

Empowering The Next Generation

2024-2027



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zone

An **OnSide** Youth Zone





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AN INTRODUCTION FROM OUR CEO AND CHAIR

We are pleased to present our latest three-year strategy which will cover the period 2024 to 2027.

Since writing our last long-term strategy in 2017, extended recently by our interim strategy, **the context for young people growing up in our borough has significantly changed.** They have experienced challenges including a global pandemic, global uncertainty and a cost-of-living inequality crisis, amongst other things, **which has led to growing mental health challenges, increased isolation, decreased confidence and reduced hope for the future.**

Given the relentless pressures facing young people, Wigan Youth Zone continues to be fully committed to providing safe spaces for the next generation to be inspired and empowered to reach their full potential. **Over the last 11 years, our vital services have provided much needed relief and support to thousands of young people across the borough, through the phenomenal power of youth work.** Our strategy aims to sustain and, where possible, strengthen those services for our young people.

To inform our strategy, the voices of young people have been at the heart of an inclusive consultation process, as have the voices of our valued team members, partners and supporters.

This summary document outlines the three key strategic priorities for Wigan Youth Zone over the next three years and the outcomes we are targeting.

Every action we take today shapes the future generations of our community. Wigan Youth Zone stands as a crucial community asset and a living legacy. We are sowing seeds today that will benefit the borough for generations to come.

That's precisely what our Empowering The Next Generation Strategy (2024-2027) will achieve.

Anthony Ashworth-Steen, CEO
Gary Speakman, Chair





OUR VISION

**Inspire and empower the next generation
to reach their full potential**

OUR VALUES



Community



Aspiration



Respect



Belonging



Teamwork



Inclusivity



Marshall



The Importance of Youth Work

Wigan Youth Zone's (WYZ) philosophy has always been, and will continue to be, that **youth work is an essential service to help support young people in dealing with the day-to-day realities of growing up** which, unfortunately, continue to be exceptionally challenging. Young people are also experiencing and engaging with the world differently compared to the generation before – for instance:



41% of young people do not have a trusted adult in their life outside of family.



76% of young people spend most of their spare time on screens.



80% of young people spend most of their spare time at home.



26% of young people in England have stopped activities outside school like socialising with friends, sports and hobbies because of the cost-of-living crisis. **That's 1.3 million young people.**

Locally, the picture for many young people growing up in our community makes for difficult reading:

According to Wigan Council's Participants Strategy, Young People in Wigan articulated their foremost concerns as, Health & Wellbeing, Mental Health, Education & Learning, Employment, Financial Stability, Housing, and Opportunities.



The Children's Commissioner estimates that 18% (12,700) of 0-17-year-olds in the borough live in households with risks of alcohol/drug dependency, domestic abuse, or severe mental illness.

In Wigan Borough, only 50% of Young People meet the recommendation of 60 minutes of daily exercise, while 30% are active for less than 30 minutes a day (Wigan JSNA 2024).



Wigan Council's neighbourhood profile shows Leigh has the highest ASB incidents, with rowdy/inconsiderate behaviour accounting for a significantly high proportion. Leigh also has the highest percentage of NEET 16-18-year-olds.

For many of our members, **attendance at Youth Zone services helps to address many of these issues** through the provision of active, meaningful and rewarding activities run by our exceptional youth workers who are a lifeline and, often, the first-person young people reach out to when they are experiencing difficulties. **Through the power of youth work we build trust, find out what is going on in their lives and offer support as and when needed.** Because of this, we know there is a tangible link between sustained attendance at WYZ and a variety of positive outcomes:

88%

of our members demonstrate improvements in at least one of six outcome themes:

- ▶ **CONFIDENCE**
- ▶ **EMOTIONAL SKILLS**
- ▶ **ASPIRATION**
- ▶ **SOCIAL SKILLS**
- ▶ **HEALTH & WELLBEING**
- ▶ **ACHIEVEMENT**

We know this also saves the community money. For example, in 2022/23 we calculated that Wigan Youth Zone services generated almost £8m worth of social value using the TOMs framework - a return of £4 for every £1 invested.



Our Strategy

Our three priorities will enable us to be stronger and more sustainable, so we can ensure more young people in Wigan and Leigh feel inspired and empowered to reach their full potential. They are underpinned by our commitment to put the voice of young people at the heart of our work.

Empowering The Next Generation (2024 – 2027) will focus on developing our services in three core areas: **Empowering Tomorrow, Elevating Engagement and Securing Sustainability**. This will allow us to support more young people in Wigan and Leigh, both now and in future generations.



EMPOWERING TOMORROW

FOR THOUSANDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO CONTINUE TO ENJOY AND BENEFIT FROM WIGAN YOUTH ZONE'S OFFER.

The rationale for this priority is that **scale is a powerful measure given that attendance is voluntary**, against a backdrop of 80% of young people spending the majority of spare time at home. **Focussing on service delivery and success measures for young people will always be at the heart of our strategy.**

Success Measures:

- ▶ WYZ services are accessible 7-days a week, across various locations across the borough.
- ▶ Over 80% of WYZ weekly services to be available for all young people (in age-range), with the remaining 20% supporting those that need additional support.
- ▶ 5,000 young people to be engaged as members of WYZ in a 12-month period.
- ▶ An average of 1,200 young people attend each week over a 12-month period.
- ▶ 1,000 young people to access WYZ services at least 10-times in any 3-month period over the course of a year.
- ▶ Enhance the SEND provision at WYZ (grow % membership from 14 to 15%)
- ▶ Continue to improve wellbeing as a result of WYZ engagement (regular surveys to establish how many young people feel their wellbeing is improved; target >80%).
- ▶ Develop (by Dec 2024) and deliver a 5-year capital expenditure plan 2025-2030, consistent with other provision targets.
- ▶ To prioritise the following areas for new externally funded projects:



**MENTAL HEALTH
SUPPORT**



**HEALTH &
WELLBEING**



**EMPLOYABILITY &
LIFE SKILLS**



**TACKLING
INEQUALITY**



**ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY**

ELEVATING ENGAGEMENT

PROMOTE THE POWER OF FIRST-CLASS YOUTH WORK TO ALL CURRENT AND FUTURE STAKEHOLDERS.

The rationale for this priority is to create a deeper connection between the community we serve and the power of youth work – to increase the understanding of, and a relationship to, the services delivered by WYZ for all stakeholders including young people, parents/carers/guardians, current and future funders, supporters, employees and volunteers. Achieving this will be a powerful combination and enable WYZ to achieve measurable positive change for the community, both now and in the future.

Success Measures:

- ▶ Use measurements to demonstrate and communicate the impact of WYZ outcomes biannually.
- ▶ To be a supportive, rewarding and values-based employer, that invests in the personal and professional development of team members - using the following success measures:



80% of WYZ vacancies to be advertised internally before openly sourcing.



1,800 hours to be spent on training and development annually.



Volunteer hours to total over 8,000 annually.



Turnover of core team to reduce to <20% p/a.



80%+ of team members to be happy within their roles annually.



Employee survey to be carried out annually, with an action plan.





SECURING SUSTAINABILITY

TO UNLOCK NEW FUNDING STREAMS TO SUSTAIN AND GROW CRITICAL SERVICES.

The rationale for this priority is to ensure that WYZ can sustain the current high levels of operation and that it can grow services in line with the needs of the community – this is essential given the tangible link between the outcomes achieved by WYZ and the benefits to Children and Young People in Wigan and Leigh, not to mention the ripple effect it has on the wider community. As mentioned earlier, WYZ returned a social value to the Borough of c£8million in 2022/23 alone – therefore as a community we cannot allow the services delivered by WYZ to reduce; no one will benefit if this happens.

Success Measures:

- ▶ Grow income from existing streams from £1.56m in 23/24 to £2.1m in 26/27.
- ▶ Seek to unlock at least one new stream of significant funding (£100k+ p/a) - task and finish group from Board to present range of options by Sept '24.



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wiganyouthzone.org ● Parsons Walk, Wigan, WN1 1RU ● Charity Number 1134451