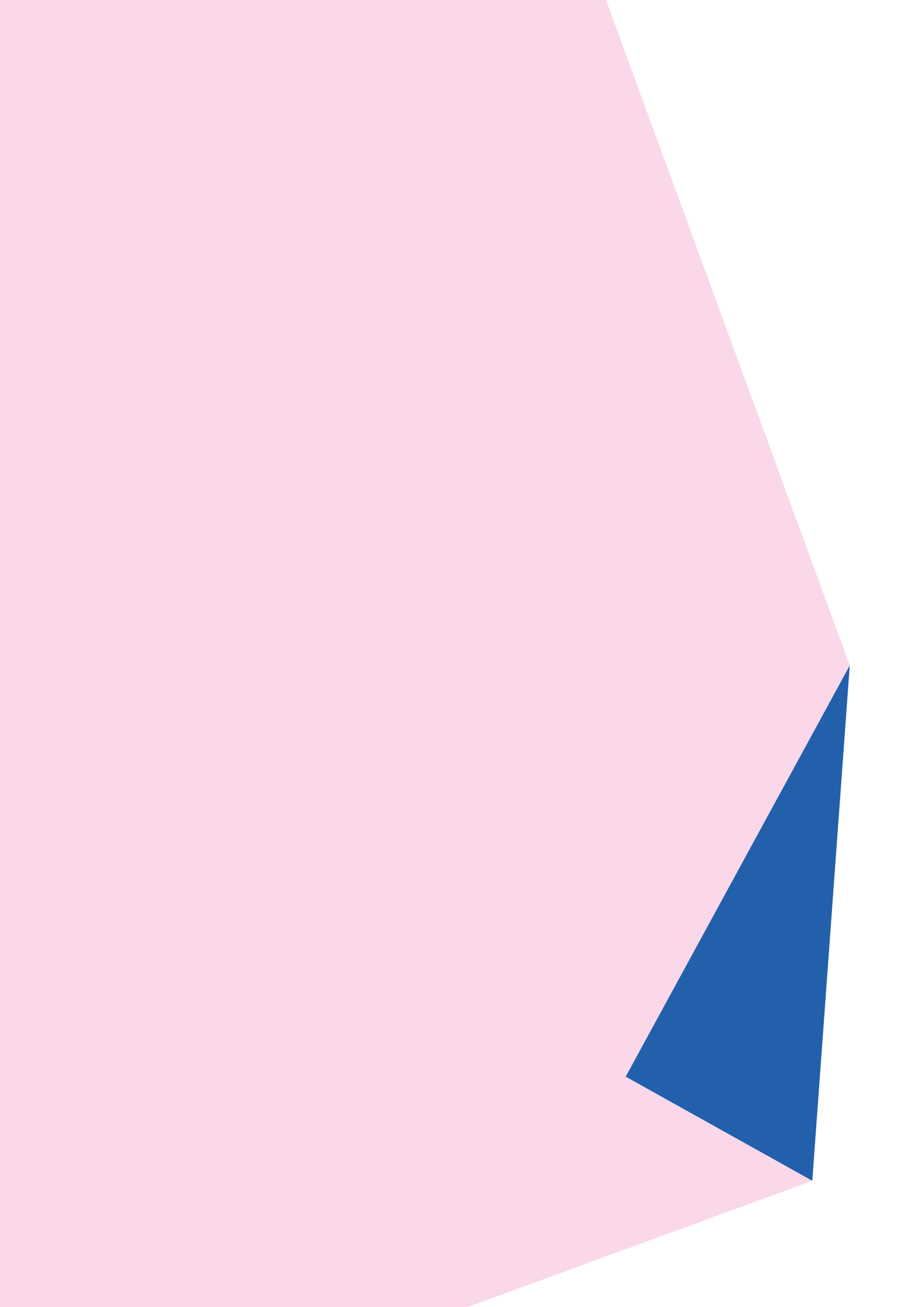


# How to use the National Youth Work Curriculum



# Why use the National Youth Work Curriculum?

Using the Curriculum developed by the National Youth Agency (NYA) can provide a number of additional benefits for young people and youth workers.

It will:

- **Provide a structure:** the Curriculum provides a clear structure and framework for working with young people. This can help youth workers and volunteers plan and deliver activities that are focused and relevant to the needs of young people.
- **Promote best practice:** the Curriculum is based on the latest research and best practice in youth work and the evolving needs of young people. By following the guidance in the Curriculum, youth workers and volunteers can be confident that they are delivering effective and evidence-based interventions.
- **Encourage personal development:** the Curriculum is designed to promote the personal, social and emotional development of young people. By using the Curriculum, youth workers can provide young people with opportunities to develop new skills, build self-confidence and resilience, and improve their mental health and wellbeing.
- **Support youth participation:** the Curriculum emphasises the importance of youth participation and engagement. By involving young people in the planning and delivery of activities, youth workers can empower young people to take ownership of their own learning and development.
- **Enhance professional credibility:** by using a recognised youth work Curriculum, youth workers can enhance their professional credibility and demonstrate their commitment to high standards. Investing in continuous professional development and up-to-date certification for all those engaged in youth work provides a clear message to cross-sector colleagues and organisations.

## National Youth Work Curriculum



# How do I implement the National Youth Work Curriculum?

The NYA recommends the guided steps set out below:

- **Familiarise yourself** with the Curriculum framework. Make sure you understand the themes, principles, aims and structure of the framework.
- **Assess the needs** of the young people you work with and intend to work with by identifying their interests or particular vulnerabilities (for example if living in a neighbourhood with ongoing challenges). This will help you to plan and deliver activities that are relevant and engaging.
- **Develop a plan** for your organisation that meets the needs you have identified. Include in this plan a list of resources that will support your team or a checklist to deliver on (such as session planning, evaluation forms, impact measurement tools, activity ideas, and so on). The development plan should not be rigid – you may need to make changes as you test and carry out activities and ideas.
- **Implement your plan** and review it regularly with young people and your youth work team. Put the plan into action by delivering the programmes and activities you have developed. Provide opportunities for young people to participate in activities that will enhance their skills, knowledge and personal development.
- **Make time to analyse** the effectiveness of your curriculum and share your learning. Use the information you record in session evaluations, team debriefs and feedback, gauge whether or not you have successfully met your aims and objectives. Use your learning to inform future plans.

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# How can we ensure that our curriculum planning and delivery is inclusive, accessible and diverse?

To ensure your curriculum and process for implementation is relevant to as many young people as possible, we recommend the following:

- **Ensure young people are actively involved** in the design, development and evaluation of the plan; especially in the development and delivery of activities. This can help to ensure that activities are relevant and engaging for all young people, regardless of their background, circumstances, religion, or the challenges that may be happening in their local area.
- **Engage with a diverse cross section of the communities** with which you work or want to reach out to. Take steps to listen to their needs and perspectives. This can help you to develop a better understanding of the cultural, social and economic contexts in which young people are living.
- **Adapt activities** to include all the needs of the diverse communities you want to reach. For example, recognising the needs of young people with disabilities, those from minority ethnic groups, or those from low-income families.
- **Provide training and support** to youth workers to help them understand issues around diversity, equity and inclusion. This can include training on cultural competence, unconscious bias, and working with marginalised groups.
- **Monitor and evaluate the impact of your work** activities on diverse groups of young people. This can help you to identify any gaps in provision and start to address them.
- **Provide a space for continual reflection** where your team can assess your practice and be open to feedback. Use this to adapt your approach and ensure that your activities are accessible to as many young people as possible.

## Resources to support your curriculum planning:

- National Youth Work Curriculum
- Youth Work Practice Standards
- Youth Club in a Box

## Case study

# Kinetic Youth

**Below is a case study that outlines how the National Youth Work Curriculum can be applied to improve the quality of practice to get the best possible outcomes for young people.**

Kinetic Youth is a not-for-profit youth work organisation that delivers youth work to young people within the secure estate (youth detention accommodation, including young offender institutions). Potentially the young people will be a mix of ages, ethnicities, religions, faiths, sexualities, and gender identities. As such Kinetic Youth needs to be aware of all the needs of the young people they work with to build a varied and engaging curriculum.

The first step for Kinetic Youth was to create a learning and exploration space for all staff to familiarise themselves with the National Youth Work Curriculum. A training plan was developed to ensure that all staff were competent in needs analysis, programme development, delivery, evaluation and impact data assessment. Kinetic Youth developed internal models of data collection and analysis.

Kinetic Youth wanted to ensure that the voice of young people was central to the development of the organisation and so worked across various sites to consult with them. Gaining this insight helped to prioritise what young people felt was affecting them most.

The organisation then implemented communication models with wider stakeholders (commissioners, funders and other service providers) and brought their priorities into the curriculum planning process.

Quarterly planning meetings allowed staff to plan, deliver and evaluate the successes of their curriculum and make changes to their delivery. Gathering the team together allowed for different voices to help shape their curriculum to meet young people's needs going forward.

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These meetings identify:

- the top priorities of young people
- the top points for stakeholders
- themes to shape the delivery in the next quarter (the coming three months)
- session plans
- activity plans
- the resource needed.

Quarterly and annual outcome reports were produced to help the team recognise what worked and what needed to be done differently. These reports are used for feedback from all stakeholders, recognising changes in behaviour, achievements and outcomes. The reports explore in detail how the youth work has made a positive impact or where something has not worked. They help to identify the reasons why and how best to avoid pitfalls in the future. The reports are essential in evidencing to funders and commissioners how the work delivered is helping to reach their overall aims.



Kinetic Youth used the following templates:

- consultation and feedback forms
- curriculum planning document
- session planning and evaluation forms
- Kinetic impact measurement models
- team meeting minutes
- risk assessment templates for the whole curriculum
- risk assessment templates for specific activities
- quarterly and annual outcome reporting.

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## Curriculum themes

- Identity and belonging
- Health and wellbeing
- Leadership, civic engagement and participation
- Economic and financial wellbeing
- Creativity and fun
- Global citizenship
- Skills development
- The environment and sustainable development
- Healthy and safe relationships
- Arts, culture and heritage.

**Identity and belonging:** providing the space for young people to learn about their identity and how they belong to wider communities is nurturing, developmental and inspiring. Running groups that bring together individuals to create a community, such as from the LGBTQIA community (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex and asexual), or working with young people from the travelling community, can increase a sense of inclusion, understanding and safety. You can tailor activities to meet the specific groups' needs (such as how to challenge discrimination).

**Health and wellbeing:** providing time and space to engage in sessions that improve emotional and mental wellbeing is vital. Running a variety of physical activities that spark interest as well as getting them active can have a positive impact on overall health. You could run basketball leagues, deliver yoga or mindfulness sessions, have quiet areas for reading or discussion, do forest bathing or run team competitions.

### **Leadership, civic engagement and participation:**

engaging young people in the process of decision-making is not just a good thing to do, it is a right as stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In a youth club you may want to involve young people in the creation of a curriculum that meets their needs, or in how your club looks physically. In a local authority you may want to work with young people to influence local decision-making bodies; things such as 'no go areas' or 'no loitering' can really affect how young people are thought of or treated by the wider public, and they deserve to have a say.

**Economic and financial wellbeing:** running workshops, offering advice and guidance and providing resources to improve young people's economic wellbeing is essential. Young people need the financial security to flourish, but knowing how to do that in a safe and legal way is not always clear. You could run a holiday group that helps young people create a CV, develop interview skills or learn how to set up a bank account. Ask your group what they need to know about the world of work and life, then create the space and place for them to learn.

**Creativity and fun:** youth work aims to be fun and creative, and engage young people in positive activities. You can measure the impact of your work through the number of smiles, the laughter in the room and the number of returning young people. You could run regular games leagues, quiz nights, competitions or whatever the young people say they want to do.

**Global citizenship:** a project that widens horizons and helps young people see their place in the world can be liberating, educative and empowering. Working with similar peer groups in another part of the world can help young people broaden young people's understanding of different countries and cultures. National or international exchange trips enabling your young people to visit their peers in a different region or country, giving them the opportunity to experience different cuisines, accents or languages, surroundings, and more.

**Skills development:** young people want to develop new skills, nurture existing skills or try new things entirely – be it cooking, first aid, DIY, mechanics, bike maintenance or sports. Consider asking individuals to do a personal skills assessment and identify where they may want to develop their skills. Then support them to work out how to develop in that area.

**Environment and sustainable development:** young people feel empowered to stand up for their beliefs and are leading the way globally to combat the climate crisis. Ask your young people what environmental priorities they have. Ideas could include an allotment project that grows food for the local community, organising community litter picks, planting trees or beachcombing (looking for things of value).

**Healthy and safe relationships:** by delivering a programme that looks at healthy and safe relationships you can provide opportunities for young people to develop an awareness of power dynamics, safeguarding, harm and neglect. Creating activities that help young people to be aware of their personal safety, their position in relationships, their rights as an individual and their role in protecting themselves and others.

**Arts, culture and heritage:** a programme that uses the arts to explore culture and heritage can be inclusive, equitable and diverse. You could work with young people in their local community and ask them to produce artwork that they feel represents them and their community, and exhibit the work in a public space for all to see. This work could improve communication and demystify cultures within a community.

The National Youth Work Curriculum is designed to be a flexible framework, it is not a fixed or rigid syllabus that we expect youth workers or organisations to stick to. It's here to help, complement and guide what you're doing or planning.

The NYA's goal is that it helps, supports, guides and inspires everyone who uses it, with the aim of improving, sharpening and enabling new examples of inspiring youth work all over the nation.

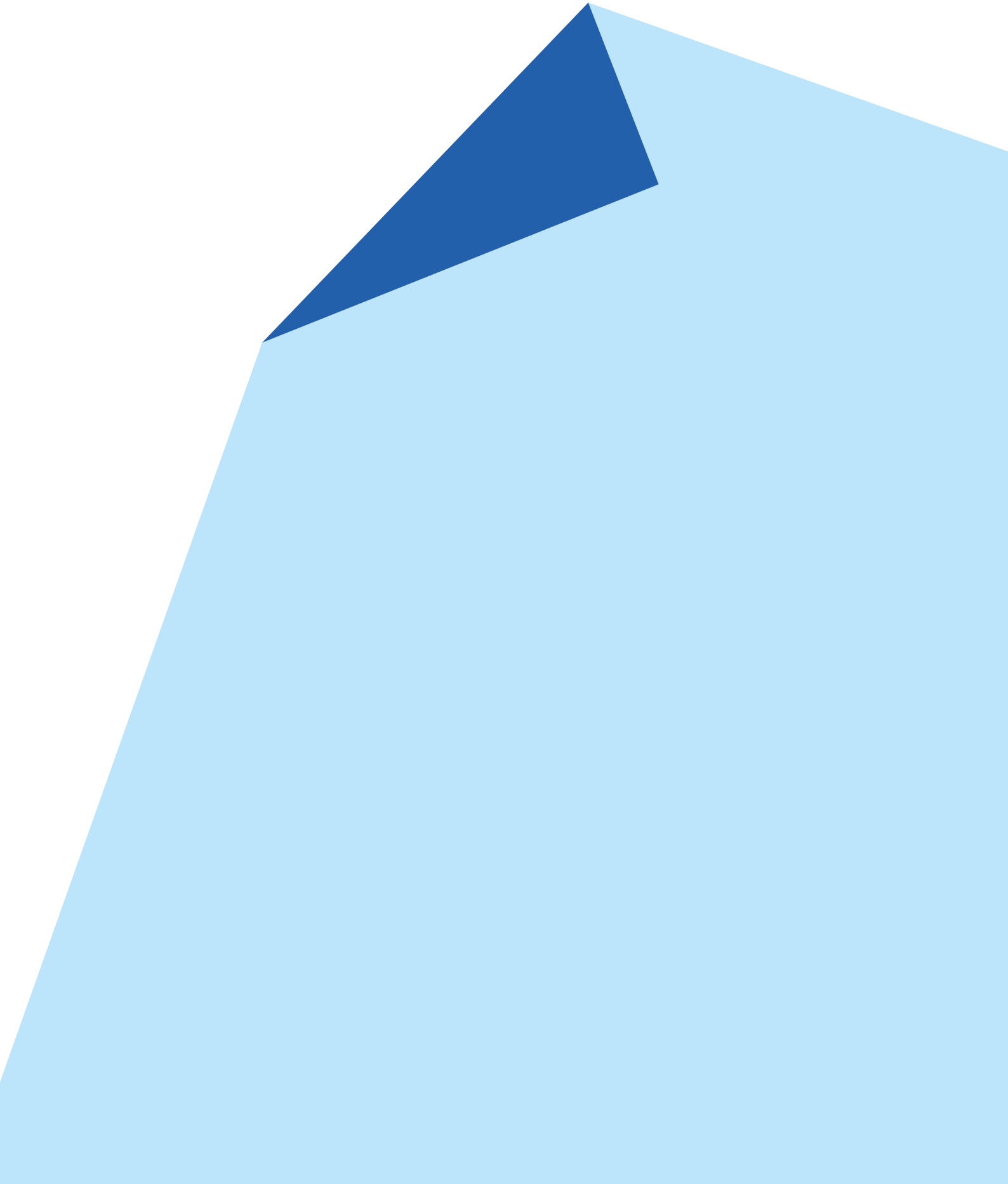
Through designing an adaptable framework, our overall goal is to enable a greater understanding of youth work practice, providing an educational framework, and acting as a reference tool to be used by decision-makers, policymakers, commissioners, youth workers, volunteers, and importantly, the children and young people themselves.

Whatever form youth work takes, the Curriculum emphasises the need for young people to be at its front, centre, and its beating heart.



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