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

## Summary

### 1. Research aims and methodology

- 1.1 The [Young Person's Guarantee](#) (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 is delivered by a wide range of programmes, such as Working Wales (WW), Communities for Work+ (CfW+) and Jobs Growth Wales+ (JGW+), and partners such as Business Wales. [The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework](#) (YEPF) complements the YPG. It aims to support the early identification and support of young people aged 11 to 18 who are at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- 1.2 The aim of this study is to develop a robust framework to support the evaluation of the 'whole-system' approach to delivering the YPG. A range of methods were used including:
  - A desk based review of:
    - policy and research focused upon young people's transitions from school to post-16 employment, education or training (EET);
    - evaluations of EET support interventions and of 'complex' systems'; and
    - data, including national statistics (for example, the Statistical First Release (SFR) [Participation of young people in education and the labour market](#)), administrative data (for example, from the Lifelong

Learning Wales Record (LLWR), and programme management information (MI) data.

- Interviews and discussion with a range of stakeholders involved in developing and implementing the YPG and YEPF, including members of the YPG and YEPF policy teams and stakeholders with responsibilities in areas such as further education (FE) and apprenticeships, Fair Work, Careers Wales (CW) and employability policy.

1.3 Data gathered through these methods informed the development of a theory of change, evaluability assessment (EA) and evaluation framework for the YPG and YEPF.

## 2. The YPG's theory of change

2.1 Figure 2.1. illustrates the high level ('meta') theory of change for the YPG. It shows how by providing the offer of support, the YPG aims to contribute to the national milestone that at least 90% of 16 to 24 year olds will be in education, employment or training (EET) by 2050. This will require young people to take up the offer of support and for that offer of support to then help them access and sustain EET.

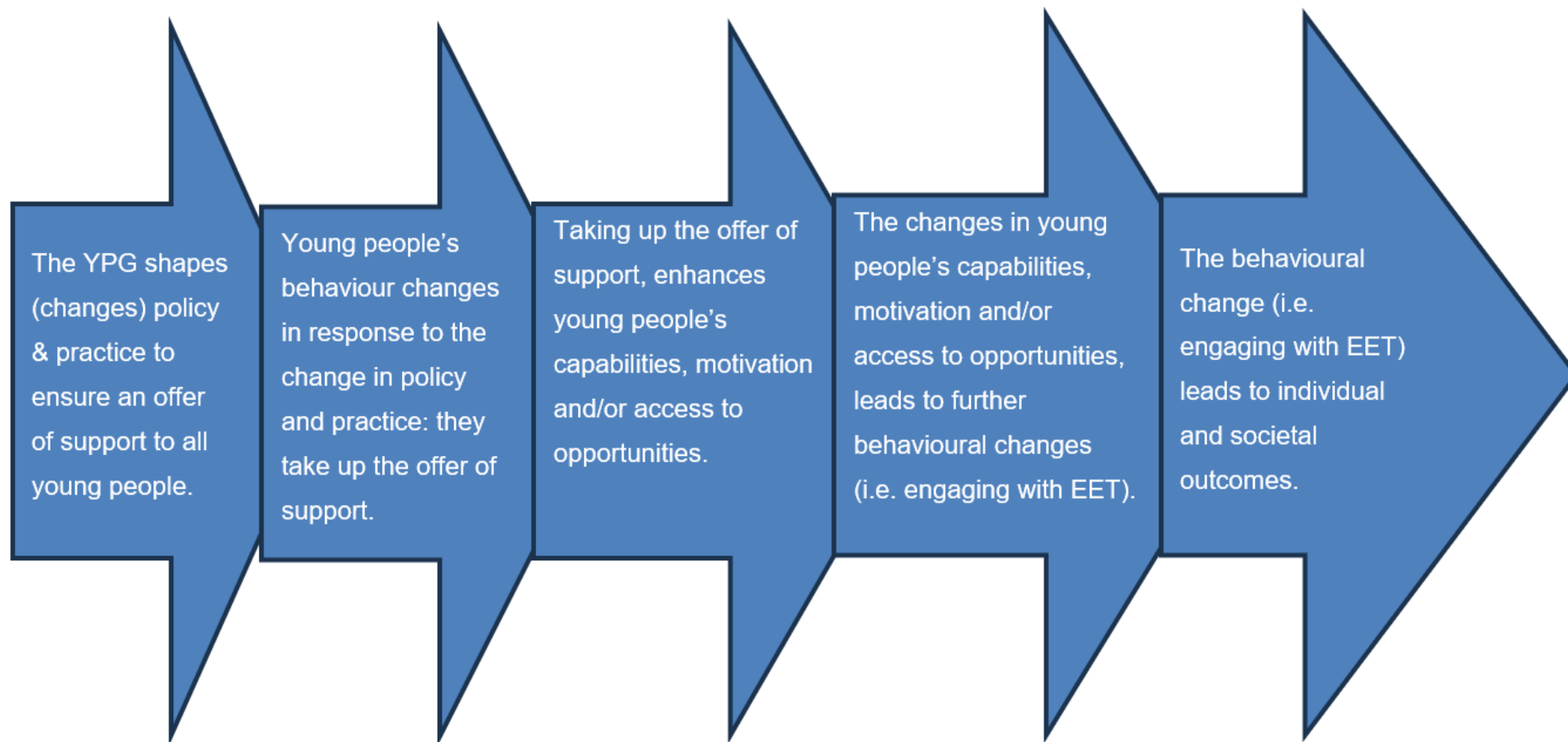
2.2 The theory of change uses the COM-B Framework (Michie et al., 2011) of behavioural change to explore how it is anticipated that the YPG will **motivate** young people to take up the offer of support through, for example, marketing campaigns such as [Feed your Positivity](#). By taking up support, it is anticipated that:

- young people will build their skills and knowledge, enhancing their **capabilities**; and/or
- be helped to overcome barriers, increasing their access to EET **opportunities**, and
- this, in turn, should **motivate** changes in their **behaviour** in relation to EET.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is also possible that the offer of support would motivate young people to change their behaviour - which might include actions that also enhance their capabilities (for example, engaging in training) and or/access to opportunities (for example, by taking steps to overcome barriers, such as caring responsibilities). This type of effect is judged 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, compared to young people first taking up the offer of support through the YPG and then taking up EET opportunities.

**Figure 2.1. YPG's high level ('meta') theory of change**



### 3. The Evaluability Assessment and evaluation framework

- 3.1 The Evaluability Assessment (EA) and the proposed process, impact and economic evaluation framework are based upon the theory of change (figure 2.1.) and focuses upon evaluating change at three interlinked levels:
- **Policy and practice:** how the offer of support to 16-24 year olds changes (policy outcomes);
  - **Young people's behaviour:** how the behaviour of 16-24 year olds changes in response to changes in the offer of support (behavioural outcomes); and
  - **Societal outcomes:** how changes in the behaviour of 16-24 year olds contributes to wider outcomes, such as strengthening of Wales' prosperity, health and language.
- 3.2 For each level the evaluability is assessed in respect to identifying:
- what has changed; this includes assessing whether there have been policy changes or shifts in young people's behaviour; and
  - why it has changed; understanding the reasons behind these changes.
- 3.3 Proposals to do this are then put forward in the form of the evaluation framework.

#### **Systems and programme perspectives on the YPG**

- 3.4 In order to provide the necessary data, the EA identifies the need to take two complementary perspectives:
- a **systems wide** perspective; and
  - a narrower focus upon an individual component of the YPG, such as a key **programme** that forms part of the YPG (for example, JGW+).
- 3.5 An example of a system level measure would be the proportion of disabled young people who are NEET and an example of a programme level measure would be the proportion of young people supported by JGW+ who are disabled.
- 3.6 Because the aim of this study is an evaluation of the 'whole-system' approach to delivering the YPG, system level measures are generally preferable. However, there are gaps in data at a system level that can only be (partially) filled by using programme level data. For example, more comprehensive data on the characteristics of young people who were NEET but who are now engaging with programmes is available at a programme level than it is at a system level. Moreover, in some cases, programme level measures will be preferable even where system level measures are available. For example, as the system of support for young people is made up of multiple different programmes, understanding the performance of different programmes can help us better understand how different parts of the system are performing.

However, because a system is more than the sum of its parts, the attributes of a system cannot be understood by looking at each component in isolation. Therefore, programme level measures will never be adequate to explain the system (HM Treasury, 2020).

### **Measuring changes in young people's behaviour**

- 3.7 As outlined above, the theory of change for the YPG identifies that in order to achieve its aims, such as increasing the proportion of young people in EET, the YPG will need to encourage and enable changes in young people's behaviour. Unless an increasing proportion of young people take up the offer of support and/or take up EET opportunities,<sup>2</sup> the long term goals the YPG aims to contribute to, such as 90% of young people in EET,<sup>3</sup> cannot be achieved. Therefore, the key performance indicators (KPIs) outlined in figure 3.1 will be used to measure changes in two aspects of young people's behaviour:
- the numbers of young people engaged in programmes or support; and
  - the numbers of young people engaged in programmes or support who enter EET.
- 3.8 As figure 3.1 (on page 6) illustrates, the proposed headline measures of change use both system and programme level measures to analyse success in relation to: (i) early identification and support to prevent young people from disengaging from education (prevention) and (ii) support for those who are NEET to re-engage with EET. These measures provide the basis for three sets of key performance indicators (KPIs): one set for the YPG alone which is aimed at young people aged 16-24; a second set is for the YEPF which is aimed at young people aged 11-18; and a third set of shared KPIs is for both frameworks.
- 3.9 Outcome measures like KPIs only provide a measure of change; they do not explain how and why change occurs. Figure 3.2. on the following page provides an overview of the evaluation framework itself, describing how primary and secondary data could be used (and triangulated) to explore how and why change in policy, young people's behaviour and society occurs.

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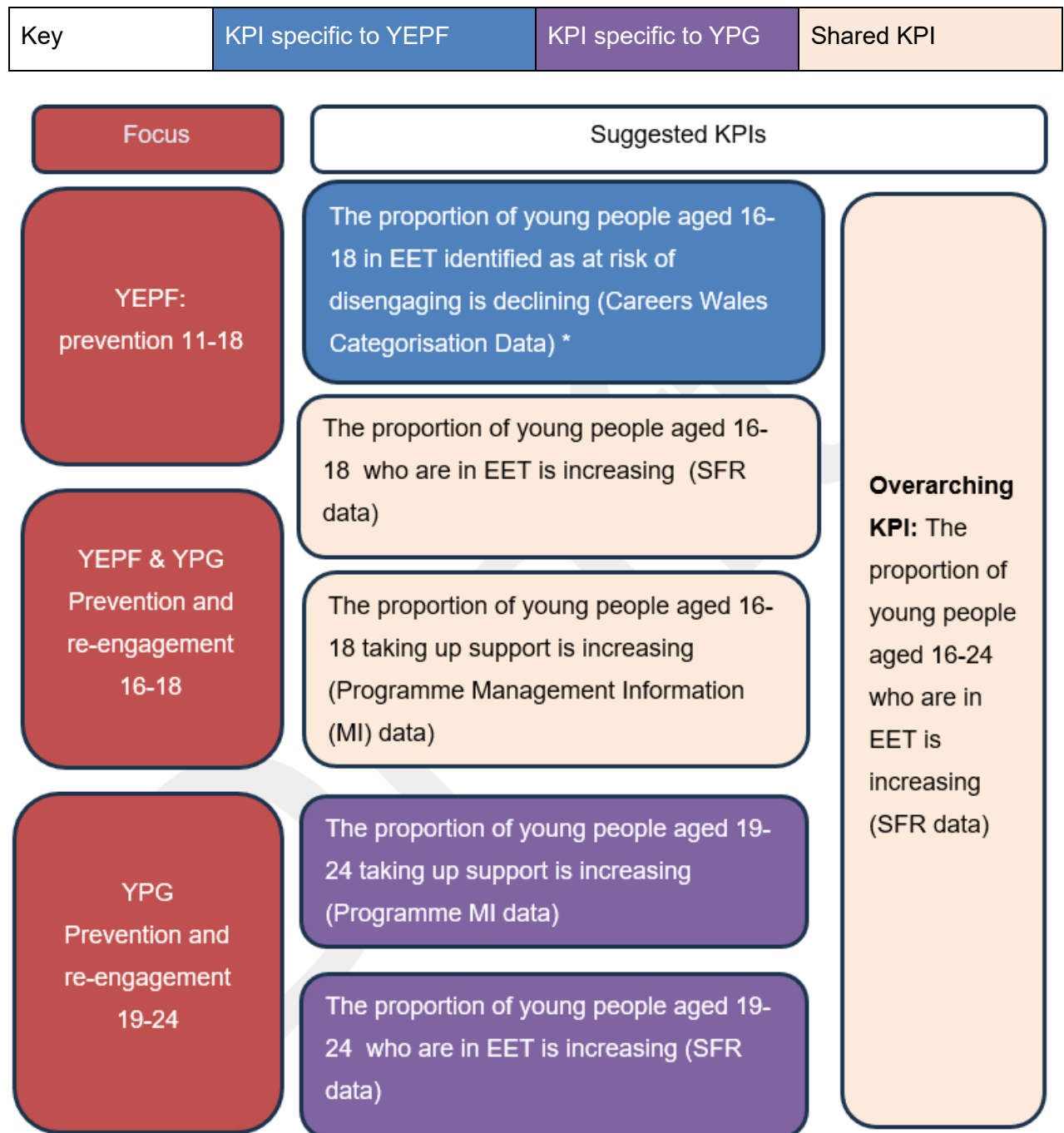
<sup>2</sup> As noted, it is possible that having a guarantee of support would be sufficient to motivate action, even if young people did not take up the offer of support (meaning the take up of support may not be a necessary condition for achieving the milestone).

<sup>3</sup> This is one of the [national indicators and milestone](#), used to measure progress against the [Well-Being of Future Generations Act](#) (WBFGA) goals) such as: 'At least 90% of 16 to 24 year olds will be in education, employment, or training by 2050' (Welsh Government, 2021, p. 9).

#### **4. Conclusions**

- 4.1 The YPG is evaluable. Change at each of the three levels identified by the theory of change (that is, policy and practice, young people's behaviour, and society) is measurable. However, impact attribution (identifying the contribution of the YPG to observed changes) is only feasible at the level of policy and practice and young people's behaviour. It is therefore recommended that a theory-based approach, such as contribution analysis (Mayne, 2011), is used. As outlined in figure 3.1. it is recommended that this draws upon a range of methods and sources of primary and secondary data to explore change at a system and programme level. This should include empirical impact evaluations of individual programmes. Although it may not be possible to measure impact upon societal outcomes, it may be possible to infer the likely impacts of changes in young people's behaviour (such as more young people in EET) upon societal outcomes (such young people's wellbeing and health).

**Figure 3.1. Performance framework: proposed headline KPIs**



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

**Figure 3.2. Overview of the Evaluation Framework**



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

\*\*Likely to consider, for example, programmes' contribution to the [Well-Being of Future Generations Act](#) goals.

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

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



## References

HM Treasury (2020), [Magenta Book 2020: Supplementary Guide: Handling Complexity in Policy Evaluation. HM Treasury Website.](#)

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Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/young-persons-guarantee-ypg-evaluability-assessment-and-proposed-evaluation-framework>

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

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Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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