



# Guidance for inspectors

How we inspect youth work  
from September 2024



This guidance is also available in Welsh.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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## Introduction

### Purpose of the guidance handbook 'How we inspect'

This handbook sets out our approach to inspecting youth work. It explains **how** we inspect. The guidance is essential reading for reporting inspectors and all other members of the inspection team. It may also be useful for providers to support their understanding of the inspection mind-set and methodologies.

The guidance should be read alongside '[What we inspect](#)' guidance for youth work, which outlines the inspection framework. Providers can use this guidance to see how inspections work and to help them inform their own self-assessment and improvement processes.

Where the inspection identifies practice that other providers might find useful, inspectors will invite the provider to write a case study that we will publish on our website. Where the inspection identifies important concerns in relation to outcomes, quality of provision and training or leadership and management, we will arrange follow-up activity to support improvement.

There is further information about inspections on our website [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales)

### Legal basis for the inspection of youth work

In the post-16 sector, the Learning and Skills Act (2000) requires the Chief Inspector to report on:

- the quality of the education and training provided
- the standards achieved by those receiving education and training
- the quality of leadership and management, including whether the financial resources made available to those providing education and training are managed efficiently and used to provide value for money

Estyn inspects youth work training under the Learning and Skills Act (2000) and the The Youth and Community Work Education and Training (Inspection) (Wales) Regulations 2006.

### Policy background

While not governed directly by the following policies and conventions, the guidance handbook takes account of the following:

- The legislative basis for youth work and youth support services is provided through education legislation, beginning with the Education Act 1944 and more recently in the Education Act 1996. The Learning and Skills Act 2000 and [Extending-entitlement-support-for-11-to-25-year-olds-in-wales](#) Directions and Guidance (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002) form the basis for the services provided in Wales.

- Youth Support Services are educational services, defined under the Learning and Skills Act 2000 (Great Britain, 2000), and paid for by direct or indirect public funding. They include services provided in partnership with other agencies such as schools and voluntary sector organisations or provided directly by voluntary sector organisations.
- [The National Youth Work Strategy for Wales 2014-2018](#) stated that: *“Youth work provision is offered through youth services. Youth work is an intrinsic element of youth support services, which seek to ensure that all 11 to 25-year-olds have the services, support and experiences they need to achieve their potential. In Wales, the youth service is a universal entitlement, open to all young people. Through the Learning and Skills Act 2000, section 123, Welsh Ministers have directed local authorities to provide, secure the provision of, or participate in, the provision of youth support services”* (Welsh Government, 2014, p.4).
- Interim Youth Work Board: Final Report

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-09/achieving-a-sustainable-delivery-model-for-youth-work-services-in-wales-final-report.pdf>

- [Youth Work in Wales Principles and Purposes 2022](#)
- the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015  
<http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/?lang=en>
- [Youth engagement and progression framework 2013](#)
- [Youth Work NOS Functional Map \(cldstandardscouncil.org.uk\)](#) 2019
- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the Welsh Government in 2004 as the basis for policy-making for children and young people  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>
- the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018  
<https://gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-and-education-tribunal-wales-act>
- Programme for Government priorities – including:
  - Race Equality Action Plan : <https://gov.wales/race-equality-action-plan-anti-racist-wales>
  - LGBTQ+ Action Plan : <https://gov.wales/consultation-lgbtq-action-plan-html>
  - Cymraeg 2050 Action Plan : <https://gov.wales/cymraeg-2050-our-plan-2021-2026-html>

## Part 1: Inspection arrangements

### Introduction

This section is set out in a way that reflects the sequence of work before, during and after a core inspection.

The reporting inspector (RI) is responsible for the conduct and management of the inspection and for the inspection report. While this guidance focuses mainly on the role of the reporting inspector, all team members must comply with the same inspection requirements.

### Context

Youth work is delivered in a wide variety of settings. A wide range of voluntary sector organisations deliver youth work across Wales. Local authorities also deliver youth work and they often work in partnership with the range of voluntary sector organisations who deliver youth work. Welsh Government directly funds local authorities and some voluntary youth work providers and many providers are successful in gaining funding for youth work from other sources such as charitable organisations or the private sector. Inspection will consider publicly funded youth work and providers may experience inspection in ways outlined below. We will typically carry out around 6 inspections each year and it is likely that 2 of these will typically be stand alone inspections of voluntary sector youth work providers.

Type of inspection	What this means
Stand alone inspection of a voluntary sector youth work provider	The inspection would consider the experiences of young people in that voluntary sector youth work provider. All parts of the inspection framework would be used for the inspection, and we would publish a report on the provider's work. Where the provider delivers in partnership with another organisation through direct funding or provision of staff or resources, we might visit the other provider to observe work with young people. The work of any partner providers might be mentioned in the report where it is a positive example.
Stand alone inspection of a local authority youth work provision	The inspection would consider the experiences of young people across the provision delivered directly by the local authority, or in any provision commissioned or delivered in partnership. All parts of the inspection framework would be used for the inspection, and we would publish a report on the local authority's work. If a voluntary

	<p>sector or other youth work provider receives funding from a local authority to provide services we may visit their youth work setting to observe a youth work session as part of the overall local authority youth work inspection. The work of the voluntary sector provider might be mentioned in the report where it is a positive example.</p>
<p>Thematic inspection</p>	<p>We also carry out thematic inspections, where we gather evidence about a particular focus across a sample of youth work providers. Specific aspects of the inspection framework will be used to evaluate the focus area for the thematic report. We would write an overall report and may mention interesting practice from individual settings in the report.</p>

### Principles of inspection

Inspectors will:

- ensure that inspection is of high quality and responsive to the needs of all young people 11-25
- ensure that evaluations are secure, reliable, valid and based on first-hand evidence
- involve young people and providers fully in the inspection process, including the opportunity for the provider to select a nominee
- use the provider’s improvement priorities as the starting point for the inspection and to identify key issues for investigation in order to evaluate the validity of its findings
- include peer inspectors in the inspection process
- keep to a minimum any requirements for documentation and preparation by the provider
- gain the young people’s, staff (paid and unpaid, part-time and full-time) and stakeholders’ perspective, including that of management bodies and trustees.
- apply the principle of equality for Welsh and English to all our inspection work, providing bilingual services whenever they are appropriate
- be constructive in identifying and supporting youth work providers with important aspects or areas that require improvement

## Our mind-set

Estyn's approach to inspection is:

**Fair and impartial** – this means that we work to be independent, objective and balanced. We are robust and consistent in our work. We weigh the evidence and its significance to provide an honest, credible and accurate view of the partnership's strengths and areas for improvement.

**Supportive** – we work to guide providers to implement improvements that benefit young people. We encourage innovation and recognise good intentions. We are friendly but always professional in our approach. We support educational reform. We work hard to develop meaningful relationships with statutory providers and the voluntary sector and local and regional organisations.

**Reflective** – we are open-minded. We listen to a wide range of stakeholders and reflect on their responses. We are thoughtful, measured and careful. We plan opportunities to think carefully about the inspection findings and to discuss them with others in the team.

**Transparent** – we are well informed and communicate clearly, directly and succinctly. We use efficient and effective inspection methodologies to respond to the partnership's unique situation. We plan inspection activity and report on strengths and areas for improvement in ways that reflect the particular circumstances of each individual partnership. As a result, our actions promote trust and respect.

## Expectation of inspectors

Our code of conduct explains how we embody the inspection mind-set through their actions. Inspectors should uphold the highest possible standards in their work. All inspectors have to meet the standards of Estyn's code of conduct.

When conducting the inspection, inspectors will:

- put young people at the heart of the process
- be courteous and professional
- carry out their work with integrity and due sensitivity
- take all reasonable steps to prevent anxiety and to minimise stress during inspection activity
- report honestly, fairly and impartially
- communicate clearly and openly
- act in the best interests of young people
- respect the confidentiality of all information received during the course of their work

It is important that we evaluate the effectiveness of provision and leadership on their impact and not on the basis of any preferences for particular methods. The key to the evaluations is whether the methods and organisation are fit for the purpose in supporting all young people to achieve the best possible outcomes, including strong levels of wellbeing.



Inspectors should inform Estyn of any perceived or actual conflicts of interest as soon as they receive notification that they are part of the partnership’s inspection team.

### **Expectations of youth work providers**

In order that inspection and regulation are constructive and beneficial, it is important that inspectors and providers establish and maintain a professional working environment based on mutual courtesy, respect and professional behaviour. We expect inspectors to uphold Estyn’s Code of Conduct but we also expect providers and their partners to:

- be courteous and professional
- provide evidence that enables enable inspectors to conduct the inspection in an open, honest and objective way
- use Estyn’s electronic systems for managing inspections as required
- provide evidence that will enable inspectors to report honestly, fairly and reliably about the partnership
- maintain a purposeful dialogue with the reporting inspector and other inspectors
- recognise that inspectors may need to observe practice and talk to young people, staff, and other stakeholders without the presence of a manager or senior leader
- draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of the reporting inspector in a timely and suitable manner through the nominee or senior manager
- work with inspectors to minimise disruption and stress throughout the inspection
- ensure the health and safety of inspectors while on their premises
- maintain the confidentiality and meetings and inspection findings until the final publication of the report

Any CCTV and recording equipment should be brought to the attention of the team during the initial team meeting.

At the point of the inspection notification, youth work providers should review the composition of the inspection team. It is the responsibility of the provider to highlight any perceived or actual conflicts of interest prior to the start of their inspection.

### **Expectations of local authority and voluntary sector provider officers**

Officers who attend feedback are expected to comply with the same principles of the expectations of providers.

### **The Welsh language**

We will carry out any engagement, including inspections, in line with our Welsh Language Policy, available on our website.

### **Safeguarding, including health, safety and well-being issues**

Inspectors will carry out inspections in accordance with Estyn’s guidance on inspecting safeguarding. If they observe anything that they think constitutes, in their opinion, a danger to the safety of staff, visitors or young people, inspectors should alert managers at the provision.

If an inspector becomes aware of a safeguarding allegation/suspicion in respect of a child, young person or vulnerable adult, they should follow the procedures set out in the current version of '[Estyn's policy and procedures for safeguarding](#)', which is available on our website.

In all cases inspectors should record details of the concern. They should inform the Reporting Inspector (RI) who should then contact one of Estyn's safeguarding lead officers. The lead officer will advise the RI of the next steps to take including what to record in the evidence base for the appropriate inspection area. This includes any risks relating to young people's health, safety and wellbeing. The officer will also advise the RI whether or not to share the concern with the provider.

Where these risks are a serious concern during core inspection activity, inspectors should include a short comment in the report's text and a recommendation in the report.

We will send a wellbeing letter to the provider and the local authority and voluntary sector providers where appropriate asking them to outline how they will address the shortcoming.

If an inspector identifies a site security concern, they should inform the RI. If the RI considers that the concern can be addressed quickly, they should inform the provider who will be expected to provide evidence of the concern being resolved within a week.

If the concern/s is more serious and cannot be addressed quickly, the RI should inform the IC who will issue a health and safety letter to the local authority provider and/or voluntary sector provider. It will be their responsibility to ensure that the issue/s is addressed. If a less significant issue is not addressed satisfactorily within a week, then this process will also apply.

### **Approach to inspection**

Inspections of youth work provision, in the public and voluntary sectors, will usually be held over a 5-day working week period. However, inspections may be held over a longer period or concentrate on certain aspects of provision, when appropriate, due to factors such as the size of the provider/provision and/or geographical spread.

Providers will be informed of this when they receive inspection notification. (See 'Contacting the provider before inspection' on page 15).

We will work with providers to ensure that the inspection activity is proportionate to the provision, especially in relation to voluntary sector organisations

The starting point for inspection is the provider's assessment of its own performance and priorities, supported by relevant evidence. Inspectors will not inspect all aspects of work in depth during a core inspection. They will sample evidence to test the provider's own assessment of its work.

The progress young people make from their starting-points and the outcomes they achieve are the key measures of the quality of the youth work they have taken part in and of the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the provision.

Inspection will focus on the needs of young people and the impact that the provision makes on supporting their personal and social development. We will continue to work with the sector to develop approaches to measuring the impact of youth work.

The inspection period and number of inspectors will vary according to the size of the provider/provision.

We will carry out inspections in line with our Welsh Language Policy, available from our website [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales).

### **The Virtual Inspection Room**

We will use an electronic system, called the 'Virtual Inspection Room' (VIR), for managing many aspects of the inspection. It is a web-based system that allows providers to upload information before the inspection and to download guidance from the inspectorate about the inspection process.

We ensure the security of information uploaded by subjecting the VIR to penetration testing. This testing evaluates system security. We identify and implement any actions to prevent unauthorised access. All users of Estyn's VIR system have a username and password, which are recorded and maintained securely within an active directory. The system also has features to ensure password protection including threat detection and conditional access.

### **The inspection team**

Inspection teams will be led by a reporting inspector (HMI), with other team members drawn from among HMI, peer inspectors (from youth work providers including maintained voluntary sector providers) or additional inspectors (AIs). Additional inspectors may be on secondment or contracted to Estyn.

The reporting inspector manages the inspection team and is the first point of reference for everyone involved in the inspection.

We will invite providers to select a senior member of staff, called the 'nominee', to work with the inspection team. In practice, nearly all providers accept the invitation, but it is not a requirement. The nominee should have sufficient seniority to act as a link between the provider and the inspection team but need not be the leader of the provider. Providers can access the guidance for nominees on preparing for the inspection from links within the initial contact form (ICF), completed by the inspection co-ordinator (IC) and available via the VIR.

### **Contacting the provider before the inspection**

The provider will usually receive 15 working days' notice of the inspection. This period may be longer in the case of longitudinal inspection activity.

Following the notification, we will contact the provider by telephone to set up the arrangements for the inspection. Inspection co-ordinators (IC) in Estyn will undertake the initial contact with providers. During this discussion, the inspection co-ordinator will:

- explain the purpose of the inspection and discuss an outline programme for the inspection

- inform the provider of the type of inspection,
- Arrange a pre-inspection meeting between the reporting inspector and the nominee/head of provider discuss the specific information required before the inspection, including its current safeguarding assessment. The provider may use Estyn's safeguarding self-assessment template if they so wish.
- ask if there are any issues or risks the team should be aware of and ask for a general health and safety briefing for the team at the start of the inspection
- establish whether the provider wishes to have a nominee and, if it does, agree the role of the nominee and explain the process for completing the nominee guidance
- arrange a meeting at the start of the inspection with the nominee to provide a health and safety briefing for the team
- arrange a meeting at the start of the inspection for the provider to set out its priorities for improvement and its current stage of development
- provide links and guidance for the completion of online pre-inspection questionnaires for young people and staff
- agree arrangements for setting up a meeting with partnership organisations (where appropriate)
- ensure that there are agreed procedures for addressing any concerns or complaints that might arise during the inspection
- organise any domestic arrangements, such as a base for the inspectors, parking and internet access
- set up the arrangements for feeding back the inspection findings
- agree the arrangements for completing the post-inspection questionnaire
- inform the provider through the initial contact form of the key inspection arrangements

The inspection co-ordinator will request information from the provider through the Virtual Inspection Room as soon as possible after the formal notification of the inspection. **We only ask providers to share the plans, assessments and evaluations that they routinely use to report to senior managers, trustees or governing bodies.** We consider proportionality as a key principle in terms of what can reasonably be expected from providers by taking into account relevant factors such as the nature and size of the provision.

- key background information on the provider
- the provider's most recent quality development plans and self-assessment reports including approaches relating to equality and inclusion of opportunities for young people. **We do not expect the provider to prepare a self-assessment report for an inspection and will be critical of leaders if such a report is created solely for this purpose.**
- the numbers of young people involved in provision
- details of provision timetables, locations and contact details for the period of the inspection. This should include all youth work provision with any other organisations funded wholly or partially by the youth work provider, and/or provided in partnership with other agencies e.g. youth justice, social services.
- Where youth work is provided as part of a wider organisation that also provides other forms of youth engagement or other services, wider organisational context may be required but the whole organisation will not be inspected.
- In the case of organisations funded by the strategic voluntary youth work

organisation grant or the Youth Work Strategy grant we would require the equivalent information.

- arrange a date (as agreed with the RI) for the initial planning meeting

When we notify providers of the inspection, they will receive information on how to conduct a confidential online survey of young people. We will also provide a pre-inspection online questionnaire for youth workers, partner organisations and young people. The outcomes of the surveys will form part of the pre-inspection evidence.

The team will also consider the most recent survey(s) of young people's perceptions conducted by the provider.

During the inspection, inspectors will undertake a range of activities which could include the following, where appropriate; interview a sample of young people, and youth workers and support staff as part of their gathering of evidence.

### **Planning the inspection and preparing the team**

The reporting inspector will plan the inspection and allocate responsibilities to members of the inspection team, taking into account the provider's identified improvement priorities and self-assessment reports where available, and any information already held by Estyn. On the basis of the information received, the reporting inspectors will plan their observations of activities. These will reflect the range of provision on offer, including face-to-face and online sessions and activities where available.

### **During the inspection**

#### **Initial team meeting**

In the initial meeting of the inspection team, there should be a health and safety briefing from a member of the provider's staff. The provider should present a brief position statement on its strategic priorities and its current stage of development. After that, the team should discuss with senior leaders the priorities for service improvement already identified by the provider and the progress that it is making in its improvement work. The reporting inspector will confirm these arrangements with the provider during the pre-inspection phone call.

Inspectors will sample, test and validate the provider's own priorities and its evaluations of its strengths and areas for improvement and any other strengths and areas for improvement which the reporting inspector identifies. Inspectors will also consider the evaluation of the provision by young people. The team will also consider the evidence that inspectors need to review. This will include session observations, sampling any work or documented achievements made by young people where appropriate, and interviews with young people, staff, and other partners and stakeholders.

#### **Gathering and reviewing inspection evidence**

The team will plan the inspection so that they can cover all the relevant reporting requirements within the three inspection areas. The team will ensure that they have enough time to review the key evidence they need to make their evaluations. The main forms of evidence are:

- documentary evidence, including information on the impact of youth work activities on young people, samples of young people's work, where appropriate
- survey responses from young people, staff, and others where relevant
- discussions with young people, youth workers and other staff managers, trustees, partners and other key stakeholders

The team will use direct observation of young people's activities wherever possible to gather evidence to support their judgements. Inspectors may also consider a variety of media to evidence young people's achievements.

Inspectors will undertake a range of activities to gather evidence for their evaluation of young people's participation and outcomes and the quality of the provision. This may include session observations, including sampling online sessions, conversations with young people about their participation and experiences, and discussions with individual staff members about young people's progress and development and how they plan sessions to meet their needs.

The voice of young people is a key source of evidence for inspectors. Discussions with young people will provide an opportunity to explore the impact of youth work on their personal development and wider learning including the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. It will also help inspectors to gauge how well they feel the provider supports young people and contributes to their well-being.

Inspectors may consider how young people progress from their starting points.

The team will need to consider stakeholders' views about the provider and test out the validity of those views during the inspection.

### **Recording inspection evidence**

Inspectors will use various forms to note and to collate their findings and evaluations.

Wherever possible, inspectors will complete their forms electronically as part of Estyn's electronic system for collecting, collating and recording inspection findings.

### **Team meetings**

The main purpose of team meetings is to arrive at an accurate, reliable, valid and corporate view of young people's participation, development and outcomes and the quality of provision and leadership. Meetings will provide opportunities for inspectors to:

- consider the evaluations in the provider's quality development planning and self-assessment processes
- discuss emerging issues
- review visits to young people
- resolve pre-inspection issues and emerging questions
- identify any gaps in the evidence base
- consider main inspection findings and any recommendations

### **Professional dialogue**

During or at the end of a session observation, inspectors should have a brief professional dialogue with the youth workers involved in the activity.

The main focus of the discussion should be on the young people, the progress they make and the outcomes they achieve during the activity. The inspector should stress that these are emerging, interim findings on one aspect of the evidence base and that these may be amended, on reflection, after reviewing young people's work/outcomes or talking to young people, or as the result of moderation within the team. Inspectors should try to focus on any strengths or areas for improvement in relation to the specific activity seen.

### **Formal feedback**

At the end of the on-site part of the inspection, the team will provide oral feedback to the provider's leaders. We will also invite representatives from Welsh Government. The feedback should focus on the main evaluations for each of the three inspection areas and the reasons for these.

The feedback meeting provides the opportunity for leaders to hear and to reflect on the evaluations. The feedback should focus on the strengths and areas for improvement and the factors that contribute to them. The reporting inspector should explain to the provider that factual matters may be corrected, and evaluations may be clarified, although they are not negotiable.

During all core inspections, the inspection team will consider whether the provider needs any follow-up activity. The reporting inspector will inform the provider if any follow-up activity is required. More information about follow-up arrangements can be found in part 2 of this guidance.

During the inspection, the team will also consider if there is any effective practice in the providers that is worthy of consideration and emulation by other providers. Where this is the case, we may provide cameos of this work in the report text. The reporting inspector also will ask the provider to prepare a case study (or studies) for dissemination on Estyn's website.

All the evaluations reported during an inspection are provisional and subject to moderation and validation by HMCI. They are confidential to the provider's staff, governors, trustees, elected members and management boards (where appropriate). They should not be communicated beyond this group, including via social media, until we publish the report on our website.

### **Complaints about the conduct of the inspection**

If there are any issues about the conduct of the inspection overall or the conduct of individual inspectors, then the provider, through the nominee, should raise these directly, and as soon as possible, with the reporting inspector. The provider should not wait until after the inspection but should raise any issues during the on-site inspection. Issues often arise due to misunderstandings, and these can usually be resolved quickly and satisfactorily in the partnership close to the time when they occurred.

There is guidance for providers on Estyn's complaints handling procedures on Estyn's website.

## After the inspection

### The inspection report

The reporting inspector is responsible for producing a final inspection report that is clear to a lay audience, to young people and helpful to the provider.

When writing reports, inspectors should take account of Estyn's writing guidance which is available on our website [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales).

We will publish reports bilingually, where providers have made this request, in line with Estyn's Welsh Language Policy.

We base the structure of the inspection report on youth work provider inspection areas as set out in the 'What we inspect' document and the report will take the following form:

#### About the youth work provider

##### Overview

##### Recommendations

##### What happens next

##### Main findings

- 1 How does youth work help young people achieve their potential?
- 2 What young people can expect from youth work provision
- 3 Leading and improving

##### The evidence base of the inspection

We will produce the report within statutory or agreed sector timescales.

### The factual accuracy check

We will give the provider a late draft of the report to help check the factual accuracy of the content. The provider will normally have five working days in which to consider the draft report and to identify any factual errors.

The focus of the factual accuracy check is on resolving any factual inaccuracies in the inspection report. It does not focus on the findings or the evaluations. There is further guidance for providers on the nature and scope of the factual accuracy check on our website.

The provider should raise any complaints about the conduct of the inspection during the on-site inspection. However, if the provider continues to have unresolved complaints about the conduct of the inspection after the end of the on-site inspection, then it should refer to our complaints handling procedures on our website. The focus of the procedures is on the conduct of the inspection and not the findings or the evaluations arrived at by the inspection team.



## Assuring the quality of inspections

We are committed to:

- effective selection, training, briefing, support and deployment of inspectors, including peer inspectors and additional inspectors
- effective training, briefing and support to allow the nominee to play an active role
- regular dialogue with the nominee and manager/principal youth officer during inspection
- criteria and recording systems that comply with the common inspection framework and guidance
- careful review and analysis of evidence
- unambiguous oral feedback of the team's findings for each inspection area
- clear, accurate and well-presented reports

As part of our quality assurance procedures, we invite providers to complete a post-inspection questionnaire (PIQ). The questionnaire will be available to providers in the VIR. Providers should complete the first part of the PIQ immediately after the on-site inspection and submit it electronically to Estyn through the VIR system. Providers can complete the second part of the PIQ after the publication of the inspection report, again through the VIR system.

Providers should raise any concerns about the conduct of an inspector during the inspection as soon as possible with the reporting inspector.

We apply a robust quality assurance process to all of our inspections. The reporting inspector will quality assure the team's work in the first instance. After the end of on-site activity, the report and evidence base are quality assured by an experienced HMI who has not been involved in the inspection thus far. The full evidence base is scrutinised and matched to the report text, to ensure that the two align. In addition, the quality assurance process considers the appropriateness of the level of follow-up, and the recommendations emanating from the inspection. As part of the quality assurance process, recommendations may be amended, removed or added.

There is then a further moderation process. The evidence base and the report are scrutinised by the appropriate assistant directors. Whenever the outcome of an inspection is statutory follow-up, in addition to an assistant director, the strategic director moderates the report alongside the evidence base, on behalf of HMCI. On a very few occasions, this moderation process may result in a change to the level of follow-up.

In addition, we quality assure a sample of inspections through on-site visits. Our full arrangements for assuring the quality of inspections are available on our website [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales).

## **Part 2: Follow-up arrangements for youth work providers causing significant concern**

During all core inspections, the inspection team will consider whether the youth work provider is causing significant concern and requires follow-up activity. The potential reasons for identifying that a Youth Work provider is causing significant concern are:

- if the youth work provider is failing to support young people to participate in opportunities and achieve the skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes and values needed for their own personal development and fulfilment and as a means of contributing to society as members of groups and communities, locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.
- consistently poor quality of practice across the service
- serious safeguarding concerns
- leaders of youth work do not demonstrate the capacity to bring about the necessary improvements
- any other concern that presents a significant risk to the well-being or achievement of young people

The inspection team must report as they find and be able to substantiate their judgements based on sound evidence. At all times, our inspectors should remember that the main emphasis in youth work inspections is on the participation of and outcomes for young people. In judging the extent to which senior leaders have the capacity to bring about improvements, inspectors will need to give attention to how well these leaders know and understand the strengths and areas for improvement of the service. Inspectors should also establish if senior leaders show the ability to tackle the areas for improvement through the sense of purpose and direction they provide, and through decision made and action taken to address concerns. Discussions with senior leaders should provide evidence of how they are tackling these issues and if they are giving attention to the right things.

In all circumstances, it is vital that inspectors evaluate youth work in the context in which it is currently operating, and they should not be unduly influenced by recently prepared plans for improvement that have yet to be implemented or the recent appointment of staff. This is because, in both cases, the effect or impact of improvements will not have taken place and inspectors must judge based on outcomes and evidence rather than plans or good intentions.

If the youth work provider is judged to be causing significant concern, the RI should take the following steps:

- telephone and inform the appropriate inspection co-ordinator before the youth work provider is told of the judgement, no later than the end of the inspection
- inform the Assistant Director or Strategic Director of the judgement (who will in turn inform HMCI)

- tell the chief executive/most senior representative at the end of the inspection that the team has reached the judgement that the youth work provider is causing significant concern.

Within five days of the end of the inspection, the RI will:

- complete the relevant section of the Reporting Input Form (RIF)
- place the completed RIF in the inspection documents section of the VIR
- inform the designated IC by email and copy to the IC inbox at [ic@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:ic@estyn.gov.wales)

HMCI, or HMI acting on behalf of HMCI, will scrutinise the work of the inspection team to check the judgement. The RI should ensure that all the evidence collected during the process of the inspection is available for scrutiny. HMCI has the power to call for any information required. If HMCI does not agree with the RI's opinion, the reasons will be explained, and they will be given the opportunity to discuss HMCI's decision and amend the report and summary by removing the opinion that the authority is causing concern. After the due process of internal challenge and moderation has been completed to secure the judgements, HMCI will notify Welsh Ministers that the youth work provider is causing significant concern. In exceptional circumstances, we may wait until the youth work provider has responded to factual accuracy check stage of the process.

#### **After the inspection**

In the case of Local authority Youth Services, the category of follow-up will be 'causing significant concern'. The positioning of Youth Service inspection with wider LGES arrangements will mean that any Youth Service follow up activity will be co-ordinated in line with and at the same time as any corresponding LGES follow up or in the absence of any follow up arrangements for that LGES, will take place 3 months after the youth service inspection.

For the voluntary sector, the category will be 'causing significant concern'. Follow up activity will take place either 3 months after inspection or after a period and in a manner appropriate to the circumstances of the organisation. Follow up activity may be in-person/on location or virtual and subject to discretion, for example where it does not impede the effectiveness of the inspection process or inconvenience anyone involved.

#### **Post-inspection improvement arrangements.**

Around three months after the inspection, we will chair an improvement meeting with senior leaders (officers and elected members in the case of a local authority Youth Service and other key stakeholders where relevant). In the case of youth work in the voluntary sector, key representatives associated with the organisation will be involved as appropriate and relevant. Organisations will be formally notified of the improvement meeting date four weeks in advance.

The purpose of the meeting would be to check that the youth work provider has fully understood the reasons for the inspection outcome and to check that the organisation is developing appropriate plans to address shortcomings. Following the

meeting, we will send a letter to the chief executive/person in the most senior governance position. This letter will confirm the degree of assurance inspectors received during the meeting that the organisation understands the reasons why it has caused significant concern. The letter may include recommendations for the organisation to support further improvement in its plans to address the concern.

Our Local authority link inspectors (LALIs) will be mindful to include youth work updates as part of the ongoing keeping in touch arrangements with local authorities, elected members and stakeholders. This will include updates on the work of the relevant voluntary sector youth work organisations where these work in partnership with the Local Authority Youth Service and receive any public funding for the purposes of youth work.

### **Monitoring visits**

Estyn will carry out a series of monitoring visits after the improvement progress meeting. The discussions in the improvement conference will inform the focus areas and the timing of the visits over the ensuing 18 -24 months. In the case of the voluntary sector, these visits will be proportional to the size and capacity of the organisation

For each monitoring visit, we will formally notify the organisation four weeks in advance but will aim to ensure that the date is suitable before issuing this notification. The size of the team and design of the visit will be tailored to the specific context of the organisation and the nature of the recommendation/s. It may be the case that we invite other relevant bodies to contribute to the visit if appropriate. A VIR will be set up for the meeting, which will allow the organisation to share a few key documents and supporting information that is relevant. During the monitoring visit, inspectors will consider how well the organisation has addressed the recommendation/s being considered.

We will publish a report following each monitoring visit. The report will include an evaluation of progress for each recommendation being considered. Where the progress seems secure and on the right trajectory, we will convene a monitoring visit which will evaluate all the recommendations which will enable us to confirm whether or not the organisation has made sufficient progress to be removed from follow-up. If inspectors are not satisfied with progress, we will convene another monitoring visit at an appropriate point, allowing sufficient time for the provider to demonstrate appropriate progress.