

# ysqm

Quality Mark for Services for Young People

## What is the YSQM?

**YSQM: Quality Mark for Services for Young People** challenges organisations to assess for themselves whether they have the building blocks in place to provide high quality services.

“Young people deserve the highest quality services. But good quality services do not just happen. They require careful planning, skilled staff and sufficient resources. This quality mark captures these elements. It provides services with the opportunity to assess for themselves how they are doing. Achieving, or working towards achieving these standards, will demonstrate that an organisation can deliver high quality work for and with young people, thereby improving life chances.”

*Tom Wylie, Chief Executive, The National Youth Agency*

## The YSQM is made up of 11 Standards divided into 3 key themes:

### Policy and Strategy

Performance management  
Management information  
Quality assurance  
Equality and diversity  
Curriculum/Programme of work  
Legal requirements

### Partnerships and Resources

Partnership strategy  
Resources strategy

### People

Personal and social development  
Involving young people  
Workforce development

Each standard is assessed at one of four levels – Advanced 4, Established 3, Aspiring 2, and Emerging 1. There are three indicators within each standard each with level descriptors (none for the Advanced level) and examples of evidence designed to assist in the self-assessment process.

## Who is it for?

The YSQM is designed for use by any organisation working with young people. Commissioning bodies wishing to satisfy themselves of the quality and solidity of an organisation they may wish to engage as a service provider could also use it.

This is a bespoke Quality Mark which focuses on work with young people and the building blocks to sound quality youth work organisations. Its greatest strength is that it has been commissioned and funded by the DfES, overseen by the NYA's Quality Action Group (made up from representatives from Ofsted, Government Office, Voluntary Sector, DfES, NYA, and the Statutory Sector) and designed with the participative input of fifteen youth work organisations.

### How does it relate to Ofsted?

The YSQM enables services and organisations to look across all of their functions. It can usefully assist services in carrying out and answering questions set out in Ofsted's self assessment. As is the case with other systems, the quality mark is an indicator to external bodies, including Ofsted, of the rigour, which has been brought to performance management.

### How much does it cost?

Organisations can subscribe to YSQM for £125 a year or £200 for two years (local authority and national voluntary organisations) Local voluntary organisations will pay £75 for one year and £100 for two. VAT at 17.5% will apply. This entitles you to the framework and a range of support including quarterly briefings, case studies, regional event and support networks and input into the review process. Details on how to subscribe are on the website [www.nya.org.uk/qualitymark](http://www.nya.org.uk/qualitymark)

### What is the YSQM National Award?

The YSQM is primarily a self-assessment tool, which can be used by any organisation as a means to quality improvement. However, there was a demand from those involved in its development for a National Award for those organisations, which reach the required standard. Achieving this would bring prestige to youth work organisations, help with their relationships with other organisations, support funding bids and commissioning, and celebrate good youth work practice with peers, young people, staff and partners.

To be eligible for the National Award you need to have achieved an established score on your self-assessment and pay an additional fee, depending on the scale of the work involved. An external assessor checks your assessment and makes a recommendation on whether the quality mark is awarded to The NYA's Quality Standards Committee, who make the final decision. Once achieved an award will be valid for 3 years. The challenge for its credibility was to have internal ownership and external accreditation.

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The National Youth Agency



The Sound Systems Accreditation scheme is a way in which organisations can critically examine their own policies and practices around safeguarding, measure them against the recommended standards and work towards reaching those standards. It encourages, promotes and accredits good practice in accordance with the *Keeping it Safe* standards which fall into the following categories:

- organisational policies and procedures;
- reporting concerns, suspicions and allegations;
- safe recruitment and selection;
- managing paid and volunteer staff;
- providing education training and support; and
- providing safe activities.

The accreditation process is peer-led by voluntary and community organisations working with children and young people. Organisations that sign up are assigned a mentor who helps set actions plans and targets. Once the organisation and their mentor feel they have achieved the standards, they are allocated an assessor who will analyse the portfolio of evidence and visit the organisation.

The assessor makes one of the following recommendations:

- pass
- pass with recommendations (when some minor suggestions as to possible improvements are made)
- pass with conditions (organisations are re-assessed after an agreed period to make sure the additional requirements have been met)
- or failed to achieve the standards

The recommendation goes to the moderation board made up of a group of assessors and NCVYS representation, who decide on the award of the kitemark.

Currently the process is free and is open to voluntary and community organisations that work with young people.



## Hear by Right

Hear by Right is a tried and tested standards framework for organisations across the statutory and voluntary sectors to assess and improve practice and policy on the active involvement of children and young people.

HbR contends that success in involving children and young people will only come when based on clear and explicit shared values for their participation. The active involvement of children and young people works best when:

- ❑ their involvement is a visible commitment that is properly resourced;
- ❑ their involvement is valued;
- ❑ they have equal opportunity to get involved; and
- ❑ policies and standards for the participation of children and young people are in place, evaluated and improved.

The standards framework in Hear by Right is based on the Seven S model of organisational change: Shared values; Strategy; Structures; Systems; Staff; Skills and knowledge and Style of leadership. It relies on self-assessment, divided into three levels of 'emerging', 'established' and 'advanced', with each level building on the last. *This ensures that young people's involvement is built in and not just bolted on.* Hear By Right is also accompanied by a set of resources including 'Building Standards' which support the full involvement of children and young people in the mapping and planning process.

The Hear by Right mapping and planning tool is key to making sure these standards prompt planning to improve the quality of participation and services delivered. It is then vital to recognize and record what has changed for children and young people through listening and responding to them. The HbR 'What's Changed?' tool helps to achieve this in a simple way. This and all other resources to get the most out of HbR are available on The NYA website at [www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright](http://www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright).

