate milestones as well as

more focus on specific target or priority groups, such as disabled young people.

Contribution to the WBFGA goals

4.4 As outlined in the Welsh Government's impact assessment (ibid., pp. 9-10), the YPG is expected to contribute to the following [Well-Being of Future Generations Act](#) goals:

- 'A prosperous Wales: The YPG will help develop a skilled and well-educated population, in turn assisting the economy to generate wealth and provide employment opportunities. Opportunities will focus support around a low carbon society.
- A healthier Wales: Access to skills is widely accepted as a significant determinant of life outcomes including health, socio-economic position and life expectancy. Evidence indicates achieving fair work can deliver multiple long-term benefits, helping us to overcome persistent underlying problems and effect long-term change.
- A more equal Wales: A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic background and circumstances). [The] YPG will help address inequality, enhance well-being and reduce poverty which remains pervasive in Wales. We are already seeing existing areas of deprivation suffering more than affluent areas of Wales and we know that employment is a direct route out of poverty.
- A vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language: a society that promotes and protects the Welsh language. [The] YPG will actively promote and encourage the use of services in Welsh[,] and communities with the highest percentage of Welsh speakers tend to be rural in nature[,] and we will ensure appropriate consideration is given to the availability of services in these areas in order to ensure that Welsh speakers are not disadvantaged as a result.'

5. The mechanisms: the ways in which the YPG is expected to generate these changes

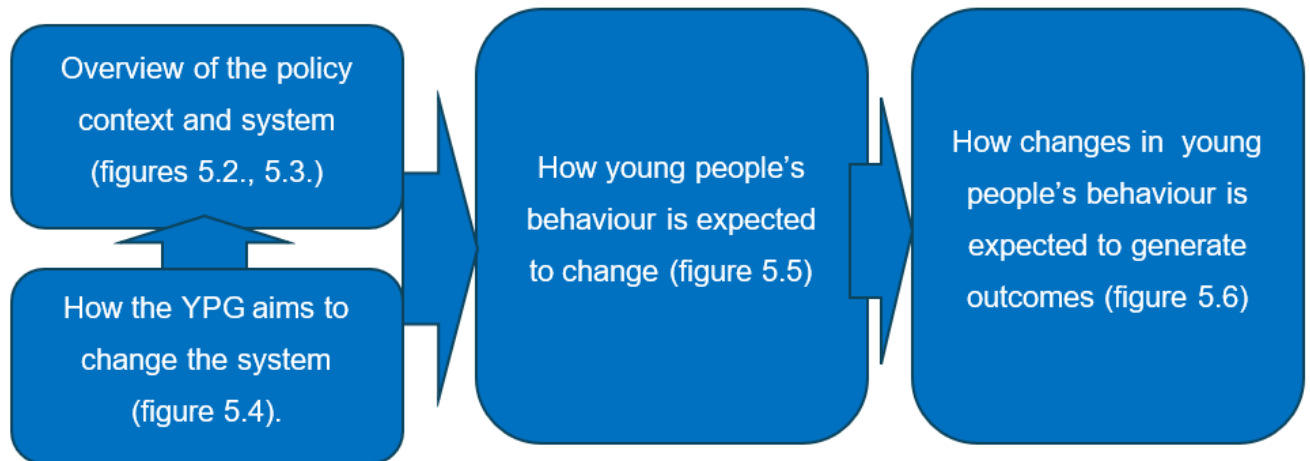
Theories of change

5.1 As outlined in section 2, a series of linked theories of change that focus upon different aspects of the YPG's context, mechanisms and outcomes has been developed for this evaluation framework. These include:

- a context and systems map (figure 5.2) outlining the different components of the YPG, including important stakeholders and the main parts of the context that are not part of the YPG, but which are likely to shape its delivery and impact; and a post-16 EET support map (figure 5.3), which has a tighter focus upon the YPG;
- a theory of change (figure 5.4) outlining how the YPG aims to influence, mobilise or change these different components of the system;
- a theory of change (figure 5.5 and also figure 5.6) outlining how the different components that make up the YPG are expected to influence young people's behaviour; and
- a theory of change (figure 5.7) outlining how changes in young people's behaviour are expected to generate the intended outcomes of the YPG outlined in section 4.

5.2 The relationship between the systems map and the three linked theories of change is set out in figure 5.1. Taken together, they aim to describe the causal chain of events that are expected to bring about the intended changes (outcomes) of the YPG.

Figure 5.1. The relationship between the different system maps and theories of change

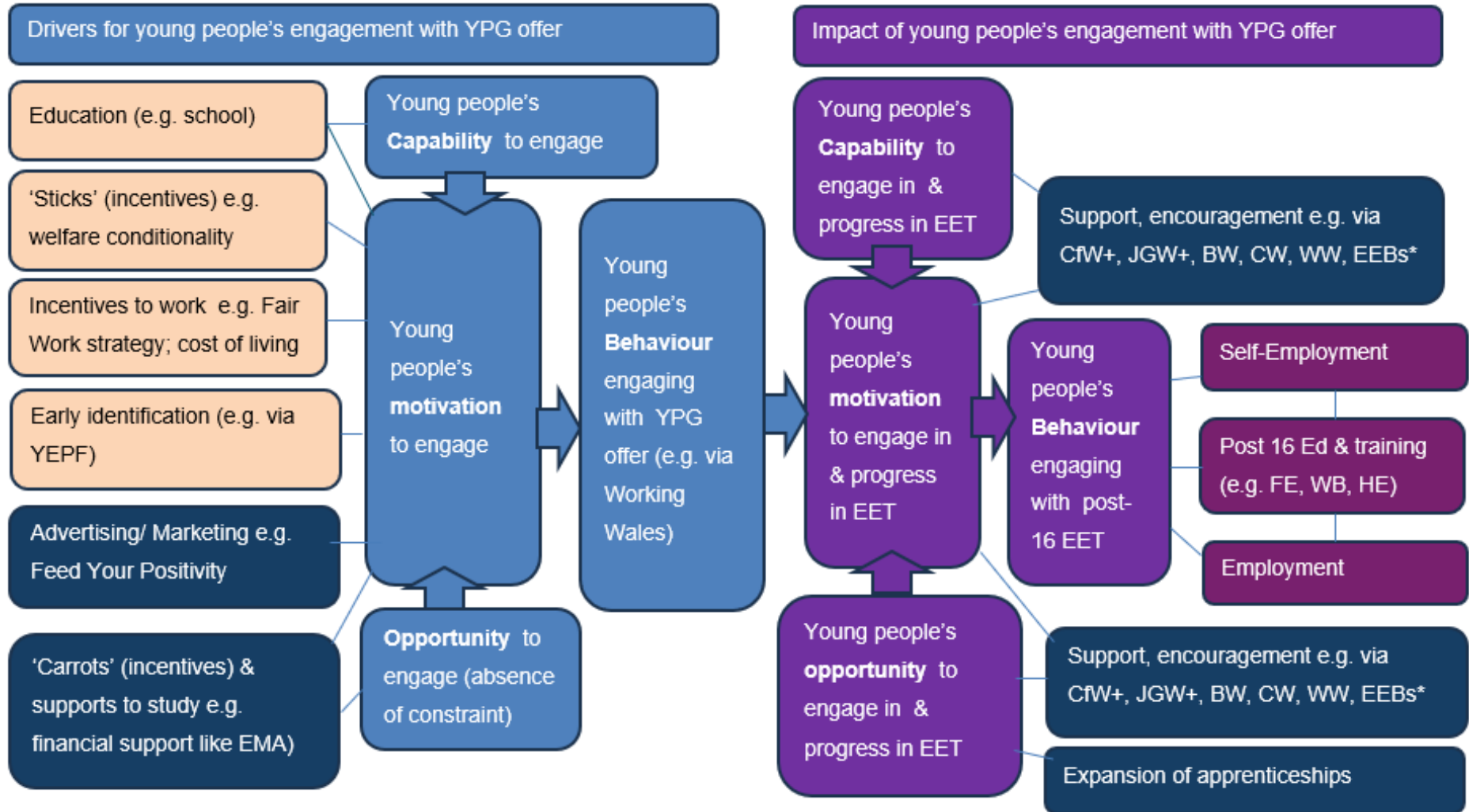


5.3 As outlined in the introduction, this evaluation framework uses the COM-B framework as a ‘golden thread’ to link analyses of the YPG context, its mechanisms (articulated through the theories of change outlined above) and its outcomes. For example, as figure 5.4. in particular illustrates, the COM-B framework is used to help articulate how and why it is expected that the behaviour of different groups of young people will change in response to the YPG. Figure 5.5. illustrates how this, in turn, is expected to generate societal outcomes.

5.4 As figure 5.5. illustrates, it is expected that young people first take up the support offered through the YPG and that this, in turn, helps strengthen their capability, access to opportunities and/or motivation to re-engage with EET. Therefore, the evaluation framework outlined in section 7 focuses upon measuring these two behaviours (that is taking up support and then re-engaging with EET). However, it is possible, in theory, that the YPG’s offer of support would be sufficient to motivate young people to change their behaviour and to re-engage with EET without them taking up the offer of support. For example, the YPG’s [‘feed your positivity’ campaign](#) might inspire young people to engage with EET opportunities, without taking up support. Similarly, the knowledge that support was available if they needed it, might give young people greater confidence to engage with EET opportunities, even if they did not actually take up that support. This type of

effect is judged much less likely but would be harder to identify and isolate from other factors, as the main observable behavioural change would be more young people taking up EET opportunities.

Figure 5.2. YPG Context and Systems Map



*CfW+ - Communities for Work+; JGW+ - Jobs Growth Wales+; BW - Business Wales; CW- Careers Wales; WW - Working Wales; EEB - Enterprise and Employment Bureaux; EMA Education Maintenance Allowance

Key	Context	Part of the YPG	Outcomes
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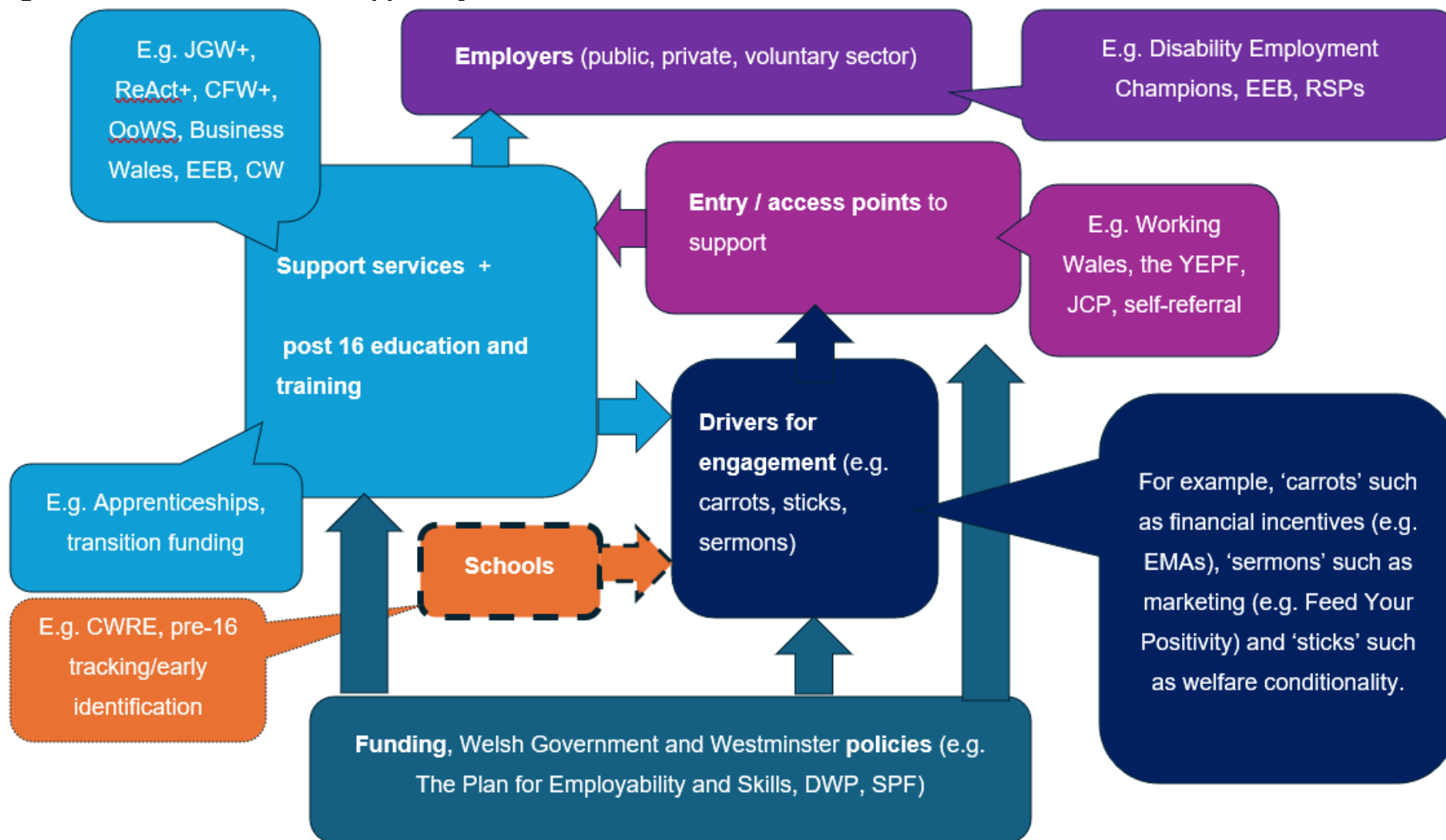
The scope of the YPG

- 5.5 Defining the scope of the YPG (that is, what is part of the YPG and what is just the context for the YPG) is a main challenge for the evaluation. As outlined in the introduction, as a 'rule of thumb', the YPG is defined as the *offer of support*, rather than a place in education or training. Figure 5.3. (below) uses this definition to highlight the main parts of the post-16 employment, education and training (EET) support system that form the YPG.
- 5.6 However, it is difficult to draw sharp distinctions (or lines) that demarcate the boundaries of the YPG. For example:
- Information, guidance and support services for students in education and training settings, such as schools, FE and, potentially, HE institutions¹³ would fall within the scope of the YPG. However, subject courses in education and training settings, would not generally fall within the scope of the YPG.
 - Nevertheless, there are exceptions as apprenticeships and Work-Related Education (CWRE) in schools are considered part of the YPG. Moreover, employability support programmes like JGW+ and CfW+ offer education and training courses, which would be considered programmes which support delivery of the YPG.
 - Support for transitions and low-level mental health difficulties in education and training settings and EET support services fall within the YPG's scope. However, more specialist health services, such as child and adolescent or adult mental health services (CAMHS and AMHS) do not.
 - Nevertheless, the Out of Work Service (OoWS), which offers peer support for young people recovering from substance misuse or mental health issues, is considered part of the YPG and support services that are considered part of the YPG would be expected to work with, and refer young people to, more specialist services where needed.

¹³ In discussions with Welsh Government policy officials the scope of the YPG in relation to HE has also been raised, but not fully resolved.

5.7 It is important from an evaluability perspective to define what is part of the YPG and what is part of the wider context, when considering, for example, questions about implementation and impact. Nevertheless, when the focus is upon understanding how and why change occurred, the distinction can sometimes be less important, as both the intervention and the context can be expected to contribute to outcomes. Indeed, as noted above, understanding how the intervention was shaped by context and vice versa, is likely to be an important line of inquiry (see, for example, Pawson & Tilly, 1997).

Figure 5.3. The Post-16 EET support system



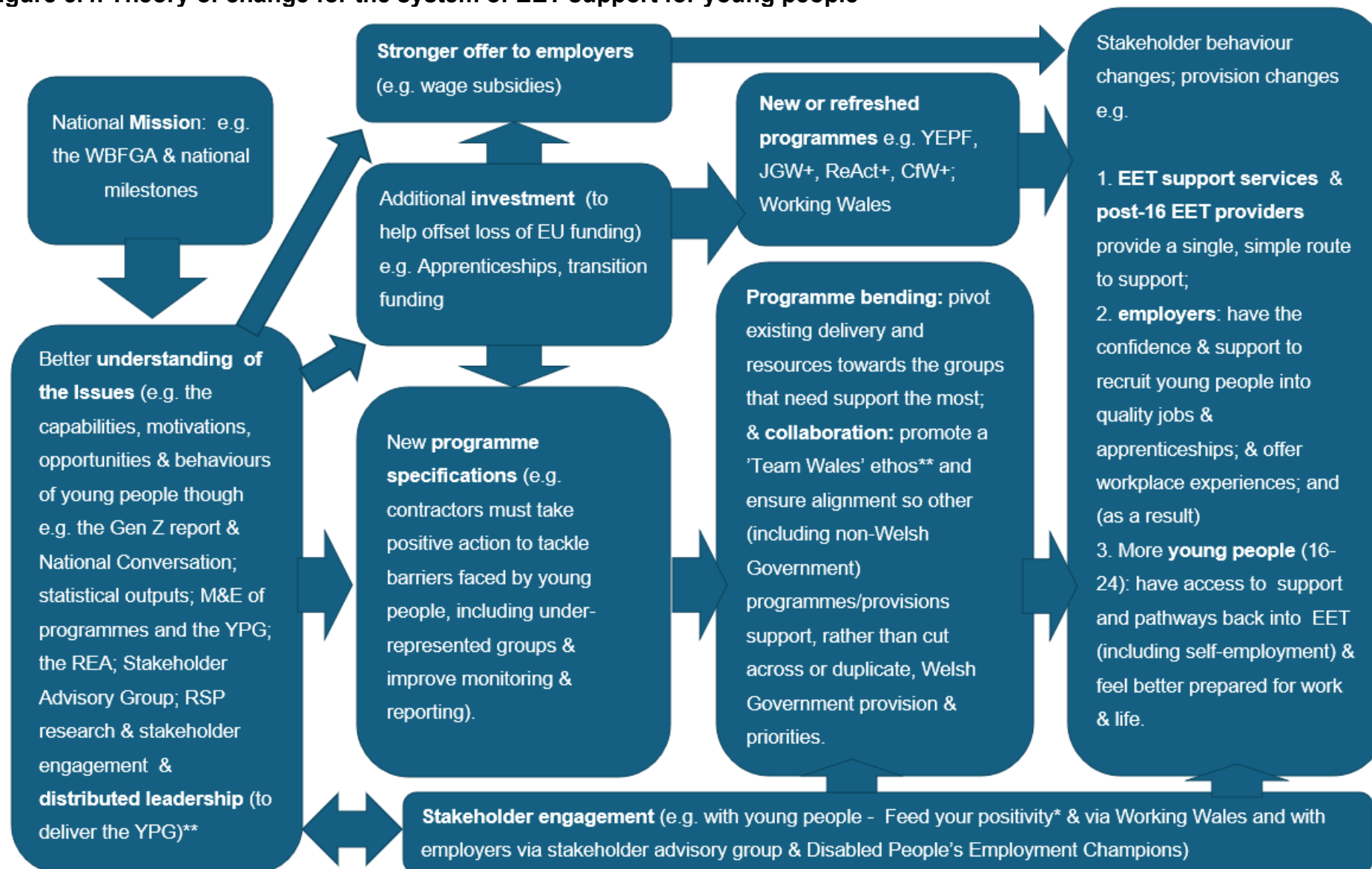
Elements of the YPG & YEPF, or which support these policy frameworks, appear in comments.

A systems approach

5.8 The EET support landscape for 16 to 24 is a 'complex adaptive system', posing challenges for policy and evaluation (HM Treasury, 2020a). For example:

- there are multiple diverse, interacting components and control over the different elements of the system is dispersed and decentralised (making it a system), raising impact attribution challenges and increasing the numbers of stakeholders who need to be involved;
- it is dynamic, adapting to change. For example, the actions of those managing or delivering these disparate elements is likely to influence the behaviour of others in the network (making it an adaptive system). For instance, new DWP programmes can disrupt referral pipelines to existing programmes. These interactions mean that evaluating each component in isolation may miss the wider network effects;
- it is an 'open' system and the context shapes the behaviour of actors (for example, the pandemic led to rapid and unexpected changes in education/training delivery and also to young people's capabilities, opportunities, motivation and behaviours). Looking forward, changes in the economy and in government policy, in response to inflation and end of EU funding, are likely to have consequential and potentially unexpected impacts upon the system;
- some components of the system may have a disproportionate impact. For example, the effectiveness or otherwise of Working Wales may have marked effects on the effectiveness of other parts of the system; and
- history matters - the YPG was not created from a clean sheet, but brings together a range of pre-existing programmes, and aims to reshape others, and the histories of these programmes are likely to affect their response to the YPG.

Figure 5.4. Theory of change for the system of EET support for young people



Acronyms: M&E - Monitoring and Evaluation; RSP – Regional Skills Partnership

*The ‘Feed Your Positivity’ campaign aims to communicate the YPG and ‘to encourage young Welsh people to positively engage with their plans for the future’, by countering ‘the negativity about job prospects and challenges to mental health that young people are exposed to - primarily on social media’ (Welsh Government, 2021b, n. pag).

** ‘Building a ‘Team Wales’ ethos’¹⁴ and ‘encouraging and embedding a culture of collaboration and partnership working’ are at the heart of the YPG (Welsh Government, 2022c, p. 8) and, given the breadth and complexity of the system, strategic leadership and co-ordination is also widely distributed. For example:

- Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) have a principal role in mapping EET support and employer and stakeholder networks. For those aged 16 to 18, the YEPP and its Engagement and Progression Coordinators (EPCs) have a lead role in mobilising partners to track young people, identify those at risk of being, or who are, NEET, and signpost and broker access to support (including youth support services, for instance mental health services) and opportunities. The system is designed so that EPCs work with both Working Wales and dedicated YPG Co-ordinators; and
- Working Wales has a central role as the principal gateway to support and information, advice and guidance (IAG), providing access to: a range of DWP, Welsh Government, regional and local employability support programmes; post-16 education and training provision; and self-employment support (via Business Wales). Working Wales is also responsible for managing and reporting on progress.

¹⁴ In the specification for this research, this is described as a ‘sense of collective responsibility to draw together the support available to young people to access opportunities, government programmes, academia and the business community to support the YPG in order to reach the national milestone of 90% of our young people being in employment, education or training by 2050’ (Welsh Government, 2022b, p. 8). The ‘Team Wales’ ethos has also been described as a ‘cross-Welsh Government, pan Wales, multi-agency’ response in ‘collaboration with our key strategic partners’ (Welsh Government, 2023b, p. 1).

The main assumptions, links and dependencies

Changing stakeholders' behaviour and the system of support for young people

- 5.9 As well as helping understanding of the influences on young people's behaviour', the COM-B model of behavioural change can be used to explore how and why the 'behaviour' of a range of stakeholders - such as post-16 EET providers and EET support services - is expected to change, and what might stop this. It focuses attention upon their capability, opportunity and motivation to change, and as figure 5.4. illustrates, the YPG seeks to address each of these components, for example:
- additional funding can be understood as increasing stakeholders' capability and motivation to change; and
 - national goals, specifications, requirements and engagement with stakeholders can be understood as influencing their motivation to change, and might also remove or modify external constraints on change (increasing their opportunity to change).
- 5.10 However, these are very unlikely to be the only factors shaping stakeholders' capabilities, motivations and opportunities to change (and it will be important to consider the impact of these other factors too).
- 5.11 A further important line of inquiry for the evaluation is likely to be understanding to what extent the YPG changed existing provision and practice (i.e. the system of support for young people), rather than simply rebadging existing provision. This could include exploring how effective the mechanisms outlined in figure 5.4. were, for example, in:
- establishing new EET support services;
 - reshaping existing EET support services (for example, to ensure they were better aligned); and/or
 - influencing post-16 EET providers and employers.

- 5.12 This exploration of mechanisms would be enhanced by an exploration of how other factors changed practice (and therefore changed the system of support for young people). These could include, for example, changes in:
- UK Government, Welsh Government or LA policies;
 - the behaviour of other stakeholders, including young people themselves (who may choose to, or not to, engage with EET providers and support services); and
 - the behaviour of employers which could, for example, influence EET providers, support services and young people and which could be influenced by the behaviours of education and training providers, support services and young people.

The effectiveness of different components of the system

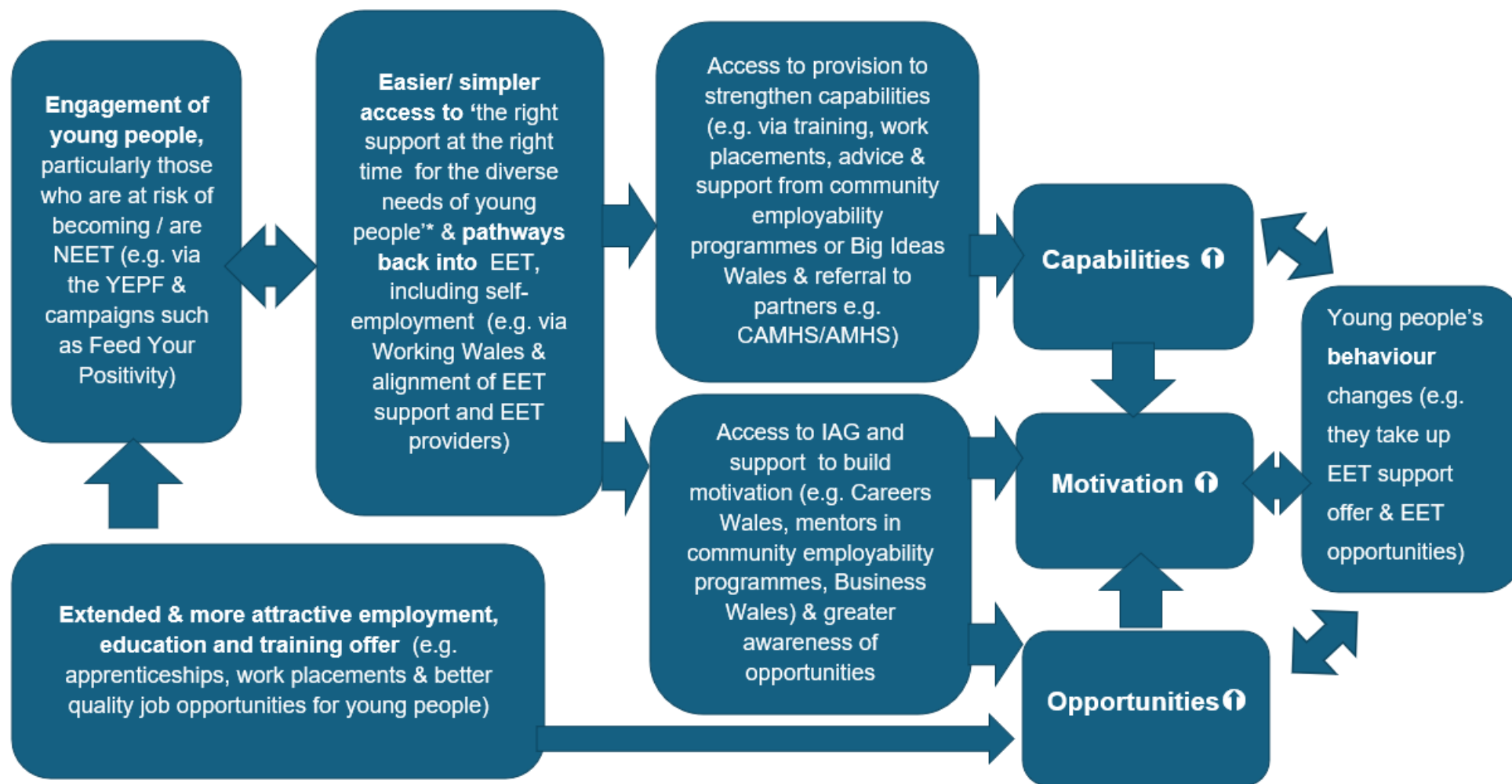
- 5.13 Building upon existing provision (rather than reshaping or creating new provision) is logical where that provision works well. Understanding how effective different components of the YPG are, such as EET support - whether existing, reshaped or new - is likely to be another important line of inquiry. This is expected to draw upon existing evaluations and reviews (for example, by Estyn) and to identify the main gaps where further evaluation is warranted. For example, as the [Rapid Evidence Review: Supporting young people who are Not in Employment Education or Training](#) (Welsh Government 2024b, 2024c) identifies, the evidence is clear that it is not only what is done but how well it is done (or implemented) that matters (International Labour Organisation, 2017). Factors such as adequacy of resourcing and the skill and capabilities of staff are main factors which shape interventions' effectiveness. Collaboration, integration and involvement are also important aspects of effective practice.

Systemic effects

- 5.14 The different components of the YPG are expected to work together. For example (most obviously), Working Wales is expected to provide a single, simple route to support. Understanding interactions, such as synergies or tensions, between different parts of the system, and also the wider context,

will therefore be vital in understanding the overall impact of the YPG. These interactions mean that the attributes (or 'behaviour') of the system cannot be understood by looking at each component in isolation (HM Treasury, 2020a). Moreover, as outlined above, the implementation and effectiveness of some components of the system, such as working Wales, or changes in the context, such as economic growth or contraction, may have disproportionate impact effects on other parts of the system.

Figure 5.5. Theory of change for young people who are, or are at risk of becoming, NEET



*Welsh Government, 2022b, p. 13.

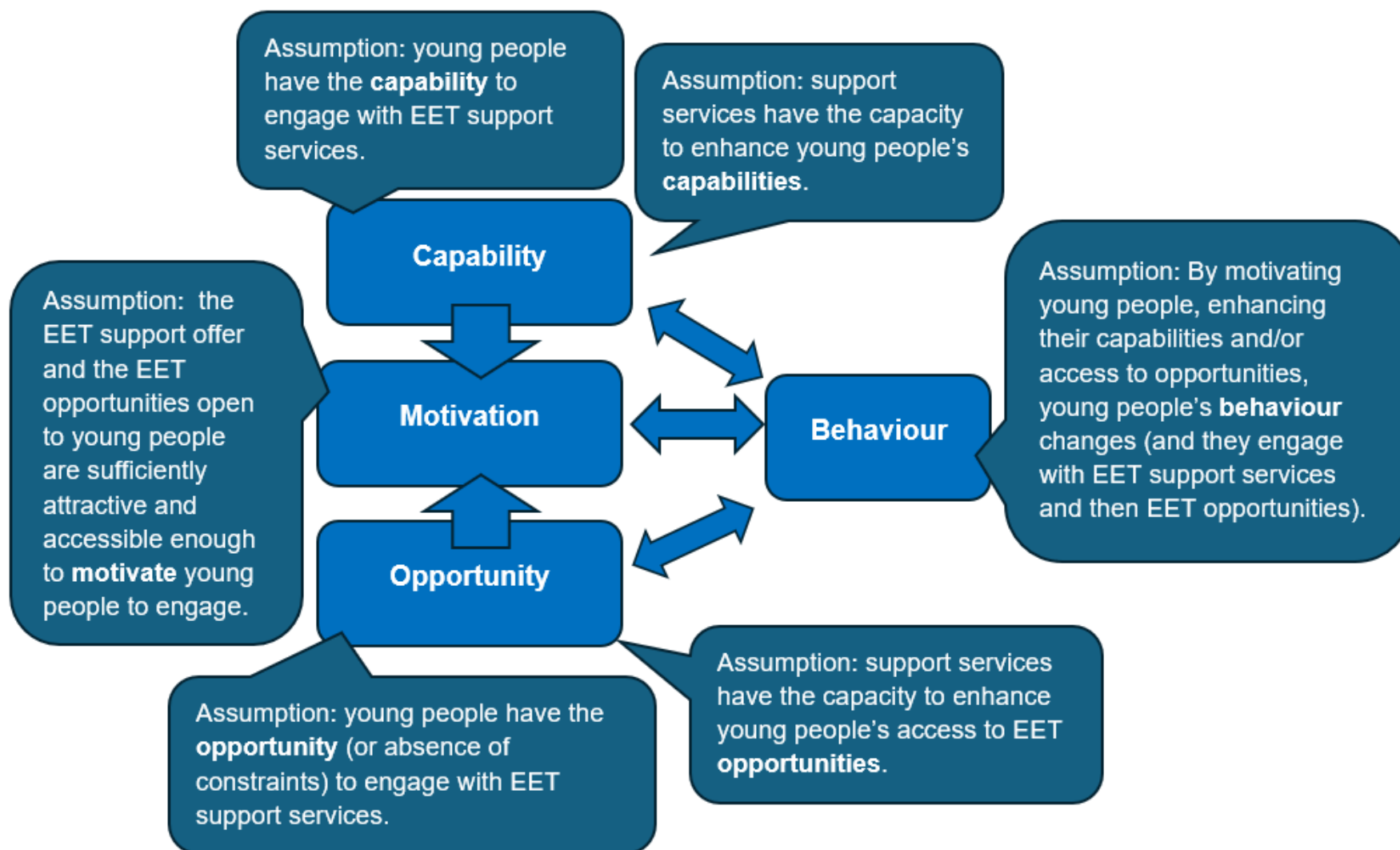
Main assumptions, links and dependencies

5.15 As figure 5.5. illustrates, the COM-B model of behavioural change is useful in understanding how and why the behaviour of young people is expected to change in two important ways:

- firstly engaging with EET support services; and
- secondly, having engaged with EET support services, then engaging with EET opportunities.

5.16 As figure 5.6. illustrates, the COM-B model is also useful in considering why young people's behaviour might not change. The [Rapid Evidence Review: supporting young people who are not in employment, education, or training | GOV.WALES](#) (Welsh Government 2024b, 2024c), suggests a number of important assumptions which need to be tested, as the evidential base underpinning them is weaker, than other assumptions that underpin the YPG's theory of change.

Figure 5.6. The COM-B Framework and the main assumptions underpinning the YPG



Adapted from Michie et al., 2011.

Assumption 1: the YPG will motivate young people to change their behaviour and engage with support services

5.17 This assumption may be vulnerable, because there is evidence that large numbers of young people choose not to engage with EET support services (Welsh Government, 2024b). This may for example be because:

- young people have become discouraged and do not believe that they can access EET opportunities;
- young people perceive that the post-16 EET opportunities open to them are unattractive (for example, in terms of pay or working conditions); and/or
- weakness in young people's capabilities and/or access to opportunities, given potential difficulties relating to mental health or caring responsibilities, may block engagement with the EET support services; and/or
- young people perceive that EET support services are ineffective.

5.18 This may mean that EET support services struggle to motivate young people to engage with support. Therefore, it may also be important to explore the extent to which the YPG is:

- an offer of support which relies upon motivating young people who are NEET to take it up - in effect for young people to put themselves forward and ask for support; or
- an offer of support plus active outreach (for example, in the same way as for the YEPF, for 16 to 18 year-olds), to identify and engage young people who are NEET but who might not otherwise seek support.

Assumption 2: the YPG will enhance young people's capability and access to opportunities, enabling them to change their behaviour

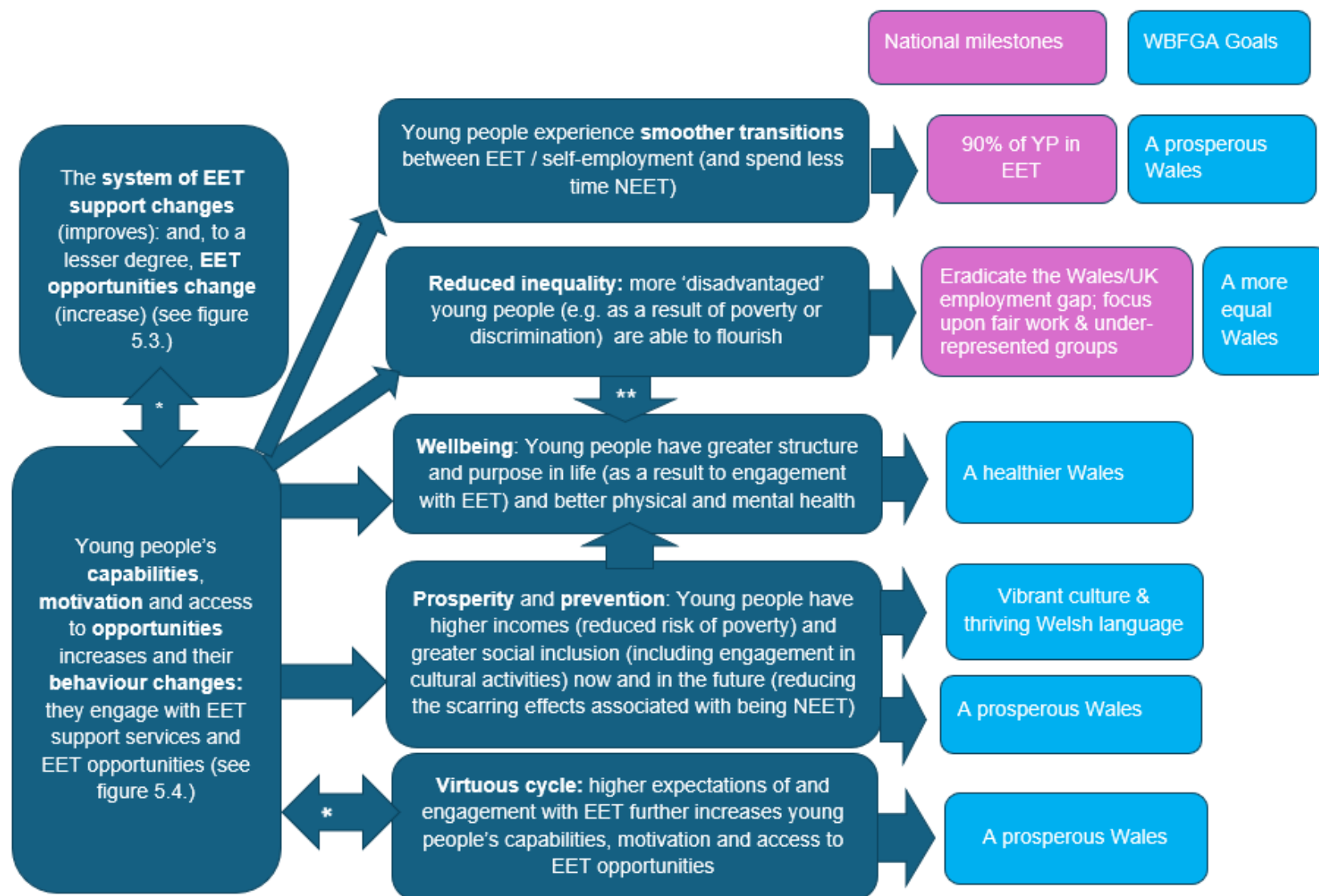
5.19 Even if young people take up the offer of support, services may still struggle to enhance young people's capabilities, motivation and/or access to post-16 EET opportunities (Welsh Government, 2024b). Therefore, it may also be important to explore the extent to which EET support services and/or referrals to partners (such as CAMHS/AMHS) are able to sufficiently strengthen young people's capabilities and/or their access to opportunities, so that they can find

EET opportunities that are close enough to their aspirations and expectations for them to be motivated and able to take them up.

Assumption 3. The YPG is an inclusive offer for every young person

- 5.20 This assumption may be vulnerable because of the variation in young people's motivations, capabilities and access to opportunities. For example, there is evidence that EET support services generally struggle to both engage and help those with the most complex barriers (ibid.). It is possible, for example, that the YPG is effective for those young people who are NEET because they are 'undecided' (and lack motivation), but is less effective with those who are 'stuck' or even regressing (who also have constrained capabilities and/or access to opportunities). Therefore, understanding which groups the YPG works well with, and who it works less well with is likely to be another important line of inquiry.

Figure 5.7. Theory of change for the impact of the YPG



* Engagement with EET can further strengthen young people’s capabilities, motivation and/or access to opportunities (for example, employers can be more positively disposed to employ young people with work experience, and the young people’s social networks can expand), creating a virtuous cycle (hence the double headed arrows).

** Reducing inequality can help promote well-being (see, for example, Pickett & Wilkinson, 2009).

Main assumptions

5.21 As outlined in the [Rapid Evidence Review: Supporting Young People Who are Not in Employment Education or Training](#) (Welsh Government 2024b, 2024c), there is a large body of evidence outlining the positive benefits associated with engagement with EET for individuals and society. However, some research also cautions that the benefits of engagement with low quality EET, such as poorly paid, insecure work with few opportunities for progression, are much more limited, and in some cases, the impact upon some aspects of young people’s well-being may even be negative.

5.22 Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that these high-level outcomes are subject to multiple influences, diluting the potential impact of the YPG and increasing the importance of external (contextual) factors such as those highlighted in figure 5.3, including:

- shocks, like the pandemic or Brexit;
- cycles (such as the economic cycle); and
- longer term trends, such as increasing educational attainment and increasing mental health disorders¹⁵ amongst young people.

¹⁵ This language is not consistent with the Social Model of Disability the Welsh Government uses. However, it is used here because this point is based on NHS Digital data (for England), which are official statistics on probable levels of ‘mental health disorder’ among children and young people, estimated using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (NHS Digital, 2023).

5.23 Such factors can both:

- disrupt, distort or enhance the anticipated mechanisms for generating these outcomes. For example, where changes in young people's health changes their motivation to engage with the YPG's offer of support; and/or
- directly shape these outcomes. For example, where wider economic and social forces directly shape young people's health,¹⁶ and these effects multiply or dilute the direct impacts of engagement with EET upon young people's health.

¹⁶ See for example, Institute of Health Equity (2020) for a discussion of the social determinants of health.

6. Evaluation questions

Introduction

6.1 Given the high-level theory of change (outlined in section 2) and the theories of change that sit under it (outlined in section 3-5), the evaluation needs to assess impact (the difference the YPG has made) at three levels:

- **Policy and practice:** how the offer of support to 16 to 24 years olds changes (policy outcomes¹⁷);
- **Young people's behaviour:** how the behaviour of 16 to 24 years olds changes in response to changes in the offer of support (behavioural outcomes, such as engaging with EET support programmes and engaging with EET); and
- **Societal outcomes:** how changes in the behaviour of 16 to 24 years olds contributes to social outcomes, such as strengthening of Wales' prosperity, health and language.

6.2 As implicitly identified in the high-level theory of change, it will also need to look at how change within one level affects the other levels.

6.3 This section outlines an overarching aim for evaluation at each of the three levels, focused upon identifying the impact of the YPG. It also includes a series of additional evaluation questions based upon those suggested in the specification for the study (Welsh Government, 2022c) relating to the evaluation of the YPG and/or the YEPF (which complements the YPG and forms part of this evaluability assessment and process evaluation).¹⁸ These proposed questions include:

- process evaluation questions (that is, 'what can be learned from how the intervention was delivered?');
- specific questions related to the YEPF;

¹⁷ This will need to consider both policy on paper and practice (for example, considering delivery/ implementation).

¹⁸ Unless indicated otherwise (that is, by quotation marks) the language used in the specification (Welsh Government, 2022b) has been lightly edited to, for example, turn statements into evaluation questions, while preserving the intent.

- impact evaluation questions (that is, ‘What difference did the YPG make?’); and
- economic evaluation questions (that is, ‘To what extent did the benefits of the YPG outweigh the costs?’) (Adapted from HM Treasury, 2020b).

Policy and practice: evaluation aim and questions

- 6.4 **Aim:** to identify if the YPG changed the nature or extent of support for young people (aged 16 to 24) to gain a place in education or training, or an apprenticeship, find a job or become self-employed. And if so, how and why.
- 6.5 The research questions will explore what worked well and why, stakeholders’ roles and differences between them in delivery of the YPG including the following questions.

Process evaluation questions about the YPG

1. How well have intentions and expectations of the YPG from its instigators been communicated to other stakeholders, such as Welsh Government policy and delivery colleagues, particularly those who lead on education, employability, self-employment support, health and sponsorship of Careers/Working Wales, and education and training providers, information, advice and guidance services (for example, Careers Wales), employment and self-employment support services, local authorities (especially Engagement and Progression Co-ordinators and Youth Workers) and strategic bodies such as Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs)?
2. Were/are stakeholders aware of the support and guidance provided by the Welsh Government to deliver the YPG and was/is this support and guidance valued?
3. What was the role of stakeholders in setting the direction and expectations of the YPG, including the roles played by different partners?
4. How well did stakeholders work together to deliver the YPG? What is working well and what have been the challenges in embedding the ‘Team Wales’ ethos?

5. What progress has been made towards implementing the YPG? For example, were there any observed changes in the policy or provision of EET support for young people?
6. To what extent did implementation of the YPG embody the five ways of working laid out in the WBFGA ('involvement'; 'integration'; 'prevention'; 'long-term'; 'collaboration')?
7. Did (i) employers and (ii) providers face any obstacles and, if so, were these overcome and, if so, how?
8. Was there any impact on employers' attitudes to employing young people, including what they believe to be the main barriers and benefits of employing young people?
9. What strategies were put in place to promote the YPG and engage the target groups of young people?
10. Were there any differences in how the offer of support to young people changed in different geographical areas (for example, regions) or for different groups of young people (for example, those aged 16 to 18, those aged 19+)?
11. Were there any unintended changes/outcomes?
12. What good practice, important learning (for example, barriers/enablers, what worked/didn't work) and areas for further development were identified?

Process evaluation questions about the YEPF

13. Has the new YEPF guidance¹⁹ led to changes in stakeholders' understanding of roles, responsibilities and partnership working to deliver the YEPF?
14. To what extent do stakeholders understand the alignment between the YEPF and the YPG? What role has the refreshed YEPF played in clarifying

¹⁹ This includes the [YEPF Overview and Handbook](#) published in 2022 and the [Early Identification Guidance](#) published in 2023.

roles and responsibilities for organisations and increasing understanding of the options available to support young people aged 16 to 18 who are, or are at risk of being, NEET?

15. To what extent do the partner organisations involved in the YEPF delivery feel accountable for reducing NEET rates and what processes, if any, were in place to measure the impact of what they were doing?
16. What other monitoring information on young people who are judged at risk of becoming NEET, or who are NEET, is being collected at the local authority (LA) level and how effectively is this driving decisions and partnership working at the local level?
17. To what extent were young people supported under the YEPF signposted to support for their emotional and mental health and well-being when needed?

Economic evaluation questions

18. What were the additional costs (that is, funding spent on specific YPG related activity or for new programmes (such as JGW+) that are specifically under the YPG umbrella and did not previously exist), of delivering the YPG (and changing the support offer)?
19. What were the costs for different components of the YPG (for example, employment support, education, self-employment)?

Impact evaluation questions

20. To what extent could observed changes in regional or local authority level policy and provision of EET support for young people be attributed to the YPG policy, and how much was influenced by other factors? For example, how credible is the theory of change linking the YPG to changes in policy and practice?²⁰ How and why do stakeholders report policy changed? And what evidence is there about the likely impact of the wider context upon policy and implementation?
21. How sustainable are the policy outcomes of the YPG likely to be in the medium to long term?

²⁰ See sections 3 to 5 of this report for further details.

22. What were the costs and benefits of the YPG for stakeholders such as employers?

Proposed evaluation aim and questions about the effectiveness of the YPG in changing young people's behaviour

- 6.6 **Overarching aim:** to identify if changes in the offer of support to young people aged 16 to 24 (see questions about policy and practice) contributed to a change in the behaviour of young people in relation to:
- i. the take up of the offer of education, employment, training and/or self-employment (EETSE) support; and/or
 - ii. their participation in EETSE²¹
and, if so, how, why and for whom (which groups of young people)?
- 6.7 Research questions exploring young people's response to the YPG offer include the following:

Process evaluation questions

23. What is young people's understanding of the YPG, including of what support is available; how support is accessed; and how accessible it is? ²²
24. What are young people's expectations of the YPG, including what they want from the offer of support?
25. What are the experiences of young people accessing the programmes and services (mainly Careers Wales/Working Wales) that underpin the YPG?
26. How robust are different YPG pathways through EETSE?

²¹ These should both be measurable / quantifiable and may form the basis for key performance indicators (KPIs). We note that if the YPG is successful, the proportion of young people in EET will increase. However, it is also possible that the YPG is having an effect but the effect is not a big enough effect to change national indicators. For example, if there is an economic downturn and unemployment and economic inactivity (and the numbers of young people who are NEET) increases it is possible that an increase in the numbers of young people who were NEET would be larger without the YPG.

²² As noted in the specification for this research, 'Special consideration should be paid to the accessibility of the YPG to deliver services to young people not in Education, Training and Employment (NEET), those furthest away from the labour market, people with Protected Characteristics and those who face additional barriers to accessing and sustaining work' (Welsh Government, 2022b, pp. 13 to 14).

27. To what extent do young people feel that they have a say in the development of policy and the design of services and are given a voice to challenge the system (especially under-represented groups)?
28. To what extent are strategies put in place to promote the YPG, and engage the target group of young people, working? For example, are participant numbers in line with the targets?
29. How effective are referrals for young people most at risk of disengagement from EET?
30. Are there patterns and trends in which groups of young people are, or are not, engaging with the YPG offer?
31. Why are some eligible young people not accessing the opportunity or dropping out of the process before a positive outcome?
32. Are there any subjective early outcomes linked to involvement with any of the programmes/services that form part of the YPG, such as: changes in confidence or resilience; changes in aspirations or goals; changes in mental health or well-being; confidence in financial or employability skills?
33. What contribution has the YPG made to building networks of employment support for young people?
34. Were there any unintended outcomes/changes in young people's behaviour?
35. What is working well and what is not working so well (including the barriers and facilitators for young people furthest from the labour market entering EETSE via the YPG)?
36. What can be learnt from the YPG about 'what works for whom and when' for young people seeking progression into EETSE?
37. Is the current mode of delivery suitable, given the YPG aims and objectives?

Process Evaluation questions about the YEPF

38. What is the contribution of the YEPF to supporting young people [aged 11 to 18] at risk of disengaging from education, training, and employment and taking up the YPG support offer?
39. How effective is the YEPF in enabling a smooth transition from (pre-16) education into (post-16) further or higher education, training or employment?

Economic evaluation questions

40. What was the cost per participant supported under the YPG?²³
41. What was the cost per positive outcome (entry into EETSE), for each participant supported under the YPG?
42. Is the resource provided by the YPG effectively targeted at the young people who need it and proportionate to their level of need?

Impact Evaluation Questions

43. How sustainable are the behavioural outcomes of the YPG likely to be in the medium to long term?
44. What is the contribution of the YEPF to the outcomes of the YPG?
45. How credible is the theory of change linking changes in policy (primarily the offer of support) to changes in young people's behaviour in relation to EETSE? For example, can underlying assumptions be tested using data or evidence from other comparable interventions? Is there evidence that intermediate outcomes (such as expansion of programmes) have been generated as anticipated? What evidence is there about the likely impact of the context upon young people's behaviour?
46. Were there any observed changes in young people's behaviour? If so, how much of a change was there from the pre-YPG period, and how much could be said to have been caused by the YPG policy as opposed to other factors?

²³ This might be more meaningful if calculated for different strands or components of the YPG rather than as an overall figure for all young people supported by the YPG.

Questions about societal change

- 6.8 **Overarching aim:** to identify if changes in the behaviour of young people (aged 16 to 24) in relation to their participation in EETSE (see questions about young people's behaviour) contributed to a change in societal outcomes (for example, contribution to the WBFGA goals)?
- 6.9 Additional research questions include the following:

Impact evaluation questions

47. What is the contribution of the YPG to important Welsh Government priorities including: the Plan for Employability and Skills, the WBFGA, the YEPF, Net Zero Wales, the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan and Cymraeg 2050?
48. How credible is the theory of change linking changes in young people's behaviour with societal outcomes and Welsh Government policy outcomes? For example, can underlying assumptions be tested using data or evidence from other comparable interventions? Is there evidence that intermediate outcomes (such as changes in young people's behaviour) have been generated as anticipated? What evidence is there about the likely impact of the context upon societal outcomes?
49. To what extent are the YPG and YEPF contributing to achievement of the National Milestone that at least 90% of 16 to 24-year-olds will be in education, employment or training by 2050?
50. Were there any observed changes in societal outcomes? And if so, how much of a change was there from the pre-YPG period, and how much could be said to have been caused by the YPG policy as opposed to other factors?
51. How sustainable are the societal outcomes of the YPG likely to be in the medium to long term?

Economic evaluation questions

52. To what extent have or will the societal benefits of the YPG outweigh its economic costs?²⁴

Cross-cutting themes for analysis

- 6.10 To a certain extent, the proposed approach involves a focus upon individual component parts of the YPG, such as programmes like CfW+, JGW+ and ReAct+. It will be important to understand the engagement of, experiences of, and outcomes for, different groups of young people (for example, male and female, disabled and non-disabled young people) accessing these different programmes, in order to better understand what works for whom.

²⁴ This would only be viable at a programme rather than system level.

7. Measuring change: system and programme levels

- 7.1 As outlined in sections 1 and 5, the YPG is composed of a large number of individual component parts, which collectively form the system of support.²⁵ By shaping and mobilising this system, the YPG aims to ensure that all young people aged 16 to 24 have the offer of support to gain a place in education, training or an apprenticeship, find a job or become self-employed. Change can be measured at both the level of the whole system and also at the level of an individual component, such as a programme.
- 7.2 As the name suggests, a systems level measure covers the whole system. For example, the percentage of young people who are NEET is a systems level measure. In contrast, a component level measure only covers a part (or component) of the system, usually an individual programme that supports the YPG, such as the CfW+ or JGW+ programmes. Because programme level measures only cover one part of the system, they can only provide a partial picture. Moreover, it is generally not possible to aggregate programme level data to provide a more complete composite picture. For example, adding the number of Working Wales (WW) clients to JGW+ clients would risk double counting young people first supported by WW and then supported by JGW+.²⁶ However, setting KPIs for individual programmes means that it is possible to draw up a picture of how different programme parts supporting the YPG are performing (meaning there are also benefits to using programme level data, rather than just system level data).

²⁵ Importantly there was a support offer before the YPG and understanding if and how this support offer has changed is a central part of the evaluation.

²⁶ Streamlining of employment support with, for example, JGW+ focusing upon 16 to 19 year-olds while CW+ focuses upon those aged 20+, should make this simpler.

System level measures

There are six primary sources for system wide measures:

- the Annual Population Survey (APS);²⁷
- Statistical First Release (SFR) data;²⁸
- Careers Wales' (CW) pupil destination survey;²⁹
- Careers Wales categorisation (cat) data³⁰ (see appendix D);
- The Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR);
- Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data.³¹

Programme level measures

Programme level measures would be based upon management information (MI) from individual programmes such as Working Wales, Business Wales and JGW+.

7.3 Based upon the availability of data, the KPIs use system level measures where available and programme level measures where not. This is illustrated in table 7.1.

²⁷ The APS is a large household survey that includes questions on people's education and employment status. APS data is timelier but is considered to be less reliable than the Statistical First Release data.

²⁸ The SFR is based upon data drawn from schools (the Pupil Level Annual School Census: PLASC), FE and WBL (the LLWR) and HE (the Higher Education Statistics Authority and the Open University). The data also considers population estimates and the APS (Welsh Government, 2020).

²⁹ The survey seeks to identify the destinations of pupils from years 11, 12 and 13.

³⁰ Young people aged 16 to 18 are categorised into one of five tiers, depending upon their assessed risk of disengagement. Further details are provided in Appendix D.

³¹ These data are included in the SFR on young people who are NEET. However, they would also be used as measures for the numbers (and proportions) of young people in different types of EET.

Table 7.1. Using system and programme level measures

Level of change	How has it changed	Why has it changed
Policy and practice	Focus upon change of individual programmes (for example, how has CfW+ changed?)	Focus upon change of individual programmes (for example, why has CfW+ changed?)
Young people's behaviour	Focus upon change in young people's behaviour in relation to individual programmes (for example, how has the number of young people engaging with/supported by CfW+ changed?)	Focus upon change in young people's behaviour in relation to individual programmes (for example, why has the number of young people engaging with/supported by CfW+ changed?)
	Focus upon change in the whole system (for example, how has the percentage of young people who are NEET changed?)	Focus upon change in relation to whole system (for example, why has the percentage of young people who are NEET changed?)
Societal outcomes	Focus upon change in the whole system (for example, how has the well-being of young people changed?)	Focus upon change in the whole system (for example, why has the well-being of young people changed?)

Measuring progress at individual level

- 7.4 In theory, change could also be measured at the level of an individual young person (the micro level). Projects like the Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) pilot allow for the tracking of individuals over time (a longitudinal design), and exploring the feasibility of tracking outcomes for individuals supported by YPG provision in the future is recommended.

Proposed performance framework for the YPG and YEPF

7.5 The theory of change for the YPG provides the basis for identifying what changes we would expect to observe if the YPG were successful. In particular, it identifies that in order to achieve its aims, such as increasing the proportion of young people in EET,³² the YPG will need to encourage and enable changes in young people's behaviour. These expected changes inform the KPIs. The KPIs would enable the YPG policy team to monitor progress and performance at a system and programme level.

Change in policy and provision at a programme level

7.6 As outlined in the introduction and section 5, the YPG is composed of a range of different programmes. Some of these programmes, such as the Out of Work Service (OoWS) predated the YPG (and are described as legacy programmes); some of these legacy programmes, such as the YEPF, have been refreshed; others such as CfW+ have been extended (or expanded) with additional YPG funding; and some, such as Big Ideas Wales, are new programmes established to support the YPG. Understanding the performance of each programme, in terms of the numbers of young people taking up the support they offer, the numbers of young people they support who enter EET, and the characteristics of these young people, such as their sex, gender identity and ethnicity, will be important to evaluate the performance of different parts of the YPG.

Using data on the performance of different programmes

The YPG is composed of multiple different programmes, and understanding which programmes are performing strongly and which are struggling will be important in assessing the overall performance of the YPG. This could, for example, be used to create a virtual dashboard to show the relative performance of different programmes.³³ Moreover, measuring any changes in performance (particularly of

³² For example, the YPG is expected to contribute to achievement of the national milestone that 'At least 90% of 16 to 24 year-olds will be in education, employment, or training by 2050' (Welsh Government, 2022a, p. 4).

³³ Exploration of the reasons for differing relative performance could then be explored at a programme level.

refreshed or extended legacy programmes) will, as outlined in section 9, be important evidence that can be considered as part of the impact evaluation. For example, where additional YPG funding was invested in a programme, identifying what impact this additional funding had upon the programme, and upon the numbers and characteristics of young people supported, and outcomes for young people, would all be important questions when considering the impact of the YPG. Although it will be important to consider the performance of different programmes, given differences in programmes such as funding and targeting (which groups of young people they aim to support), direct comparison between them would not be appropriate. Instead, judgments about performance would need to be made against the objectives of each programme, such as targets for the numbers of young people supported (engaged) and the proportion of young people supported by the programme entering EET.

7.7 Taken together (in aggregate) the programme level KPIs would provide an indication of the degree (extent and type) of programme performance at a system level and also the extent of change in performance over time.

Change in young people's behaviour at a system level

7.8 Given the overlap between the YPG, which covers 16 to 24 year-olds, and the YEPP, which covers 11 to 18 year-olds, the performance framework is structured into three parts covering the following:

- young people aged 11 to 18 (a measure of the performance of the YEPP in relation to prevention);
- young people aged 16 to 18 (a measure of the combined performance of the YEPP and YPG in both preventing young people from becoming NEET and re-engaging those who have); and
- young people aged 19-24 (a measure of the performance of the YPG in re-engaging young people who are NEET).

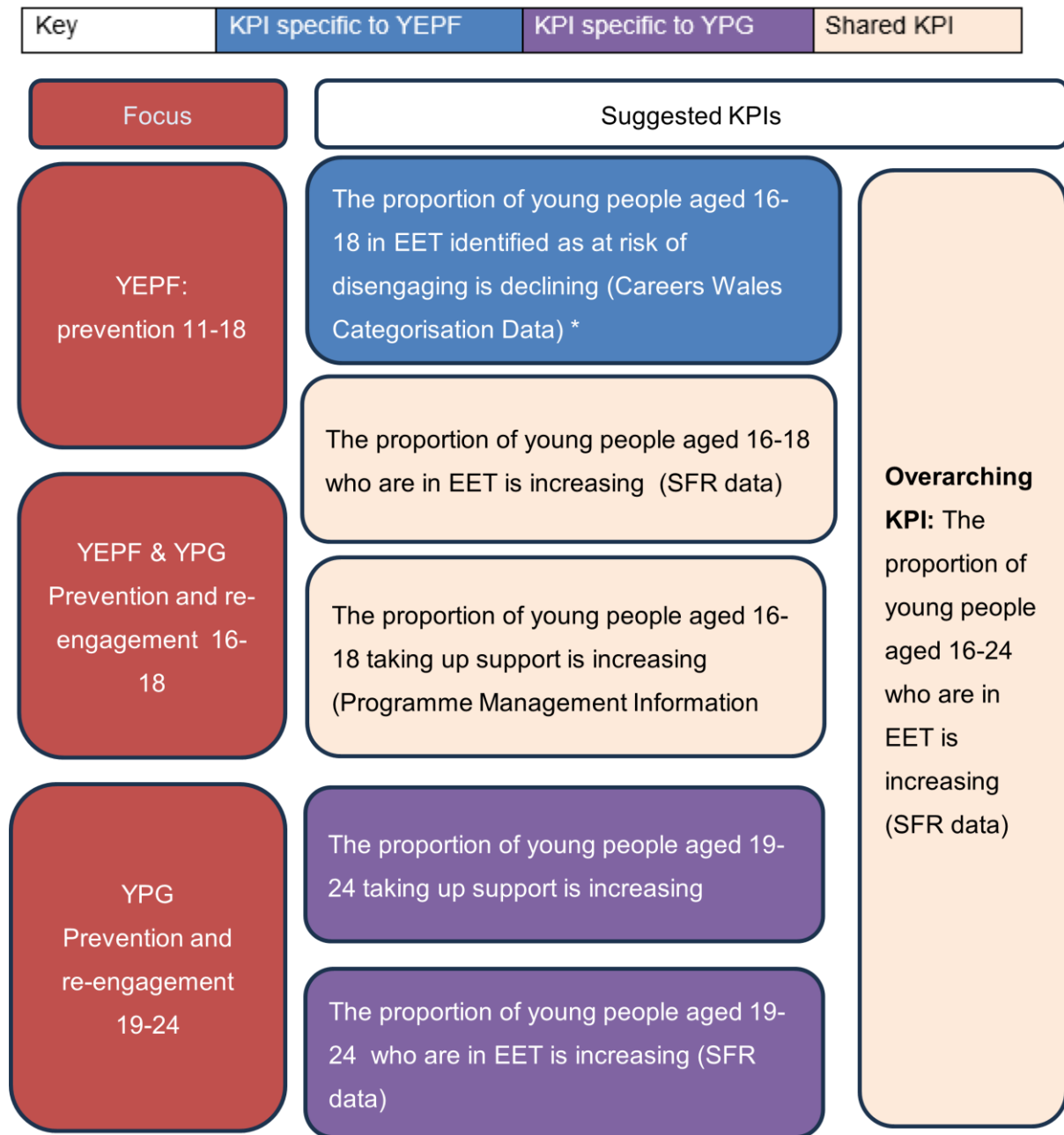
Proposed Key Performance Indicators

- 7.9 The proposed KPIs for this evaluation framework are outlined below. In the interests of simplicity, the outline (and Figure 7.1) only considers the percentage of all young people in Wales as a whole group (making these, therefore, headline KPIs).³⁴ However, as indicated below, wherever possible for each KPI the percentage change for different groups of young people (for example, women, disabled young people) should also be considered. This is discussed further below. Further details on the Careers Wales (CW) categorisation framework is provided in Appendix D.
- 7.10 The proposed KPIs are intended to measure performance in relation to prevention, re-engagement and progression. However, because each of these approaches will, if successful, increase the proportion of young people in EET, there is an overlap between the KPIs (that is, the same KPI can be applied to prevention, re-engagement and progression).³⁵ This means that it will not be possible to use these shared KPIs to assess if prevention, re-engagement or progression is working. However, these shared KPIs can still be used to assess if the YPG (and, where applicable, the YEPF) as a whole is working. They also allow for the goals of the YPG to be achieved in different ways. For example, successful prevention would reduce the need for re-engagement and progression.

³⁴ The total number of young people aged 16 to 18 and 19 to 24 is known, as is, for example, the number accessing Working Wales and JGW+, so a percentage can be calculated which allows for changes in the size of the population of 16 to 18 year-olds, which is a preferable measure to just looking at the change in numerical terms.

³⁵ However, not all KPIs are shared and, in some cases, it is possible to identify additional KPIs specific to prevention, re-engagement or progression.

Figure 7.1. Performance framework: proposed headline KPIs



* A reduction in the proportion of young people aged 16 to 18 who are judged at risk of disengagement is used as a direct measure of success for those aged 16 to 18 and as a proxy measure for those aged 11 to 15, on the basis that early identification for young people aged 11 to 15 should reduce their risks of disengagement as they get older.

Proposed headline KPIs

7.11 A series of KPIs for the YEPF and/or YPG, covering 11 to 18 year-olds, 16 to 19 year olds and 19 to 24 year olds are proposed. They cover early identification and prevention, engagement and progression, and are outlined below. The KPIs are intended to measure progress against the intended outcomes described in the theories of change. Therefore, KPIs are paired with statements describing what we would expect to see, given the YEPF and YPG theory of change

Expected outcomes and proposed KPIs for the YEPF and YPG (11-18)

Early identification and prevention

- Expected outcome: young people aged 11 to 18 at risk of becoming NEET are better supported and more able to sustain EET and transitions between EET. Therefore, the proportion of young people aged 16 to 18 who are in EET increases.
- Expected outcome: over time, the proportion of young people aged 18+ who are in EET will increase (as young people make successful transitions into EET between the ages of 16 to 18).
- Proposed KPI: the percentage of young people aged 16 to 18 categorised as in Tier 5 (in and sustaining their involvement in EET) is increasing; *and* The percentage of young people aged 16 to 18 categorised* as in Tier 4 (at risk of dropping out of EET) and the percentage in Tier 3 (actively seeking EET), Tier 2 (known to CW, but not available for EET) and Tier 1 (unknown to CW) are declining (source: CW categorisation data).
- Proposed KPI: the percentage of young people in Years 11 to 13 making successful transitions from school to EET is increasing (source: CW pupil destination survey).
- Proposed KPI: the percentage of young people aged 16 to 18 who are in EET increases and this is followed over the next two years by an increase

in the numbers of young people aged 19 to 24 who are in EET (source: SFR³⁶).

Engagement

- Expected Outcome: young people aged 16 to 18 who are NEET are identified and supported to re-engage with EET (YEPF) or young people (whether in EET or not)³⁷ are encouraged to engage with support services (for example, as a result of an enhanced support offer) (YPG). Therefore, the proportion of young people aged 16 to 18 engaging with support services increases.
- Proposed KPI: the percentage of young people aged 16 to 18 in Tier 1 (unknown to CW) is declining; *and*
- The percentage in Tier 3 (actively seeking EET) is increasing (source: CW categorisation data).
- Proposed KPI: the percentage of young people aged 16 to 18 engaging with Working Wales, JGW+ and Business Wales is increasing (source: programme MI data).

Progression

- Expected Outcome: young people aged 16 to 18 who are supported re-engage with EET and sustain this. Therefore, the proportion of young people aged 16 to 18 in EET increases.
- Proposed KPI: the percentage of young people aged 16 to 18 in Tier 1 (unknown to CW) and 2 (known to CW, but not available for EET) is declining and the percentage in Tier 3 (actively seeking EET) and Tier 5 (in, sustaining EET) is increasing (source: CW categorisation data).
- Proposed KPI: the percentage increase in the numbers of young people aged 16 to 18 engaging with Working Wales, JGW+ and Business Wales is at least as large as the percentage increase in the numbers of young

³⁶ [Young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\) in Wales.](#)

³⁷ Although the YPG may be more important for young people who are NEET, it is a universal offer, open to all young people.

people aged 16 to 18 engaging with these programmes who enter EET³⁸ (source: programme MI data).

Expected outcomes and proposed KPIs for the YPG (19 to 24)

Early identification and prevention

- Expected Outcome: more young people make successful transitions between, for example, school and post-16 EET. Therefore, the proportion of young people aged 19+ who are in EET increases.
- Proposed KPI: the percentage of young people aged 19 to 24 who are in EET increases compared to the percentage among those aged 18 to 23 who were in EET the previous year (source: SFR).

Engagement

- Expected Outcome: young people aged 19 to 24 take up the YPG's offer of support. Therefore, the proportion of young people aged 16 to 24 engaging with support services increases.
- Proposed KPI: the percentage of young people aged 19 to 24 supported by EET support programmes & Business Wales is increasing (source: programme MI data).
- Potential proxy measure amongst young people who are not in EET: the percentage who are economically active (unemployed, but actively seeking employment) is increasing while the percentage who are economically inactive (excluding students) is declining (source: SFR).³⁹

Progression

- Expected Outcome: young people aged 19 to 24 who are supported, re-engage with EET and sustain this. Therefore, the proportion of young people aged 16 to 24 in EET increases.

³⁸ For example, if we assume a conversion rate of 40%, meaning 40% of participants on a programme enter EET, if the numbers of participants increases by 10%, say from 1000 to 1100, then the numbers of participants supported by programmes who enter EET should also increase by at least 10% (in this example, increasing from 400 to at least 440).

³⁹ This assumes that the YPG's offer of support encourages young people who were economically inactive to begin actively looking for work (or post-16 education and training).

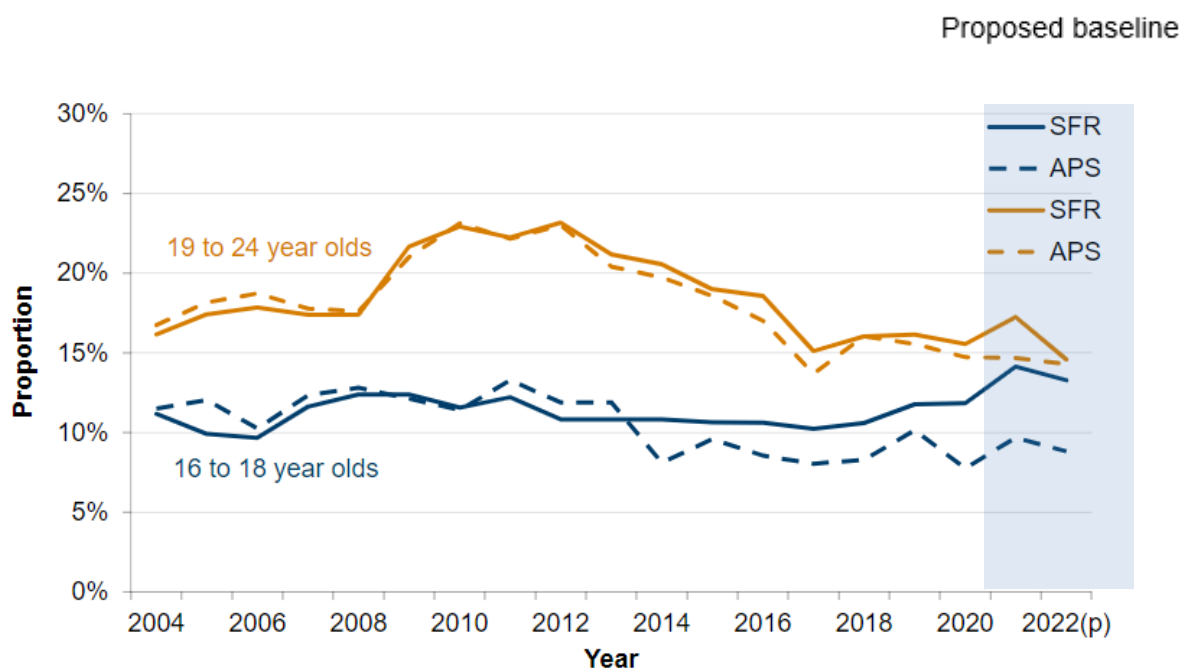
- Proposed KPI: the percentage of young people aged 19 to 24 who are economically active (employed or unemployed but actively seeking employment) or students is increasing.
- Proposed KPI: the percentage of young people who are in EET is increasing (source: SFR).
- Proposed KPI: the percentage increase in the number of young people aged 19 to 24 engaging with Working Wales, CfW+ and Business Wales is at least as large as the percentage increase in the number of young people aged 19 to 24 engaging with these programmes who enter EET⁴⁰ (source: programme MI data).

Setting baselines

7.11 Given the annual volatility in some of the relevant statistics, it is proposed that the baseline for the measurement of changes in the KPIs based upon the SFR or MI data should be set on the basis of a three year average: 2019-2021, with a rolling three year average calculated from that three year period (2020-2022; 2021-2023 etc). As Figure 7.2. illustrates, this baseline encompasses the pandemic, which was an atypical period. Given that the YPG was introduced, in part, in response to exactly this factor, however, this is judged to be appropriate.

⁴⁰ As above, if the number of participants on programmes increases by 10%, then the numbers of participants supported by programmes who enter EET should also increase by at least 10%.

Figure 7.2. Young people not in education, employment or training in Wales, 2004 to 2022



Source: Welsh Government 2023c.

7.12 The Careers Wales categorisation data is an important potential source of data, but poses some challenges if used as the basis for a KPI. For example, unlike the SFR and programme MI data, it is largely based upon subjective assessments of a young person’s orientation toward EET (using the Careers Wales categorisation tool) rather than more objective measures (such as a young person’s employment status or engagement with a programme). Moreover, this orientation is likely to be fluid, with young people moving between tiers more frequently than they would be expected to move between EET or NEET statuses, and is also sensitive to timing.⁴¹ When calculating baselines it would also be important to avoid double counting (when for example young people moved from one tier to another in a given period of time). Finally, as with any data set, it is only as good as the data that is inputted, and, for example, delays in education and training providers submitting accurate, timely information about, for example, young people dropping off courses, means it may not be accurate.

⁴¹ For example, the numbers of young people who are NEET tends to peak at the end of the school year.

8. Data: availability, adequacy and analysis/use

8.1 As outlined in sections 3 to 5, in accordance with the three interlinked theories of change, the YPG evaluation will need to focus upon three levels:

- **Policy and practice:** how the offer of support to 16 to 24 year-olds changes (policy outcomes⁴²);
- **Young people's behaviour:** how the behaviour of 16 to 24 year-olds changes in response to changes in the offer of support (behavioural outcomes); and
- **Societal outcomes:** how changes in the behaviour of 16 to 24 year-olds contributes to social outcomes, such as strengthening of Wales' well-being and the Welsh language.

8.2 Given the evaluation questions outlined in section 6, in summary, for each level, the evaluation needs to explore both:

- **what** changed (how, for example, policy and practice change); and
- **why** it changed (including, in particular, the contribution made by the YPG to any observed changes).

8.3 Figure 8.1 (below) provides an overview of the different types of primary and secondary data sources proposed to be consulted to collate data on what changed and why at each of the three levels outlined above.

This use of multiple sources will enable triangulation of data, make the best use of existing secondary data and help ensure that the analysis of how and why change occurs is comprehensive and credible. A brief overview of these different sources of data is provided in tables 8.1 to 8.5.

⁴² This will need to consider both policy on paper and practice (e.g. considering delivery / implementation).

Figure 8.1. Answering how and why questions



*Young people's' participation in EET can be considered both a behavioural & a societal outcome.

**Likely to consider, for example, programmes' contribution to WBFGA goals.

*** The National Conversation was launched in May 2022 and aims to give young people a voice about their experiences of post-16 EET.

**** 100 young people with different characteristics will be interviewed as part of the process evaluation.

Table 8.1. Summary of data sources – governmental stakeholders

Data source	Function(s)	Comment(s)	Appraisal
Interviews with the Welsh Government YPG policy team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide data needed for the process, impact and economic evaluations,⁴³ for example on: • policy intent (intended/desired outcomes) and perceived successes/impacts, barriers and/or enablers to policy change etc; and • the ‘levers’ used (mechanisms for changing policy and practice, such as funding, guidance, communications, networks). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliant in large part upon qualitative data regarding what was done, why and how effective it was. • However, this data may be confirmed by policy documents and the like (for example, evidencing the levers used), and judgments of effectiveness can be triangulated with responses from those delivering the YPG. • Can be used to explore change at both system and programme level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection through the process evaluation (PE) is feasible and should only impose a modest burden upon stakeholders. • For the policy team, interviews require use of personal data (names and contact details), but a new Privacy Notice will not be required. However, it will be required for staff in Medr (the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research). • The timing of any future impact evaluation may mean that it

⁴³ The impact evaluation would require data on both costs and benefits to assess if the YPG is a good use of resources. An assessment of costs and benefits will (in part) draw upon data from the process and impact evaluations (for example, numbers of young people supported, numbers of young people achieving positive outcomes). To avoid duplication, when discussing economic evaluation, the table focuses upon financial data rather than data on, for example, numbers of young people supported or numbers of young people achieving positive outcomes, which would come from the process and impact evaluations.

<p>Interviews with those delivering the YPG*</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide data needed for the process, impact and economic evaluations, for instance on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how programmes changed because of the YPG (for example, what are programmes doing differently because of it) and why (for example, have changes been made in response to WG guidance, funding mechanisms, etc.), including barriers and enablers to policy change. - perspectives on how and why young people’s behaviour may be changing/have changed as a result of the YPG.⁴⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliant in large part upon qualitative data regarding if, how and why policy and young people’s behaviour have changed, drawn from a small-scale sample of those involved in delivering programmes across Wales (n=35-50). • Responses will need to be triangulated with other sources (for example, programme evaluations), to assess internal and external validity.⁴⁵ • It may be difficult to determine if policy on paper is/has been implemented as intended/planned, and therefore has in fact changed in practice (although other 	<p>would be necessary to re-interview stakeholders to identify changes in the intervening period (e.g. if a long period elapsed between the process evaluation and any future impact evaluation).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with those delivering the YPG would require the use of personal data (names and contact details) and a Privacy Notice.
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⁴⁴ Without needlessly duplicating programme evaluations (where available).

⁴⁵ Internal validity describes whether the concept that is studied is adequately described and, for example, evidence of a causal relationship is sound or robust. External validity describes whether the study findings can be generalized to other contexts (Bryman, 2012).

		sources, such as programme evaluations may provide evidence of this).	
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*Additional information on stakeholder interviews is included in Appendix C.

Table 8.2. Summary of data sources – young people

Data source	Function(s)	Comment(s)	Appraisal
Interviews with young people from across Wales, in order to explore the experiences of different groups of young people, with special consideration to young people not in Education, Training and Employment (NEET), those furthest away from the labour market,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide data needed for the process and impact evaluations, such as: • how and why young people’s behaviour is changing; • young people’s involvement in policy and programme development; • young people’s experiences of and awareness of the YPG and/or YEPP; and • the perceived impact of the YPG and/or YEPP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliant in large part upon qualitative data regarding experiences of the YPG and how and why behaviour may have changed that will be drawn from a small-scale sample of young people (n=100). • Responses will need to be triangulated with other sources (for example, programme evaluations) to help assess internal and external validity. • Offers some scope to explore the experiences of those not 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection through the PE is feasible and should only impose a modest burden upon stakeholders. • Sharing and use of personal data, such as contact details, will require Privacy Notices. • Collection and use of ‘special category’ data will require the lawful basis and condition to be identified and a data protection impact assessment (DPIA). • Depending on the timing of any future impact evaluation, it

<p>people with Protected Characteristics and those who face additional barriers to accessing and sustaining work. Sampling should include those engaging with support such as Careers Wales/Working Wales and relevant programmes⁴⁶, and those who are not engaging with such support.</p>		<p>engaging with the YPG. Although qualitative findings may be transferable to other similar groups, settings and contexts the scope to generalise from small-scale samples will depend on factors like the contexts and the characteristics of the young people interviewed.</p>	<p>might be necessary to re-interview stakeholders to identify changes in the intervening period.</p>
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⁴⁶ With account taken of the need to avoid duplication with evaluations of individual programmes.

Table 8.3. Summary of data sources – documents and programme data

Data source	Function(s)	Comment(s)	Appraisal
Desk based review of policy and programme documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide data needed for the process, impact and economic evaluations,⁴⁷ for example on: • policy intent (intended/desired outcomes); and • the ‘levers’ to be used (mechanisms for changing policy and practice, such as funding, guidance, communications, networks). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There can be a gap between policy intent and policy as implemented and it will be important to explore this through interviews and other sources of data, such as programme MI and financial data. • Can be used to explore intended change at both a system and programme level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection through the PE is feasible and should only impose a very modest burden upon stakeholders (for example, in identifying policy documents).
Programme financial data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide data needed for the economic evaluation such as: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative data. • Only available at programme level (although 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management information (including financial) data is already collected by programme

⁴⁷ The impact evaluation would require data on both costs and benefits to assess if the YPG is a good use of resources. An assessment of costs and benefits will (in part) draw upon data from the process and impact evaluations (for example, numbers of young people supported, numbers of young people achieving positive outcomes). To avoid duplication, when discussing economic evaluation, the table focuses upon financial data rather than data on, for example, numbers of young people supported or numbers of young people achieving positive outcomes, which would come from the process and impact evaluations.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expenditure (costs) of YPG component programmes, and how this changes over time (for example, expansion of programmes with support of YPG funds); and • cost per participant, cost per outcome etc. 	<p>the availability of data on individual component parts of the YPG is also a strength).</p>	<p>teams. This data is not routinely shared, although may be included in published evaluation reports.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This should not include personal data (so GDPR does not apply), unless for example, the impact evaluation requires data on the characteristics of individual participants for the purposes of matching (which is not recommended), • Likely to require time series data, to show change in expenditure over time (pre/post 2021), and aggregated data, to enable calculation of costs and performance over a defined period of time. • It is recommended that measures should be set on the
Programme MI data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide data needed for the process, impact and economic evaluations, including: • numbers and characteristics of young people engaged (including change over time, e.g. pre/post YPG); • numbers and characteristics of young people achieving outcomes, such as entry to EET (including change over time, e.g. pre/post YPG); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only available at a programme level (although the availability of in-depth data on the cost-effectiveness and impact of individual component parts of the YPG is also a strength). • Generally only includes the experiences of those who choose to engage with programmes (rather than 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • data on capacity (e.g. numbers of staff, training budgets, including change over time, e.g. pre/post YPG). 	<p>those who did not choose to engage).</p>	<p>basis of a three year average: 2019-2021, with a rolling three year average calculated from that three year period (2020-2022; 2021-2023 etc).</p>
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Table 8.4. Summary of data sources – programme evaluations and secondary research

Data source	Function(s)	Comment(s)	Appraisal
Programme evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide data needed for the process, impact and economic evaluations, such as: • numbers and characteristics of young people engaged (including change over time, for example, pre/post YPG); • numbers and characteristics of young people achieving outcomes, such as entry to EET (including change over time, for example, pre/post YPG); • cost per participant, cost per outcome etc.; • impact of programmes upon young people’s behaviour (for example, engaging with the programme) and outcomes (for example, entry to EET); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only available at programme level (although the availability of in-depth data on the cost-effectiveness and impact of individual component parts of the YPG is also a strength). • Generally only relates to the experiences of those who choose to engage with YPG programmes (rather than those who do not choose to engage). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability and timeliness of reports depends upon commissioning and reporting cycles for each programme’s evaluation. • Depending on the timing of any future impact evaluation, it may be necessary to review evaluations published in the period after the PE has concluded. • Should not include personal data.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impact of programmes upon WG policy goals, such as the WBFGA. 		
<p>Secondary research (such as the recent Rapid Evidence Review: supporting young people who are Not in Employment Education or Training)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide data needed for the impact evaluation on questions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • why young people’s behaviour changes (including the barriers they may face)? • what impacts might be expected from the YPG (based upon evidence from other comparable interventions, for example)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to provide insight into how and why young people’s behaviour has or is likely to change (supporting theory-based approaches to impact evaluation). • External validity of this data is uncertain (not knowable in advance if, for example, the findings from a piece research or evaluation can be applied to the YPG). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on the timing of any future impact evaluation, it may be necessary to review research published in the period after the PE has concluded, particularly, if for example, there are significant changes in the context, which are likely to affect the behaviour of young people. • Should not include personal data.

<p>National Conversation data⁴⁸</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide data needed for the process and impact evaluation on questions such as: • young people’s awareness of the YPG; and • young people’s experiences, the barriers they face regarding EET, and so on. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System level data, covering a wide range of young people’s attitudes toward and experiences of EET (and other aspects of life). • Qualitative data based upon a self-selecting sample of young people. Therefore, it is not possible/appropriate to use the findings to generalise and draw conclusions about the experiences of all young people or those of a particular group based upon a representative sample and statistical analysis. Instead, depending upon the nature of the findings, we may be able to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent upon commissioning of and reporting on future National Conversations. • Published reports should not include personal data. • Those National Conversations published after the PE has concluded should be considered as part of the impact evaluation.
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⁴⁸ The Welsh Government launched the National Conversation in 2022 to ‘listen’ to young people and to better ‘understand how young people in Wales view the support and offer available to them, what they say they need in terms of support, and to hear about the barriers they face at this moment in time’ (Welsh Government, 2023a, p. 3). As part of the National Conversation, in 2022, 40 young people took part in focus groups, 129 young people completed an omnibus online survey and around 100 young people took part in discussions facilitated by training providers, youth workers and support services (Welsh Government, 2023a). In 2023, 55 young people took part in focus groups and 421 completed the omnibus online survey (Welsh Government, 2024e). Those who have contributed include young people in EET and who were NEET, disabled young people, those with mental health conditions, Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic young people, and both Welsh and non-Welsh speakers (ibid).

		assume a degree of naturalistic or theoretical generalisability if, for example, it appears that the findings are unlikely to be specific or particular to the context and/or group, and can be 'transferred' to other similar groups and contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).	
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Table 8.5. Summary of data sources – statistical and economic data

Data source	Function(s)	Comment(s)	Appraisal
<p>National Statistics (e.g. SFR: Participation of young people in education and the labour market and Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET))</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide data needed for the process and impact evaluation on for example, the number and/or characteristics relating to young people who are in EET or NEET, such as their age, sex, region and whether they are disabled⁴⁹ (including change over time). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative data, although data from different sources (such as the APS, SFR and CW destination survey) is not always consistent, raising questions about interpretation/validity. Only available at YPG system ('meta') level (although the availability of data at a system level is important). Can only be used to identify one aspect of behaviour (engagement with EET) within a limited number of groups of young people (such as disabled young people⁵⁰; young 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This statistical data is already collected. Recommended that measures should be set on the basis of a three year average: 2019-2021, with a rolling three year average calculated from that three year period (i.e. 2020-2022; 2021-2023 etc). Should not include personal data.

⁴⁹ The limitations in the available data, outlined in the following footnote, mean this is based upon the medical definition of disability used in the Equality Act 2010 which defines people as disabled by their impairment. It is not consistent with the social model of disability used by the Welsh Government, in which people are considered to be disabled by barriers in society.

⁵⁰ The APS, which is the source of data for this, uses the medical definition of disability used in the Equality Act 2010: 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term impact on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities' (Welsh Government, 2023c, p. 10). As noted above this is not consistent with the social model of disability used by the Welsh Government.

		people of different sexes; young people of different ethnicities, young people aged 16 to 18 and those aged 19-24).	
Post-16 education data, for example LLWR, HESA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide data needed for the impact evaluation on, for example, the number and/or characteristics of young people in post 16 education or training (including change over time). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quasi system level data (it covers all young people in FE, WBL, ACL or HE), but not all young people in post-16 education or training (as a true system measure would). Can only be used to identify one aspect of behaviour (engagement with different types of post-16 education or training) within a limited number of groups of young people (such as disabled young people⁵¹; young people of different sexes; young people of different ethnicities; young people aged 16 to 18 and those aged 19-24). 	

⁵¹ As noted above, the APS, which is the source of data for this, uses the medical definition of disability used in the Equality Act 2010 which is not used by Welsh Government.

National statistics on well-being of people in Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide data needed for the impact evaluation, such as changes in young people’s well-being, qualifications and skills over time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System level data, covering a range of different dimensions of young people’s well-being such as economic activity, the fairness of work and levels of qualifications.⁵² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended that measures should be set on the basis of a three year average: 2019-2021, with a rolling three year average calculated from that three year period (2020-2022; 2021-2023 etc). • Should not include personal data.
Economic data (for example, the number of online job adverts, job vacancies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide data needed for the impact evaluation such as: • How the economic context is changing (which is likely to contribute to observed outcomes). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System level data, whose contribution to observed outcomes, such as the proportion of young people in EET, could potentially be explored using regression analysis. • National economic data such as the total number of job vacancies in the economy is not the same as the total number of job vacancies open to young people (for example, some may require experience or skills that young people lack). 	

⁵² Qualifications could also be used as proxy measure for young people’s skills.

9. The evaluability of the YPG

9.1 It is feasible to identify changes in policy and practice using the data outlined in figure 9.1. although, as outlined in this section, the coverage and quality of data varies for different evaluation questions.

Policy and practice: measuring what changed and why

9.2 Identifying formal changes in policy should be feasible. As outlined in figure 9.1., it should be possible to triangulate responses from interviews with those charged with delivering policy with policy documents outlining policy intent. However, it is likely to be more challenging to examine if policy is implemented as intended/planned and, therefore, has changed in practice.

9.3 Identifying the contribution of the YPG to formal changes in policy should also be feasible. As outlined in figure 9.1., it should be possible to triangulate data from interviews with those seeking to influence policy (that is the YPG policy team) with a review of the levers used (for example, funding, guidance) and with interviews with those responsible for delivering policy.

Young people's behaviour: measuring what changed and why

9.4 As outlined in the performance framework set out in section 7, if measurement of change focuses upon a narrow range of behaviours (that is engagement with the offer of support and engagement with EET), it is feasible to measure how these behaviours change over time at a systems and/or programme level, using secondary data. However, as also outlined in section 7, even in this simplified form, these data are likely to be imperfect, owing to factors which are likely to include:

- weaknesses in the quality/robustness of the data linked, for example, to the declining response rate for the Labour Force Survey (LFS)⁵³ and the low response rates to the Careers Wales pupil destination survey in some areas;

⁵³ The Annual Population Survey (APS) combines the boosted samples of the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

- weakness in the coverage of data; in particular the scope to measure change (and set KPIs) for different groups of young people is constrained and while for some cases (characteristics), system-wide measures are feasible, for others, data is only available on the programme parts (see section 7); and
- partial or complete gaps in the data regarding young people who choose not to engage with the YPG (for whatever reason) and who do not take up the support that is offered.

9.5 Identifying the contribution of the YPG to changes in young people's behaviour is inherently challenging. It is likely to be feasible (even if challenging) to evaluate the impact of individual programmes (see, for example, Welsh Government, 2024d). However, it may not be feasible to measure the impact of all programmes. Moreover, it is not feasible to measure the added contribution (effect) of a guarantee composed of many different co-ordinated component parts (that is systemic effects).

9.6 The feasibility of evaluating the YPG is explored further in Table 9.1. which outlines three different types of potential impact evaluation questions, each with different requirements and different resulting evaluation designs.

Table 9.1. Young people’s behaviour: implications of different types of impact questions for evaluating changes

Principal questions	Related questions	Are the requirements for impact evaluation met? Limitations and assumptions	Suitable designs (for this type of question)
<p>To what extent can a specific (net) impact be attributed to the YPG?</p>	<p>What is the net effect of the YPG? How much of the impact can be attributed to the YPG? What is the counterfactual (what would have happened without the YPG)?</p>	<p>Factors that are likely to make an empirical impact evaluation difficult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The intervention (in this case, the YPG) is not discrete (and cannot be disentangled from other interventions) and is not stable. • The system/context the YPG is being implemented in is unstable and dynamic. • There is no scope to manipulate the intervention (the YPG) through, for example, phasing or the allocation of participants to aid impact evaluation. <p>Factors that could help enable an empirical impact evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are sufficient numbers of participants for statistical analysis (see section 7); and • expected outcomes are known and measurable (see sections 4 and 7). 	<p>Experimental or quasi experimental designs (such as Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) or Propensity Score Matching). Statistical studies Hybrids with case-based and participatory elements.</p>

		<p>Factors whose impact upon an empirical impact evaluation is either uncertain or mixed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relationship between the YPG and the outcomes it seeks to generate is reasonably direct, (at least in relation to engagement with EET). However, the effect is likely to be small relative to other factors (meaning that it would be difficult to isolate given the background ‘noise’) (see, for example. WG, 2024d). • Some data on participants’ characteristics and outcomes is available, but there are gaps and limitations (see section 7). 	
<p><u>Has</u> the YPG made a difference?</p>	<p>What causes are necessary or sufficient for the effect? Was the YPG needed to produce the effect? Would these impacts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above, and Factors whose impact upon an impact evaluation is either uncertain or mixed: • Evidence from a number of different cases can be compared.⁵⁴ 	<p>Experimental or quasi experimental designs (such as RCTs).</p> <p>Case-based designs (such as Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)).</p>

⁵⁴ Data from comparable interventions (such as youth guarantees in other countries) is available, but there is only one YPG.

	have happened in the absence of the YPG?	<p>Factors that could help enable an impact evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The theory of change is reasonably well understood (see sections 3 to 5) and a broad range of evidence can be used to test and refine the theory (see sections 7 and 8). • There is scope to explore the contribution the YPG made to the observed outcomes, alongside other factors, such as economic cycles (that may have increased or dampened the effect of the YPG) (for example, using regression analysis). 	Theory-based evaluation (such as Contribution Analysis).
<u>How</u> has the YPG made a difference?	<p>How and why have the impacts come about? What causal factors have resulted in the observed impacts? Has the YPG resulted in any unintended impacts? For whom has the YPG made a difference?</p>	<p>Factors that could help enable an impact evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is scope to explore how contextual factors (like economic cycles and DWP provision) shape and interact with the effects of the YPG (for example, by drawing upon interviews with stakeholders and a review of programme evaluations - see section 6). 	Theory-based evaluation especially 'realist' variants and Contribution Analysis. Participatory approaches, where the focus is upon stakeholders' experiences and judgments about if and how the YPG has made a difference.

Adapted from Bond (2015); HM Treasury (2020b).

- 9.7 Given the considerations outlined in the table above, and the difficulty of identifying the characteristics of YPG participants within existing datasets and of identifying an ‘untreated’ comparison group (discussed further below), experimental designs at a system level appear to be ruled out. Moreover, there is no central dataset where data on all YPG participants are recorded, meaning data on the characteristics of YPG participants would have to be gathered from each individual programme and then aggregated together. Difficulties defining the boundaries of the YPG (discussed in section 1) are also likely to pose substantial challenges in distinguishing between young people taking up the YPG’s offer of support or benefitting and those not taking up the offer of support or benefitting.
- 9.8 Alternatively, as a universal offer of support, all young people aged 16 to 24 could be considered beneficiaries, bypassing problems identifying YPG participants within existing datasets. However, as the evidence suggests that only a fraction of those young people eligible for support take it up (see, for example, Welsh Government, 2024b, 2024c), this approach (that is treating all young people as beneficiaries) is likely to dilute the impact of the YPG, and make it harder to isolate (and measure) any impact.⁵⁵
- 9.9 Moreover, even if the characteristics of, and outcomes achieved by YPG participants could be first identified and then aggregated, it is not clear whom they could be compared (and matched) against. For example, while there is no equivalent to the YPG in England, this does not mean that there is no offer of support for young people. It could be argued that the effect of the YPG is to make that support more comprehensive and co-ordinated in Wales so a YPG effect might be measurable - although it is doubtful whether the likely effect size of this would be large enough to be distinguished from expected ‘noise’ in the data (see HM Treasury, 2020b).⁵⁶

⁵⁵ The size of any YPG effect is likely to be reduced, making it harder to isolate from the background noise in the wider system (see, for example, HM Treasury, 2020b).

⁵⁶ In this context, while not directly aiding impact evaluation, it is worth noting that benchmarking performance in Wales against other UK and comparable EU nations with Youth Guarantees would be feasible.

- 9.10 The feasibility of matching older young people eligible for the YPG (for example, those aged 23 to 24) with those no longer eligible (for example, aged 25 to 26) using a Regression Discontinuity Design is also possible in principle (as suggested for the European Youth Guarantee). However, it is likely that this would only provide impact data on those young people near the eligibility boundary (that is aged under/over 25). Given the difficulties identifying YPG beneficiaries (outlined above) this design could only compare outcomes for young people eligible for the YPG (rather than taking up the YPG) with those not eligible for the YPG (see HM Treasury, 2020b for a discussion of these issues).
- 9.11 In contrast, at the level of an individual programme of the YPG, quasi - experimental designs, such as Counterfactual Impact Assessment using propensity score matching are possible and have been undertaken (for example, Welsh Government, 2024d). In these cases, it may be possible to identify the characteristics of participants and match them with a comparison group, although finding a truly 'untreated' group is challenging. It is also worth noting that were a systems-wide impact evaluation viable, it would, in effect, simply take all participants on different programmes and compare their outcomes with a matched group with similar characteristics. In doing so, it would measure only the 'average' impact and if there was a high degree of variation between the impact levels of different component programmes, this would be obscured by the reduction of impact to a single figure.

Societal outcomes: Measuring what changed and why

- 9.12 As outlined in sections 7 and 8, measurement of change at a societal level is feasible, if based upon existing indicators and measures for the Well-Being of Future Generations Act and National Milestones. However, it would also be constrained at least in part by the availability or otherwise of datasets where young people can be identified (and separated from other age groups). As outlined in section 12, change is also only likely to occur at this level over the medium or long term (at the three years plus mark or later, depending on the chosen measure).

9.13 Identifying the contribution of the YPG to these high-level societal changes is likely to be very challenging. As table 9.2. illustrates, identifying the specific impact of the YPG is not feasible (and nor will it be feasible to identify how it has made an impact). However, it will be possible in principle to explore if and how the YPG is likely to make a difference, by using theory-based approaches, such as Contribution Analysis (Mayne, 2011).⁵⁷ These approaches could be used to identify and then test potential impact pathways, even if, for example it is not possible to quantify the size or extent of effects. It should be noted that the number and range of contributory factors to any observed societal outcomes would make this very challenging.

Contribution analysis

Contribution Analysis is used to rigorously test, and confirm or inform, the revision of a theory of change. It is not intended to provide 'definitive proof' of impact, 'but rather provides evidence and a line of reasoning from which we can draw a plausible conclusion that, within some level of confidence, the program has made an important contribution to the documented results' (Better Evaluation, 2023, n. page). It involves a number of steps including:

- developing a theory of change;
- gathering primary and secondary data to test the theory of change on paper, such as programme performance data and evidence from evaluations of comparable interventions, research on outcomes, and the contribution to those outcomes made by the intervention and other contextual factors;
- analysing the data, to assess the credibility of the 'contribution story' suggested by the theory of change about how and why observed changes occurred, weaknesses in this account and potential challenges to this (that is, alternative accounts of how and why change occurred);

⁵⁷ Potential causal pathways can be identified (for example, increasing employment is likely to contribute to increasing well-being) using existing secondary data and research (for example, using evidence drawn together by the What Works Well-being Centre) but it will not be possible to test independently or explore if this is the case or not.

- gathering additional data to explore weaknesses and test the credibility of alternative accounts of how and why change occurred; and
- using this additional data to revise and, where the additional evidence allows, strengthen the account of how and why change occurred (that is, the ‘contribution story’).

A credible account of how and why change occurs should include:

- a theory of change, with a clear and logical impact chain linking, for example, inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes, with plausible mechanisms (how change is generated) and assumptions (including the expected contribution of contextual factors), that is supported by existing evidence;
- alignment of implementation of the intervention and observed outputs and outcomes with the theory of change (for example, activities were delivered as planned), and the theory of change has not been disproved;
- a statement showing how alternative explanations of how and why change occurred have been ruled out or are considered less credible; and
- demonstration that the contribution of other contextual factors (for example, economic cycles, DWP policy) has been considered, and either recognised (for example, where economic growth aids achievement of the YPG goals) or assessed to have not made a significant contribution to the observed outcomes.

Adapted from Better Evaluation, 2023; Bond, 2015; Mayne, 2011; Scottish Government, 2009.

Table 9.2. Societal outcomes: implications of different types of impact questions for evaluating changes

Principal questions	Related questions	Are the requirements for impact evaluation met? Limitations and assumptions	Suitable designs
To what extent can a specific (net) impact be attributed to the YPG?	<p>What is the net effect of the YPG?</p> <p>How much of the impact can be attributed to the YPG?</p> <p>What is the counterfactual (what would have happened without the YPG)?</p>	<p>Factors that could help enable an empirical impact evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are sufficient numbers (for example of people who experience outcomes) for statistical analysis. <p>Factors that are likely to make an empirical impact evaluation difficult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The intervention is not discrete (and cannot easily be disentangled from other interventions) and is dynamic. • The system/context the YPG is being implemented in is unstable and dynamic. • There is no scope to manipulate the YPG (for example, through a phased start across areas⁵⁸). 	<p>Experimental or quasi experimental designs (e.g. RCTs)</p> <p>Statistical studies</p> <p>Hybrids of these two approaches using case-based and/or participatory designs.</p>

⁵⁸ Phasing, where for example, an intervention starts in one or more areas, before being rolled out to other areas, can create potential comparison groups which an impact evaluation can exploit.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relationship between the YPG and the outcomes it seeks to generate is distant, (in relation to societal outcomes and the effect is likely to be small relative to other factors (meaning that it would be difficult to isolate given the background 'noise'). <p>Factors whose impact upon an empirical impact evaluation is either uncertain or mixed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some data on societal outcomes is available, but there are gaps and limitations (see section 7). Expected societal outcomes are known, but are not always easily measurable (see sections 4, 8 and 9). 	
<p><u>Has</u> the YPG made a difference?</p>	<p>What causes are necessary or sufficient for the effect? Was the YPG needed to produce the effect? Would these impacts</p>	<p>As above; and</p> <p>Factors that are likely to make an impact evaluation difficult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scope to isolate the contribution the YPG made to the observed outcomes, alongside other factors, such as economic cycles and/or changes in DWP provision (which may have increased or 	<p>Experimental or quasi experimental designs (such as RCTs). Case-based designs (such as QCA).</p>

	have happened in the absence of the YPG?	<p>dampened the effect of the YPG) is likely to be challenging (see sections 8 and 9).</p> <p>Factors whose impact upon an impact evaluation is either uncertain or mixed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence from a number of different cases can be compared.⁵⁹ 	
		<p>Factors that could help enable an impact evaluation:</p> <p>The theory of change is reasonably well understood, and a range of evidence can be used to test and refine the theory (see sections 3 to 5, 7, and 8).</p>	Theory-based evaluation, (such as Contribution Analysis).
<u>How</u> has the YPG made a difference?	<p>How and why have the impacts come about?</p> <p>What causal factors have resulted in the observed impacts?</p> <p>Has the YPG resulted in any unintended impacts? For whom</p>	<p>Factors that could help enable an impact evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The theory of change is reasonably well understood, and a range of evidence can be used to test and refine the theory (see sections 3 to 5, 7, and 8). • There is scope to explore how contextual factors (like economic cycles and/or changes in DWP provision) shape and interact with the effects of the 	Theory-based evaluation especially 'realist' variants and Contribution Analysis. Participatory approaches.

⁵⁹ Comparable interventions (such as youth guarantees in other countries) is available, but there is only one YPG.

	has the YPG made a difference?	YPG upon societal outcomes (see sections 8 and 9).	
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Adapted from HM Treasury 2020b; Bond, 2015.

10. The evaluability of the YEPF

10.1 This section outlines to what extent it is feasible to evaluate the YEPF alongside the evaluation of the YPG, using the approach outlined in figure 8.1.

Measuring what changed and why

Policy and practice

10.2 The perceived impact of the YEPF upon policy and practice for 11 to 18 year-olds could be explored through interviews with stakeholders and potentially also through programme data (for instance, data provided by LAs on the YEPF). In relation to provision for 16 to 18 year-olds, the exploration of the impact of the YEPF upon policy and practice (toward 16 to 18 year-olds at risk of or who had disengaged from EET) would complement and enrich an exploration of the impact of the YPG upon the offer of support to young people. A comparative exploration of the impact of the YEPF and YPG upon policy toward 16 to 18 year-olds would also provide opportunities to explore differences in the effectiveness of different 'levers' (such as funding in the case of the YPG, or guidance in the case of the YEPF) used to try to shape wider policy and practice.

Young people's behaviour

10.3 As outlined in table 7.1., by examining data for 16 to 18, and 19 to 24 year-olds separately, KPIs could be set to measure the combined effect of the YEPF and YPG for 16 to 18 year-olds and also provide some insight into the effectiveness of preventative work for 11 to 16 year-olds (YEPF only). However, given the issues outlined above in relation to the YPG, isolating the effect of the YEPF (separately from the YPG) would be very challenging.

Societal outcomes

10.4 The contribution of the YEPF to societal outcomes would be considered. Like the YPG, identifying the contribution of the YEPF to high-level societal changes is likely to be challenging. Identifying the specific impact of the YEPF does not seem feasible. However, it would be possible to explore

if/whether and how the YEPF has made, or is likely to make, a difference. In principle, this could be done using theory-based approaches, such as Contribution Analysis, to identify and then test potential impact pathways. However, as with the YPG, the number and range of contributory factors to any observed societal outcomes would make evaluation at this level very challenging.

11. Strengths and weaknesses of the proposed approaches

11.1 As table 11.1. outlines, the evaluability of the three levels of change differs.

Table 11.1. The evaluability of change in policy and practice: young people’s behaviour and society

Level of change	Proposed approaches to measuring what changed	Proposed approaches to measuring how and why change occurred	Strengths and limitations
Policy and practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative: interviews with policy makers and those delivering policies and desk based review of policy documents, such as the Integrated Impact Assessment (WG, 2023b). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative (interviews with policy makers and those delivering policies). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draws upon first-hand accounts from those trying to shape and those delivering policy. Heavily reliant upon the accuracy of stakeholders’ accounts of what changed, how and why.
Young people’s behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative: system and programme level measures of young people’s take up of support and participation in EET. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative (interviews with those delivering policies and young people experiencing the delivery of these policies). Qualitative and quantitative: desk-based review of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relies upon the availability of data on component parts (for example, programme level MI and evaluations). The size of any effects will be a main factor that determines how

		<p>secondary data such as evaluations of individual component parts and the National Conversation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a model of behavioural change (such as COM-B, Michie et al., 2011) to aid and inform interpretation of how and why young people’s behaviour changes. 	<p>measurable they are (meaning small effects are unlikely to be measurable).*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A focus upon individual programmes may miss interactions between different components parts (system effects). • Limited to two (measurable) behaviours in particular: taking up the offer of support and participation in EET. • Quality and coverage of data is variable (for example at system and programme levels). • Primary research sample (n=100 young people) is very small compared to the population, and any conclusions drawn from this about young people’s behaviour will need to be carefully triangulated with other sources (such as other
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			evaluations, research and the national conversation) to assess, for example, the transferability of findings.
Societal changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative: System level measures of young people's and societal well-being.** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theory based approach used to identify the likely contribution of YPG to observed changes and to forecast changes in young people's and societal well-being. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relies upon secondary data to test likely causal pathways. Given the range of factors that contribute to societal outcomes, it is not possible to isolate the impact of the YPG, and identifying the contribution the YPG makes, relative to other factors, is likely to be very challenging (and come with a large degree of uncertainty).

* This will be a problem where individual effects are small, but the combined effect of many different small effects is large.

** Changes in young people's well-being, may also benefit, or potentially adversely impact, other groups in society. For example, increasing participation of young people in EET may contribute to a more prosperous Wales that benefits other age groups.

12. Estimated timeframes

12.1 There are two principal considerations in setting out timelines for evaluation:

- the time period over which a specific change is expected to occur; and
- the time when data becomes available (given, for example, the lag between data collection and publication of data).

Timescales for change

12.2 As outlined in section two, the sequence of expected changes is that policy and then practice changes first. This is followed by changes in young people's behaviour and this is followed by changes at a societal level.

12.3 Although the precise timing of changes in policy and practice will need to be identified by the process evaluation, given the interval between announcement of a policy change and delivery of that policy, it is anticipated that the first changes in policy and practice would be measurable within eighteen months of the launch (that is, November 2021-April 2023) and these changes would scale up over time, as policy and practice developed.⁶⁰ As figure 12.1 (below) illustrates, these initial changes can be measured by the process evaluation in 2024-25.

12.4 It is anticipated that changes in young people's behaviour, to be measured using the KPIs outlined in section 5, would be observable from 6 to 12 months after a change in policy and practice (that is 24-36 months after the launch of the YPG), given the interval between, for example, an expansion of the offer of support and young people taking up that support, and then the interval between a young person taking up support and that young person re-engaging with EET. It is also expected that these changes would scale up over time, as policy and practice developed. In principle, programme level data on the numbers of young people supported and the numbers of young

⁶⁰ The 2021 Programme for Government (publicised in May 2021) included a commitment to the delivery of a Young Person Guarantee. Details of the YPG were announced in June 2021 by the then Economy Minister, Vaughan Gething and the commitment was launched in November 2021. A series of key programmes, such as JGW+ were launched in 2022 (Welsh Government, 2022b).

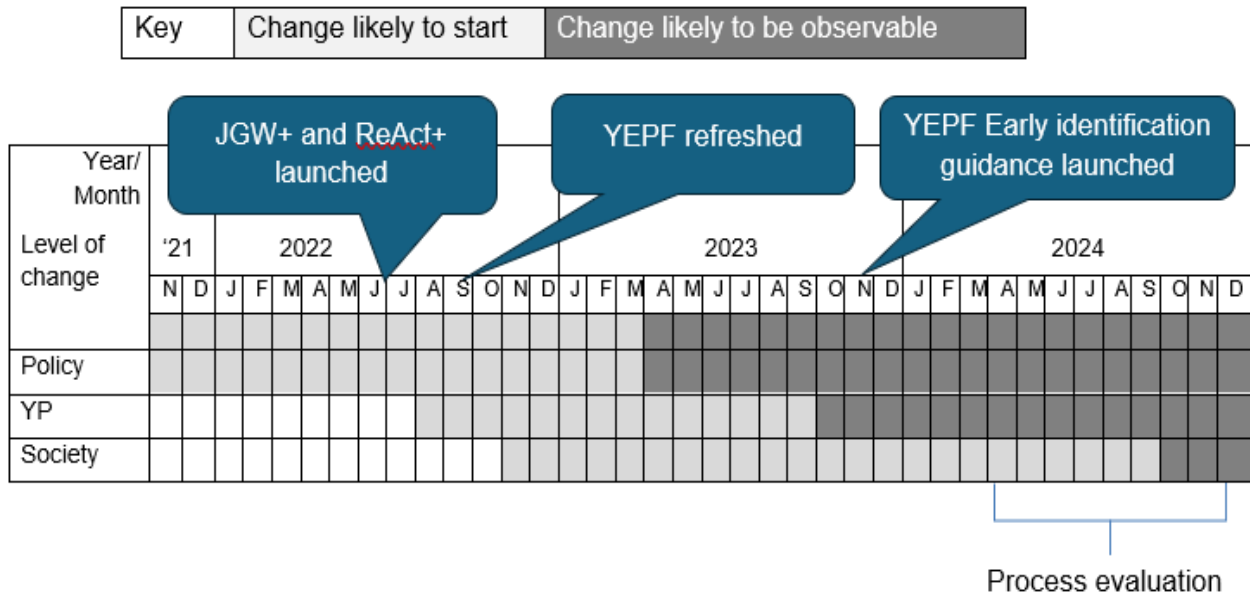
people supported who enter EET, should be available in near real time (for example, on a monthly basis). However, there will be a longer time lag before system level data is available. For example:

- The more timely, but less robust statistics, [Young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\)](#) are published quarterly, typically three to five months after the 12 month period it covers has ended; and
- the SFR, [Participation of young people in education and the labour market](#), which is considered the definitive measure, is published annually typically seven to ten months after the years it covers have ended (Welsh Government, 2020).⁶¹

12.5 The timing of any changes in societal outcomes, following changes in young people's behaviour, is harder to predict and likely to differ for different outcome measures. Nevertheless, if we assume that (a) societal outcomes will only begin to change when young people who are supported re-engage with EET, and (b) the numbers of young people who are supported who re-engage with EET scales up over time, the first changes, in relation to leading indicators such as skills and qualifications, might be observable within 36 months of a change in policy and practice (that is twelve months after the first changes in policy and practice were observable). However, the scope to measure this would depend upon how fast the numbers of young people accessing support (and then gaining skills and qualifications) scaled up following changes in policy and practice, and this estimate is very speculative.

⁶¹ For example, the latest SFR (at the time of writing), Participation of young people in education and the labour market, published in October 2023, covers 2021 and 2022, while the more timely Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), published in June 2024, covers the period April 2023 to March 2024.

Figure 12.1. Potential timescale for change



12.6 It is also worth noting that given the challenges of evaluating impacts at a societal level outlined in section 11, there may be little advantage in waiting until changes at this level would be measurable. Indeed, this would delay the impact evaluation (and therefore delay when its findings could shape and inform the YPG). Therefore, it is suggested that the timing for any future impact evaluation be determined instead by the timescales when changes in policy and practice and young people’s behaviour were expected to be measurable.

13. Conclusions and recommendations

- 13.1 The YPG is an expansive and complex policy being delivered by multiple different actors within a complex and dynamic wider system. The review of evaluation frameworks for Youth Guarantees in Scotland and the European Union (outlined in Appendix E) illustrates the challenges this poses to evaluation, but also the options and opportunities. This EA concludes that the YPG is evaluable if the evaluation framework:
- focuses upon change at three levels (policy, young people's behaviour and society); and
 - uses a range of approaches and sources of primary and secondary data to explore change at a system and programme level.
- 13.2 However, the EA identifies that measuring change at each level is likely to be much easier than identifying the contribution of the YPG to the observed changes, particularly in relation to young people's behaviour and, even more so, societal outcomes.

Evaluating the implementation of the YPG

- 13.3 The YPG is a dynamic (evolving) policy and there is no overarching policy document outlining implementation plans relating to it. Moreover, as noted, implementation relies upon the YPG policy team influencing stakeholders throughout the wider system, using a range of levers such as funding, guidance and dissemination of research evidence. The evaluation of implementation therefore needs to focus upon:
- mapping the intent, the aims of the YPG policy team;
 - the levers (in other words, the means) used by the YPG policy team to influence stakeholders within the wider system; and
 - the effect, in other words, the difference these levers had upon policy and practice across the wider system (in relation to the offer of support to young people).

- 13.4 The process evaluation will evaluate the initial implementation of the YPG. Given the theory of change, which anticipates that policy and practice influences young people's behaviour, any future impact evaluation will need to consider any further changes in policy and practice (after the process evaluation concludes in early 2025).

Evaluating the impact and additionality of the YPG

- 13.5 In addition to the outcomes relating to changing policy discussed above, the main intended outcomes of the YPG (to increase the proportion of young people in EET in the medium term and to contribute to societal outcomes over the longer term) are also measurable. As outlined in sections 7 and 8, it is feasible to measure changes in the following areas:
- policy and practice;
 - the numbers of young people taking up support from the principal programmes that make up the YPG;
 - the numbers of young people taking up support from the principal programmes (that make up the YPG) entering EET; and
 - societal outcomes.
- 13.6 The challenge will be in identifying both the contribution the YPG makes to any observed change at each level and also to the links between each level (that is the relationship, if any, between change at one level and change at a higher level). For example, identifying how:
- policy and practice in relation to EET support for young people changes (a policy and practice outcome);
 - young people's behaviour (such as engaging with EET support) changes (a behavioural outcome); and
 - the relationship (if any) between the change in policy and practice and the change in young people's behaviour.

Socio-psychological models of behavioural change

Building upon the [Rapid Evidence Review: Supporting Young People who are Not in Employment Education or Training](#) (Welsh Government 2024b, 2024c), the theory of change, EA and Evaluation Framework use the COM-B model of behavioural change as a framework for exploring how and why changes in policy and practice might be expected to change young people's behaviour. The COM-B framework is widely used and has been embraced by stakeholders during the course of this study. However, it is only one of a number of theoretical frameworks that could be used (see, for example, GSR, 2008). Alternative approaches, such as Amartya Sen's Capabilities Approach (CA) (Sen, 1985) briefly discussed in section 3, could also be considered for any future impact evaluation.

In considering different frameworks, it is important to take account of their theoretical foundations. Those more informed by (or rooted in) psychology, such as COM-B, tend to focus more upon individual agency. In contrast, frameworks more informed by sociology, such as the Needs, Opportunities and Abilities model or CA, tend to focus more on societal (or structural) factors, such as social norms and expectations and economic and political conditions (GSR, 2008).

Factors at a range of levels (including individual, group (including family and peer group), organisational and societal) are important, and all the models discussed can be considered 'socio-psychological' models. Furthermore, as section 3 outlines, it is of fundamental importance that young people's capabilities, opportunities, motivations and behaviours are understood in context. This allows the ways in which young people's capabilities, opportunities and motivation are shaped by distal factors, such as societal expectations and economic opportunities, to be considered. Without this context, there is a very real danger that young people could be crudely 'blamed' or socially pathologised for, for example, displaying 'wrong' behaviours, where they do not engage with EET support services, or for lacking the motivation or work ethic required, implying they could (and should) simply 'choose' to behave and think differently. These issues are explored further in the [Rapid Evidence Review: Supporting Young People who are](#)

[Not in Employment, Education or Training](#) (Welsh Government 2024b, 2024c) and illustrate why a model of behavioural change like COM-B offers a much richer account of how young people's behaviour can be changed than that offered by the traditional tools of 'carrots' (incentives such as training allowances), 'sticks' (such as welfare conditionality) and 'sermons' (such as advertising campaigns).

13.7 The focus of the impact evaluation will, in broad terms, be to identify the following things:

- How and why has policy and practice and, specifically, the offer of EET support for young people, changed as a result of the YPG?
- How many additional (or 'extra') young people have taken up the offer of support as a result of the YPG?
- How many additional young people who take up support then move into EET as a result of the YPG? and
- What difference does 'extra' young people moving into EET make to society?

13.8 As section 11 outlines, evaluation of the impact of the YPG upon young people's behaviour (that is engagement with programmes or support and moving into EET) is more evaluable than evaluation of the impact of the YPG upon societal outcomes, and it may therefore be appropriate to focus the impact evaluation upon this. It may also be appropriate to infer the likely impact of any changes in young people's behaviours, with this inference based upon existing secondary evidence of the likely impacts upon, for example young people's well-being, rather than trying to measure or identify the actual impacts at a societal level.

13.9 Nevertheless, even if the focus is upon the impact upon young people's behaviour, there are still a number of challenges that need to be considered. For example, because some changes (most notably the numbers of young people engaged in programmes or support and the numbers of those taking up support who enter EET) are only measurable at a programme rather than system level, the measurement in relation to these outcomes can only be

partial. In effect, the evaluation should focus upon the most evaluable elements of the YPG, such as programmes like WW, JGW+, CfW and Business Wales.⁶² Because these are also expected to be the most important elements of the YPG, while not ideal, this does not fundamentally undermine the evaluability of the YPG as a whole.

13.10 Moreover, as, for example, quasi experimental designs are not feasible at a system level, it will not be possible to isolate the specific impact of the YPG upon these outcomes at a system level. Instead, the focus will need to be upon identifying if the YPG has made a difference (which may include empirical impact evaluations of individual programmes) and how it has made a difference, using a theory-based approach to impact evaluation such as Contribution Analysis.

13.11 The connections between change at each level, such as how change in policy contributes to a change in the behaviour of young people, may also be challenging to identify. It may be reasonably straightforward to infer a causal link in some cases, for instance between the expansion of a programme like CfW+ as a result of additional YPG funding and the programme then supporting more young people. However, in other cases, the linkage between a change in policy/practice and a change in the behaviour of young people, as a result of changes in their capabilities, access to opportunities and/or motivations, may be much less direct. Therefore, an aim of the impact evaluation should be to collect, triangulate and analyse the available evidence as far as possible, in order to maximise understanding about the impact of the YPG, even if impact cannot be 'proven' or quantified (Mayne, 2011).

13.12 A further important challenge is that the evidence base on impact will, by necessity, need to be founded primarily upon those young people who choose to engage with the YPG and take up its support (and are therefore

⁶² In contrast, school-based elements focused upon those aged 11 to 16, such as Carers Work Related Experiences would not be included.

included in programme evaluations), rather than those who choose not to. Therefore, there will be evidence about how and why some groups of young people engaged with the YPG but much less about those who did not.

Evaluating the YEPP as part of the evaluation of the YPG

- 13.13 This EA and evaluation framework identifies that the approach used to evaluate the YPG could include specific KPIs for the YEPP, as well as joint KPIs for the YPG and YEPP together. This would allow for joint evaluation of the contribution of both the YEPP and the YPG to changes in policy and practice, young people's behaviour and societal outcomes.

Identifying unintended outcomes

- 13.14 The interlinked theories of change for the YPG outline what is expected (and intended) and the evaluation is designed to measure and assess whether this occurs or not. Measures of change, using, for example, the KPIs, and qualitative research with stakeholders (such as those delivering policy and young people) and review of evaluations of individual programmes (where available), will provide scope to explore any unintended and potentially unexpected outcomes in relation to policy, young people's behaviour and society that may emerge from an initiative as complex and wide-ranging as the YPG. The possibility the YPG fails to achieve its intended outcomes in relation to policy, young people's behaviour and social outcomes (which would be an unintended outcome) will also be explored (and may be the main potential unintended outcome). It is also possible that the YPG might have negative impacts. For example, if the offer of support increased young people's feeling of personal failure when they were unable to find EET.
- 13.15 Understanding if, how, when and whose behaviour changes, will be central to evaluating the theory of change and the impact of the YPG. For example, it is expected that taking up support will be the main mechanism driving changes in young people's behaviour. It is, however, conceivable that, for example, marketing (such as the Feed Your Positivity campaign) and strengthening of post-16 pathways could be sufficient to change young people's behaviour (without young people also taking up the offer of

support), or that young people took up support that did not form part of the YPG as a result of these things. Above all, it seems likely that any evaluation of the YPG is likely to generate many more questions along with all the answers that such an evaluation would also potentially provide.

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15. Appendix A. Discussion of equalities based KPIs

15.1 As figure 15.1. illustrates, we can distinguish between the following different groups of young people in this evaluation framework:

- A) Young people in EET, comprising those in employment (Ai); those in non-HE post-16 education and training (Aii); and those in HE (Aiii); and
- B) Young people not in EET (in other words, those who are NEET), comprising those engaged with support programmes aimed at helping young people into EET (Bi); and those not engaged with such support programmes (Bii).

15.2 Data, albeit with different degrees of quality and coverage are available on each group, bar Bii (that is it is not available for young people who are NEET and not engaged in EET support programmes).

15.3 In this figure, $A = A_i + A_{ii} + A_{iii}$ and $B = B_i + B_{ii}$, and $A + B =$ all young people aged 16 to 24. Unfortunately, it is not possible to simply aggregate data on the characteristics of young people in groups Ai, Aii and Bi and then subtract the resulting total from the characteristics of all young people, in order to calculate Bii (which would be the remainder/residual). It is not viable to do this primarily owing to differences in when and what data is collected on economic activity (for example, APS, LFS), on participation in post-16 education and training (primarily LLWR, but also HESA) and on engagement with EET support (via individual programmes). There are also potential problems with double counting (for example, if at the start of the year a young person is supported by a EET support programme, and later in the year they move into EET).⁶³

⁶³Although APS and LFS data represent all young people aged 16 to 24 and can be divided into: (i) young people in employment; (ii) young people in post-16 education and (iii) young people who were NEET, it does not identify young people engaged by an EET support programme. The best (and far from perfect proxy) would be the percentage of young people who were unemployed (that is, actively looking for work - as proxy for engaging with an EET support programme) and economically inactive (that is, not actively looking for work), as proxy for not engaging with an EET support programme. However, some young people classified as economically inactive engage with EET support programmes, so its use as a measure is questionable.

Figure 15.1. Data on young people

Young people in EET		Young people who are NEET	
A. Characteristics of EET young people (e.g. via APS and LFS).		B. Characteristics of young people who are NEET is known (e.g. via APS & LFS).	
Ai Characteristics of young people in employment is known (e.g. via APS and LFS)		Bi. Characteristics of young people engaged in individual EET support programmes (e.g. WW, CfW+ etc) is known (e.g. via programme MI data).**	Bii. Characteristics of young people not engaged in EET support programmes is not known.
Aii Characteristics of young people in post-16 education and training are known (e.g. via PLASC & LLWR).*	Aij. Characteristics of young people in HE are known (e.g. via HESA).*		

* Data on students (those in post-16 education and training) are also available via the APS.

**Note this quadrant is primarily a subset of people who are NEET, although small numbers may be in EET and accessing programmes like CfW+.

Using known data

15.4 Although we cannot calculate the exact size or characteristics of Bii, we can still make some logical inferences about this group (that is those young people who are NEET who are not engaged in EET support programmes) based upon what we know about the characteristics of all young people (A+B) and about young people who are NEET (B).

15.5 If, for example, 20% of all young people who are NEET have impairments, and we assume we should live in an equal society, with equal opportunities in education, training and for work for young people with impairments and those without impairments (so young people are not disabled by societal

barriers), we should expect approximately 20% of young people in each of the seven cells (A, Aii, Aii, B, Bi and Bii) to have impairments.

- 15.6 If, however, the percentage of young people with impairments in any of the left four cells (that is in EET) is higher or lower than 20%, we can infer that society is in some way still unequal. This indicates that there are unequal opportunities in education, training and for work for young people with or without impairments and that young people with impairments, are either advantaged (if rates are greater than 20%) or disadvantaged (if rates are less than 20%).
- 15.7 If the percentage of young people with impairments in the left four cells (that is, in EET) is lower than 20%, then if the YPG is or has been successful, we would:
- firstly, expect the percentage of young people with impairments engaged in EET support programmes (that is Bi) to rise (and to rise above 20%, as young people with impairments who were NEET, but who were not engaged with EET support services, respond to the YPG offer, and engage with EET support services); and
 - secondly, over time, the percentage of young people with impairments in the left four cells (that is in EET) to also rise and converge toward 20%, as young people with impairments who engaged with EET support services progress to EET in accordance with their 'natural' proportion within an equal society.

Setting KPIs

- 15.8 If inequalities are observed (for example, if the percentage of young people with a particular characteristic in EET is lower than the percentage of all young people with that characteristic), then KPIs could be set for individual EET support programmes, with the aim of increasing the percentage of young people with that characteristic that the programme in question supports (engages).⁶⁴ A longer term KPI might be one encouraging the

⁶⁴ CfW+ did have a target along these lines, but this was dropped in 2020.

convergence of the percentage of young people with that particular characteristic in EET so that it matches the percentage of all young people within society with that characteristic.

16. Appendix B. Discussion of performance KPIs

- 16.1 An important (and useful) distinction can be drawn between measuring progress toward goals, which we describe as performance, and identifying why progress is or is not being made, including, in particular, the contribution the YPG makes to observed progress, which we describe as impact. Both are important questions, but the distinction is important because the former (measurement of performance) is generally much easier than the latter (impact attribution).
- 16.2 The proposed performance framework in section 7 focuses on monitoring progress toward goals at a system and/or programme level (that is the performance of the YPG and YEPPF). It focuses upon two types of behaviour: (i) engaging with support; and (ii) participation in employment, education and training (EET), both of which behaviours are central to the aims of the YPG. As outlined in sections 8 and 9, this performance data will be used to help assess the impact of the YPG, but does not in and of itself demonstrate impact (and therefore needs to be considered alongside other data).
- 16.3 As table 7.1. outlines, this performance framework is informed by the YPG and YEPPF's theories of change and outlines what we would expect to observe were each successful. It focuses in particular upon performance in relation to:
- Prevention: young people who would be NEET, were it not for the intervention of the YEPPF and/or YPG; and
 - Re-engagement: young people in EET, who were NEET, and who would still be NEET, were it not for the intervention of the YEPPF and/or YPG.

Measuring prevention and re-engagement

- 16.4 By definition, successful early identification and support cannot be directly measured, because success is evidenced by absence (that is young people who would be NEET, were it not for the intervention). However, it is possible to measure the proportion of young people who are in EET, and to use this as a proxy measure for the effectiveness of preventative work.
- 16.5 As outlined in the introduction, the YEPF covers young people aged 11 to 18. Because all young people aged 11 to 16 should be in education,⁶⁵ and because the purpose of early identification and support is to ensure that young people ‘can progress successfully at 16’ (Welsh Government, 2023, p. 5), the performance measures in this framework focus upon the EET status of young people aged 16 to 18.⁶⁶
- 16.6 Unlike the YEPF, the YPG is primarily focused upon supporting re-engagement. While the YPG may prevent young people from becoming NEET in the first place - for example, a young person might take up the offer of support while in EET, in order to progress or change direction in EET - it is assumed that the main impact of the YPG will be supporting those who have disengaged (and are NEET).
- 16.7 Developing distinct KPIs for prevention and re-engagement is challenging, as both rely upon data relating to the percentage of young people who are NEET, and if successful, each of the two strategies will result in an increasing proportion of young people in EET.⁶⁷ From a purely ‘counting’

⁶⁵ ‘Parents may choose to educate their children at home (elective home education). However, they must fulfil a legal requirement to cause their child to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any Additional Learning Needs they may have.’ (Senedd Research, 2023, n. pag.)

⁶⁶ Disengagement for those aged 11 to 16 could be measured, using, for example, attendance data, but reducing disengagement between the ages of 11 to 16 should in turn help reduce disengagement at age 16+ and therefore have a positive effect on post-16 figures as well.

⁶⁷ Successful prevention means that young people make successful transitions and sustain their participation in EET. This means we would expect to observe an increase in the percentage of young people in EET, and an increase for younger age groups to be followed in successive years by equivalent increases in older age groups. For example, successful preventative work means that 16 year-olds make a successful transition from school to post-16 EET and do not become NEET, and

point of view the only differences would be in relation to timing (for example where prevention fails, and young people become NEET at age 16, but re-engagement succeeds, and young people enter EET by age 17) and whether young people become NEET or make seamless transitions from pre-16 education to post 16 education, training and employment (remaining in EET throughout).⁶⁸

- 16.8 Though it seems obvious, it should also be noted that successful prevention will reduce the need for re-engagement, and conversely, weakness in prevention will increase the need for re-engagement. Success in prevention may therefore appear to reduce performance in relation to re-engagement and vice versa. Therefore, as well as KPIs for different parts of the YEFP and YPG systems, the overarching system-wide KPI for the YEFP and YPG is an increase in the proportion of young people aged 16 to 24 who are in EET.

therefore in the following years (when they are 17, 18 etc), they are still in EET. An impact upon prevention would therefore be first observed amongst younger age groups and would over time be expected to ripple through to older age groups. In contrast, re-engagement means more people who are or have been NEET entering EET. In this case, we would expect to observe the percentage of young people aged 16 to 24 in EET in a given year to be higher than the percentage of young people aged 16 to 24 in EET in the preceding year (as people who were NEET the previous year change status having entered EET). We would therefore also expect to observe a decline in the percentage of those aged 17+ who were not unemployed or economically inactive in the last 12 months. Because both changes would mean that the percentage of young people aged 16 to 24 in EET in a given year is higher than the preceding year, it would be difficult to distinguish between the impacts of prevention and progression. Even if, for example, the focus is just upon transitions at 16, it is possible that prevention was ineffective (so young people became NEET) but that efforts to re-engage were effective (so young people who were NEET entered EET).

⁶⁸ However, if prevention were having an impact, we would also expect to observe an increase in the percentage of those aged 17+ who were in EET who had not been unemployed or economically inactive in the last 12 months, while if re-engagement was having an impact, we would also expect to observe an increase in the percentage of those aged 17+ who were in EET who had been unemployed or economically inactive in the last 12 months.

17. Appendix C. Additional detail on stakeholder interviews

17.1 As outlined in figure 8.1., the changes in the policy and practice landscape at national, regional and local authority levels would be evaluable through interviews with stakeholders. These stakeholders would be drawn from national level and via approximately six local authority case studies within Wales for the process evaluation.

17.2 Organisationally, stakeholders are likely to be drawn from bodies such as Welsh Government, Working Wales (WW), Careers Wales (CW), local authorities (LAs), post 16 education and training providers, employment support services, voluntary sector providers, Regional Skills Partnership Boards, the Department for Work and Pensions/JobCentre Plus, Big Ideas Wales and Business Wales.

17.3 Interviews with those involved in policy delivery would explore questions such as those in the following table:

Table 17.1. Illustrative examples of areas for exploration with stakeholders involved in delivery of the YPG and/or YEPF

Questions	In relation to young people aged 11 to 16 (YEPF only)	In relation to young people aged 16 to 18	In relation to young people aged 19-24
How well has the intent and expectations of the YPG and YEPF been communicated?	✓	✓	✓
How is post-16 provision and support coordinated? ⁶⁹		✓	✓
How and why have funding, planning and commissioning post-16 support and		✓	✓

⁶⁹ This would consider for example the role of role of EPCs, YEPF partnerships and RSPs.

provision changed since the introduction of the YPG and/or YEPP?			
What provision and support ⁷⁰ is offered to young people through the YPG and/or YEPP?	✓	✓	✓
How is support accessed ⁷¹ ?	✓	✓	✓
How and why has support changed since the introduction of YPG and/or YEPP?	✓	✓	✓
How and why is young people's behaviour in relation to EET changing as a result of the YPG and/or YEPP? ⁷²	✓	✓	✓

17.4 Although, as outlined above, interviews with (for example) staff delivering the principal elements of the YEPP and/or YPG could ask for views on why young people's behaviour was changing (as reflected, for instance, in KPIs such as the percentage of young people taking up national or local provision and support, and/or the percentage of these young people who enter EET), the relatively small number of interviews envisaged (n=35-50), covering six regions and multiple different programmes would limit the evaluation's ability to draw robust conclusions about the whole system. Therefore, as illustrated in figure 8.1, data from these interviews would need to be triangulated with data with from other sources, most notably from evaluations of YPG underpinning component programmes (where available) and from interviews with young people. It is likely that this process will in turn identify further issues and questions which may not be able to be definitively answered by

⁷⁰ Including access to mental health services.

⁷¹ This would include considerations of the YEPP brokerage role.

⁷² This would draw upon KPIs (see section 6) and involve stakeholders talking through their interpretations of the data.

the process evaluation or any future impact evaluation, highlighting areas where further research, process or economic evaluation may be warranted.

18. Appendix D: The Careers Wales Five-tier Model of Young People's Post-16 Engagement Levels

<p>Tier 5 Young People in Further Education, Employment or Training (EET)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustaining education, employment or training (EET). • Working or studying part time over 16 hours. • Voluntary Work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No lead worker is judged necessary given that young person is already engaged and not judged to be at risk of disengaging.
<p>Tier 4 Young People at risk of dropping out of EET</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those engaged in less than 16 hours of EET. • Those who have been identified at risk of disengagement pre-16 and/or were judged as at risk of not making a positive transition who are subsequently in FE, sixth form or training. • Those who have been made aware to CW by EET providers (or themselves) as at risk of dropping out of EET. 	<p>Allocation of lead worker depends on level of risk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low and medium risk - provider pastoral systems and/or allocation of learning coach as a lead worker. • High risk - may be allocated lead worker from either Youth Service or Careers Wales or if Families First involved Team Around the Family will decide allocation of lead worker.

<p>Tier 3 Unemployed 16 and 17 year-olds known to Careers Wales</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged with CW and/or known to be actively seeking EET; either ready to enter EET, or assessed as requiring career management or employability skills support to enter EET. <p>This tier should also include those known to CW, actively seeking EET but not requiring CW enhanced support, i.e. accessing support via CW.com, awaiting a college start date etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead worker identified for 100% cohort. Careers Wales will provide the lead worker in nearly all cases.
<p>Tier 2 Unemployed 16 and 17 year-olds, known to Careers Wales, who are not available for EET</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young person not available/ unable to seek EET (sickness, young carers, pregnancy, custody). Young people with significant or multiple barriers requiring intensive personal support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead worker identified for 100% cohort. Youth Service will provide lead worker in nearly all cases.
<p>Tier 1 Unknown status on leaving Careers Wales services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people unknown to Careers Wales. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once individuals are identified they are allocated to appropriate tier and allocated a lead worker accordingly.

Adapted from: Welsh Government, 2013, p. 29.

19. Appendix E. Desk based review of evaluation the European Youth Guarantees

19.1 Evaluation frameworks for the Youth Guarantees in Scotland and the EU were reviewed. This review considered in particular:

- what was or will be measured (including the KPIs used or proposed);
- how change was/will be measured (including both the type of changes, such as changes in policy and practice or in young people's behaviour) and the level at which change was or will be measured (for example, macro or system level; programme level; and/or micro level (the level of individual young people); and
- approaches to impact evaluation and attribution.

Measuring change

The Scottish Youth Guarantee's Evaluation Framework

19.2 The evaluation framework for the Scottish Youth Guarantee⁷³ sets out six KPIs outlined in the boxed text. These KPIs are supplemented by 'breakdown' measures, designed to measure (or breakdown) outcomes for different groups of young people, and 'interim measures' designed to measure progress toward the intended outcomes (Scottish Government, 2022, p. 2).

⁷³ The aim of the Guarantee is to ensure that 'every person aged between 16 and 24 in Scotland has the opportunity, depending on their circumstances, to study; take up an apprenticeship, job or work experience; or participate in formal volunteering.' The Guarantee 'builds on existing education, learning, employability, training and employment opportunities to tackle the long-term economic and social scarring of the Covid-19 pandemic.' (Scottish Government, 2022, p. 2, italics omitted.)

KPIs for the Scottish Youth Guarantee

- ‘Overarching KPI: Reduce the unemployment rate for young people aged 16 to 24 (excluding those in full-time education) to pre-Covid levels by the end of the current parliamentary term.
- KPI 1: Increase the proportion of 18 to 24 year-olds with qualifications at SCQF level 5 and above
- KPI 2: Increase the proportion of employers recruiting directly from education
- KPI 3: Increase the employment rate for young people aged 16 to 24 with disabilities⁷⁴
- KPI 4: Increase the proportion of young people aged 16 to 24 in secure employment
- KPI 5: Improve Scotland's performance compared to EU countries in the participation of young people aged 16 to 24 in education, training and employment.’ (Scottish Government, 2022, p. 4.)

19.3 The KPIs are complemented by a thematic focus upon ‘Employability Services’, ‘Employer Engagement’ and ‘Education Interventions’ intended to identify how different stakeholders (such as those delivering employability services, employers and education staff) responded.

The EU's Youth Guarantee Evaluation Framework

19.4 As outlined in table 19.1. (below) the KPIs for the EU's Youth Guarantee are more comprehensive than the Scottish framework. They include ‘macroeconomic’ measures covering the whole population of young people; direct monitoring of the delivery of the youth guarantee; and proposals for follow-up of individuals who have been supported by the Youth Guarantee.

⁷⁴ This is the text used by the Scottish Government. It is not consistent with the social model of disability used by the Welsh Government.

Table 19.1. Summary of KPIs for the EU Youth Guarantee (YG)

Macroeconomic indicators with data drawn from the EU Labour Force Survey (LFS)	Indicators of delivery using administrative data	Indicators of individual outcomes using a mix of data on individual young people
Main Indicator: NEET rate (15-24) (%) Supplementary indicators: employment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEET rate (15-24) by labour market status (unemployed/inactive). • Ratio of youth unemployment (15-24) to adult unemployment (25-74). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proportion of young people in the YG preparatory phase⁷⁵ beyond the 4 month target. • Positive and timely exits from the YG preparatory phase. • Average annual stock of young people in the YG preparatory phase / NEET population (annual average).⁷⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main indicator: situation of young people 6, 12, and 18 months after exiting the YG preparatory phase. • Supplementary indicators: situation of young people 6, 12, and 18 months after exiting the YG preparatory phase by type of offer (employment; continued education; apprenticeship; or traineeship offer).
Supplementary indicators: longer term impacts upon educational attainment and labour market attainment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth education attainment level 20-24 (%). • NEET rate 25-29 (%). • Employment rate of young people aged 25-29 (%). • Employment rates of recent graduates (aged 20-34 having left education and training no more than three years before the reference year (%). 		

⁷⁵ This is a measure of the time taken until a young person takes up an offer by measuring the duration of the YG preparatory phase.

⁷⁶ To 'give an approximate indication of the possible proportion of NEETs registered in the YG scheme' (European Commission, 2017, p. 9).

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proportion of people with low educational attainment level aged 20- 29 (%).• Proportion of people with tertiary educational attainment level 30-34 (%).• Proportion of early leavers from education and training 18-24 (%).		
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Adapted from European Commission, 2017.

Impact evaluation

- 19.5 The Evaluation of the EU Youth Guarantee envisages that impact evaluation will draw upon ‘an appropriate mix of theory of change and counterfactual methods’ (European Commission, 2017, p. 22). It suggests that:
- the youth guarantee theory of change be tested by drawing upon a wide range of data drawn from, for example, documents, reviews, interviews, surveys, analysis of data from ESF monitoring and administrative data (ibid.); and
 - that a ‘counterfactual impact evaluation’ (CIE) compares outcomes for young people who benefited from the Youth Guarantee (treatment group) with an ‘untreated’ comparison group. It suggests that the comparison group could include, for example, young people aged 16 to 17 and 25 to 26 who are not eligible for the Guarantee,⁷⁷ or young people from neighbouring areas not implementing the intervention guarantee.⁷⁸ It notes that data on groups of non-participants who are similar to those participating in the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) supported interventions being evaluated would therefore need to be collected (ibid.).
- 19.6 Although a few examples of CIEs of individual components of the Youth Guarantee were identified,⁷⁹ no CIE of the Youth Guarantee as a whole was identified.
- 19.7 At this stage, the Scottish approach to impact attribution has not been determined.

⁷⁷ The framework suggests a Regression Discontinuity Design approach.

⁷⁸ The framework suggests a propensity score matching (PSM) or difference-in-differences (DID) design.

⁷⁹ For example, in Latvia a CIE of the vocational training programme was undertaken using a Fuzzy Regression Discontinuity Design (Council of Europe, 2018); in Italy, employer incentives were evaluated using a DID design; in Poland a wage subsidy was evaluated using a RDD, combined with DID and PSM design; and in Hungary a wage subsidy was evaluated using a PSM and DID design (Krekó et al, 2021).

20. Appendix F. Young Persons Guarantee Evaluability Assessment and Process Evaluation: Policy interview schedule (May 2023)

- 1. Can you please briefly tell me about your role in relation to [insert policy area]**

- 2. Can you please tell me about the relationship between this [insert policy area] and the YPG?**
 - for example, how does your area of work or responsibilities contribute to the delivery and/or outcomes of the YPG?
 - which group[s] of young people are expected to benefit from [insert area of policy]/ does [insert area of policy] focus upon?
 - what other parts of the system, do you depend upon? [E.g. Working Wales for referrals; the post-16 education and training system for training provision; financial support such as EMAs or PLAs?] and which other parts of the system depend upon [insert area of policy]?
 - do you and/or your colleagues report to and/or attend the YPG programme board?
 - how much 'profile' or visibility' does the YPG have in your policy area? For example, how much influence (if any) does the YPG have upon the way [insert policy area] is developed?
 - [if it has an influence], how is this exerted / how does the influence 'operate'?
 - what are the main drivers/priorities for [insert area of policy]? [such as the Programme of Government, the National Milestones, the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, Cymraeg 2050, research] What are the main policy documents that guide or govern [insert area of policy]?

- 3. How would you describe the YPG? I hasten to add, this is not a test, we're interested in how people potentially think about and see the YPG in different ways.**
 - what are the main 'components' of the YPG? For example, what are the main policies that underpin the YPG?
 - how well aligned are the different policies / components?

- how would you describe the relationship between the YEPPF⁸⁰ and the YPG? Why does Wales need two potentially overlapping programmes for 16 to 18 year-olds? What does this add? (E.g. what would be lost if the YEPPF was ended? What impact would abandoning the YPG have upon the YEPPF?)
- who are the principal 'actors' [people, programmes, structures] responsible for delivering the YPG? [consider national and also regional partners, e.g. RPBs and local partners, such as LAs, post-16 education and training providers]
- to what extent is the YPG a 'relabelling' of existing policies, or perhaps an 'umbrella' that sits above a series of existing policies, and to what extent has it or is it changing those policies, and forged them into a single programme? How would you describe the relationship between the YPG and its constituent parts?
- to what extent do you think collaboration and partnership working are at the heart of the YPG? Is this the result of the YPG? (and if so, how and why?)
- what does the 'Team Wales' ethos⁸¹ mean to you?

4. Why, in your view, was the YPG needed?

- the context has changed, and continues to change, since the YPG was launched in November 2021. The predictions for a large post pandemic spike in youth unemployment didn't materialise, so has the need for the YPG changed at all? What does this mean for the YPG (e.g. in terms of design, delivery and/or its likely impact)?

5. What difference do you think having a YPG will make?

- [explore] what difference if any, *will* the YPG make to the WG's 'offer of support' to young people? [e.g. what's new / additional / different about the offer of support?]
- what differences *should* the YPG make, or does it need to make [there may be a gap between intent and expectations of impact] in order to increase the proportion of 16 to 24 year-olds in education, employment, or training?

⁸⁰ As the specification outlines: 'The YEPPF and the YPG jointly supply a line of sight to support young people throughout their school journey and beyond until they move into employment or self-employment. They sit side by side, to support vulnerable young people as they progress through the education system and beyond.' (Welsh Government, 2022b, p. 20)

⁸¹ As the specification outlines, 'Building a 'Team Wales' ethos as well as encouraging and embedding a culture of collaboration and partnership working is at the heart of the Guarantee. The YPG encourages stakeholders to join forces with government and young people themselves to build an inclusive recovery [from the pandemic], where young people have every opportunity to thrive.' (Welsh Government, 2022b, p. 8).

- will / what parts of the YPG be an accessible and attractive offer to those furthest away from the labour market, people with protected characteristics, and those who face additional barriers to accessing and sustaining work?
- [explore] how and why will the 'offer of support to gain a place in education or training, find a job or become self-employed' change young people's thinking and behaviour? and
- [explore] what else, if anything, is needed, in addition to the 'offer of support' to increase the proportion of 16 to 24-year-olds in education, employment, or training? [For example, what needs to happen to encourage young people to take up the offer of support? How dependent is the impact of the YPG (and the offer of support) upon economic conditions? What could slow or block the impact of the YPG upon the proportion of 16 to 24-year-olds in education, employment, or training?]

6. What do you think it would be important to learn from an evaluation of the YPG?

- what would you want to know or understand [as a result of the evaluation]?

7. Is there anything else that we have not talked about that you think is important?

Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you very much for your time