



OUT OF SERVICE

A REPORT EXAMINING LOCAL
AUTHORITY EXPENDITURE
ON YOUTH SERVICES IN
ENGLAND & WALES

JANUARY 2020

FOREWORD

Youth services exist to provide a sense of belonging, a safe space, and the opportunity for young people to enjoy being young. However, for almost a decade local authorities have struggled under the weight of funding pressures, meaning youth services are being forced to endure continued and damaging cuts.

No part of society could be expected to suffer almost a billion-pounds worth of real term cuts and for there to be no consequences across our communities. However, young people's needs continue to be brushed aside by decision makers as unworthy of support.

The reality behind these figures is that since 2010, more than 4,500 youth work jobs have been cut and 760 youth centres have closed.¹ We believe this is unacceptable. Without drastic action to protect funding and significantly reinvest in youth services, we are condemning young people to become a lonely, lost generation with nowhere to turn.

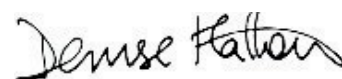
The day-to-day impact of youth services often goes unnoticed by the public, but the consequences of these cuts cannot be underestimated. Cases of knife crime, mental health difficulties and social isolation among young people continue to rise, while the number of services available to positively intervene and prevent such cases continue to decline.

While YMCA recognised and welcomed the Government's recent investment announcements on youth services in England, it still leaves a substantial shortfall in spending.

The additional funding announced focused on buildings and refurbishments. However, in many areas, the issue is not solely one around availability of physical locations but rather the resources to deliver actual services for young people.

It is imperative, therefore, that governments take a strategic approach and create national strategies that unlock the potential of existing buildings.

We owe it to the younger generations to create a youth services offer that is viable, reliable and sustainable. It is people, not new buildings, which have to be at the heart of it if we are to reverse the negative trends affecting young people and give them the best possible chance of success.



Denise Hatton
Chief Executive,
YMCA England & Wales



YMCA was established in 1844, and is the largest and oldest youth charity in the world, helping more than 65 million people in 120 countries. Here in England and Wales, 116 YMCAs work to transform 740 different communities, impacting the lives of nearly 630,000 people every year.

We believe that the right start in life is crucial for a person's long-term development. It is for this reason YMCA works with people from birth through to adulthood – supporting individuals and families to flourish.

To this end, each year YMCA supports 33,560 young people through our youth work and services.

INTRODUCTION

Youth services have long been a cornerstone in our communities, providing young people with somewhere to go, something to do and someone to speak to. For some, they represent a fun place they can spend time with their friends, relax and gain new skills. For others, they provide a safe space with a trusted adult who is someone they can turn to at times when they feel they have no one else.

Despite the critical role that youth services play in a young person's life, their presence is under threat as they are forced to endure increasing cuts. As such, youth services are often the biggest losers as local authorities struggle to manage funding pressures.

In 2010/11, local authorities spent an estimated £1.41bn in real terms on youth services across England and Wales. While the dramatic decline in spending has had a profoundly negative impact on the ability of services to meet young people's needs, the scale of the cuts had largely gone unnoticed in the public and political consciousness. This was until stories of increasing mental health difficulties, rising knife crime and growing loneliness and isolation among young people started to hit the headlines.

Although these headlines will likely pass as the news cycle moves on, previous research by YMCA examining planned budgets in 2019/20² showed the cuts are likely to continue without proper acknowledgement and scrutiny. To help inform the debate about the state of youth services in England and Wales, this research seeks to understand how expenditure by local authorities on such services in England and Wales have changed over recent years.

² YMCA England and Wales, 2019/20 Planned spending on youth services: Technical note, September 2019

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this research undertaken by YMCA England & Wales was to investigate how local authority spending on youth services had changed since 2010/11.

The analysis was conducted by taking the individual datasets of local authority spending on youth services for each financial year since 2010/11 and then converting these costings into real terms to make them comparable with 2018/19. The financial and cost difference were then analysed at a national level (England, Wales and both combined), at a regional level and at a local level with the highest and lowest levels of cuts.

WALES

Data for the Isle of Anglesey has been excluded from the dataset and report due to a number of years' data being missing.

Powys did not report their data for 2018/19 and so the figure from 2017/18 was used, and then adjusted using an average of the percentage change for all declared local authorities between 2017/18 and 2018/19. This equated to a 2% reduction on the 2017/18 figure.

REAL TERMS INCREASES

The spending referenced in this research has been converted into real terms costings. The real terms conversion takes the latest gross domestic product (GDP) deflators provided by HM Treasury and is used as a measure of general inflation in the domestic economy. This allows us to get a true reflection on how much spending back in 2010 would be equivalent to now.

YOUTH SERVICES DEFINITION

For the purposes of this research, 'youth services' broadly encapsulates two types of service: 'open-access' (or 'universal') services, including a range of leisure, cultural, sporting and enrichment activities often based around youth centres; and more targeted provision for vulnerable young people, including teenage pregnancy advice, youth justice teams, and drug and alcohol misuse services.

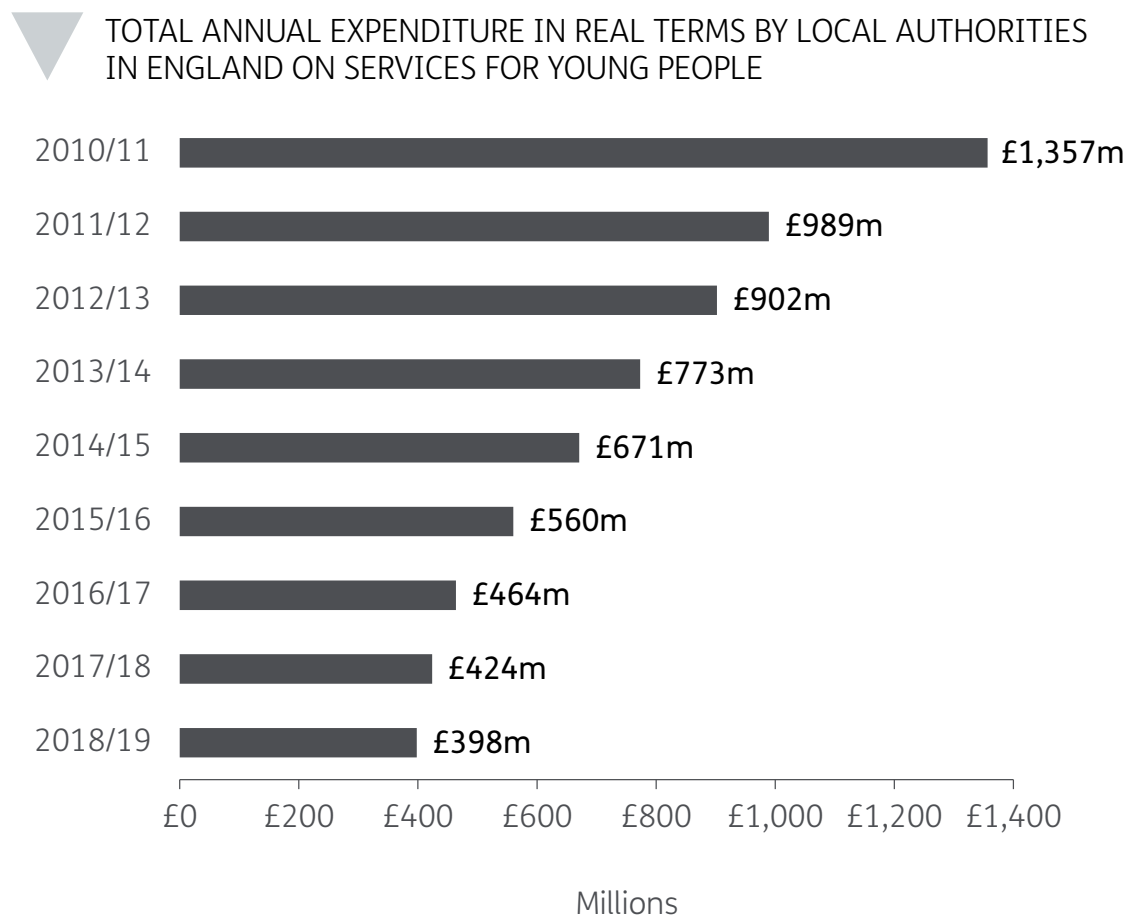
WHAT CUTS HAVE TAKEN PLACE TO YOUTH SERVICES?

ENGLAND

National picture:

In 2010/11, local authorities spent an estimated £1.36bn in real terms on youth services in England, with this work accounting for an estimated 13% of the total local spend on all children and young people's services.

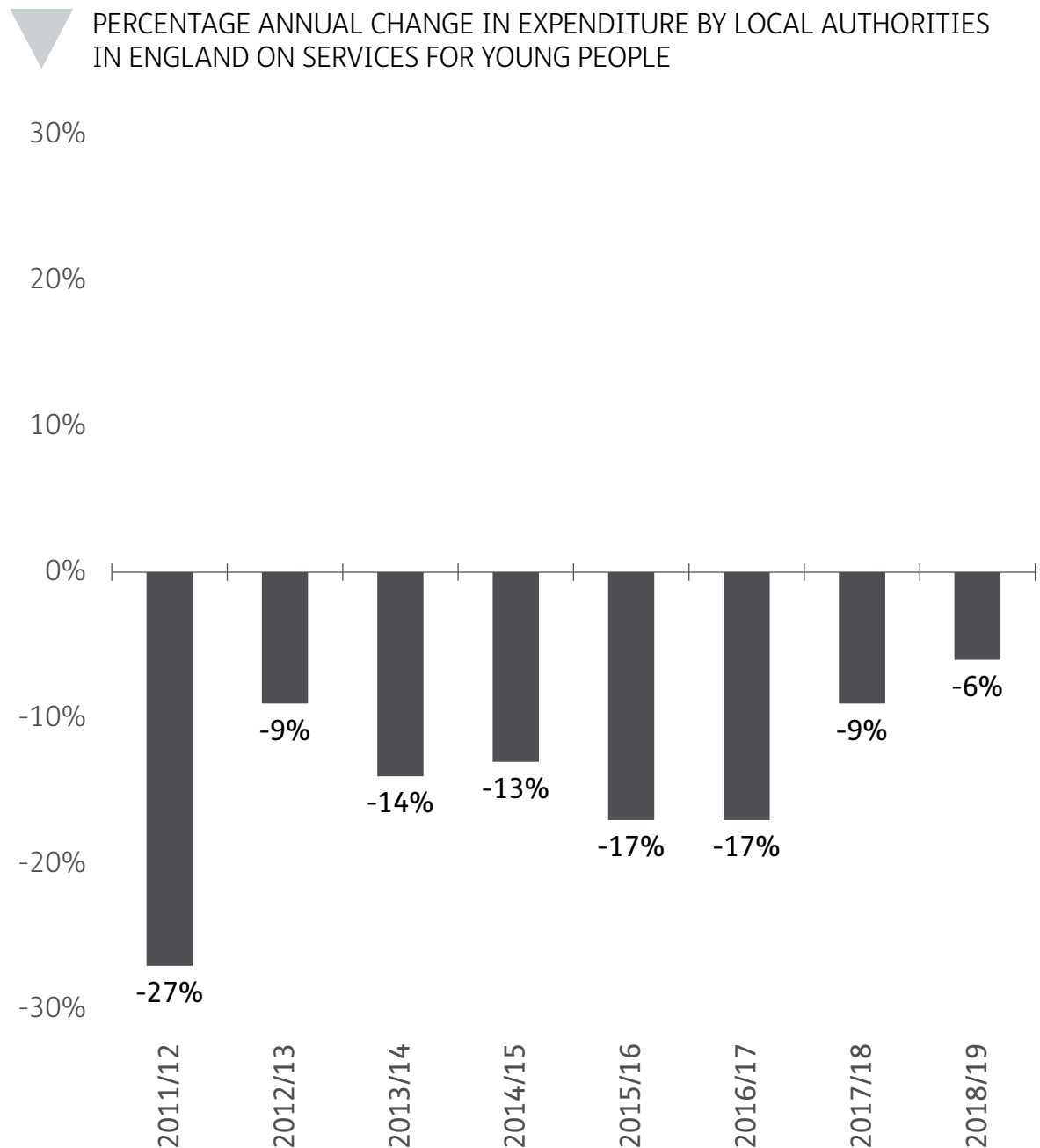
By 2018/19, spending on youth services in England had reduced by £959m in real terms, with local authorities spending in the country reported to be £398m in the last year.



This reduction in local authority spend in England is equivalent to a 71% cut since 2010/11.

The most significant cuts in England took place in 2011/12, with a reduction of more than a quarter (27%) to funding of youth services taking place in just one year. However, the trend has since continued with annual cuts in excess of 6% taking place each year since.

Last year alone, local authority spending on youth services reduced by nearly £26m in real terms, which is equivalent to a 6% reduction on the previous year, demonstrating that the cuts are unlikely to stop.



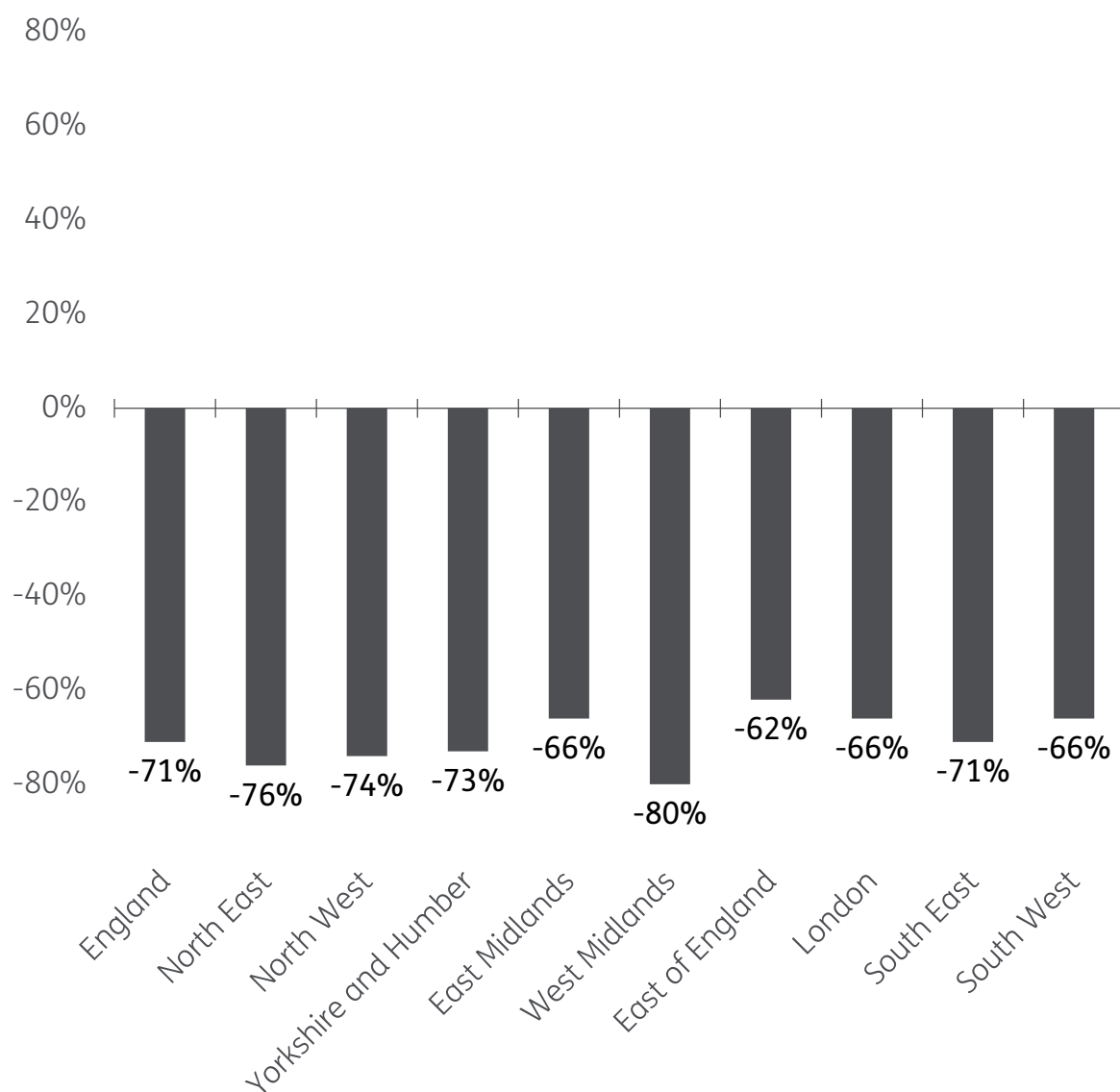
Regional breakdown:

When looking across England, young people in the West Midlands and the North East have lost the most when it comes to youth services provided by their local authority.

Local authorities in the West Midlands have cut spending on youth services by 80% since 2010/11, while in the North East cuts over the same period amounted to 76%.

Young people living in the East of England and inner London have fared the best. However, even in these areas, the annual spend on youth services has been reduced by 62% and 63% respectively since 2010/11.

▼ PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN EXPENDITURE BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND ON SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE BETWEEN 2010/11 AND 2018/19 BY REGION



Proportion of spending on young people:

In 2010/11, local authorities in England were spending a total of £10.61bn a year on children and young people's services in real terms, and in 2018/19 this had increased to £11.32bn a year. This is an increase of £703m compared to 2010/11 figures, which is equivalent to a 7% increase in funding.

This demonstrates that the scale of the cuts to youth services are not in keeping with wider trends on spending on children and young people more generally, which has increased. Instead, local authorities are choosing, or are being required, to divert spending on this age group away from universal or targeted youth services.

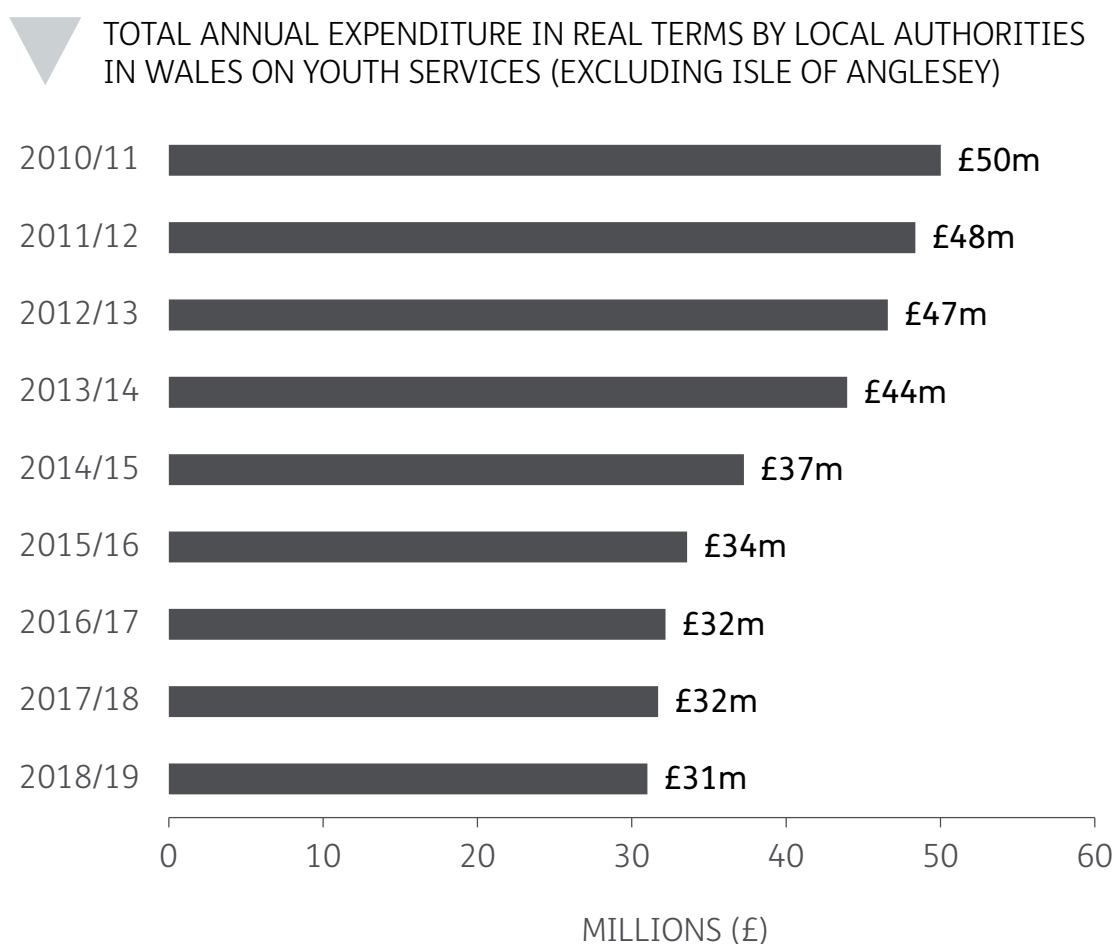
Analysing local authority expenditure over the period 2010/11 to 2018/19 demonstrates that spending in this area in England has primarily been diverted toward addressing the urgent needs of young people in crisis through services, such as the safeguarding of children.

As a result, last year (2018/19) youth services in England accounted for just 4% of the local spend on children and young people's services, compared to 13% in 2010/11.

WALES

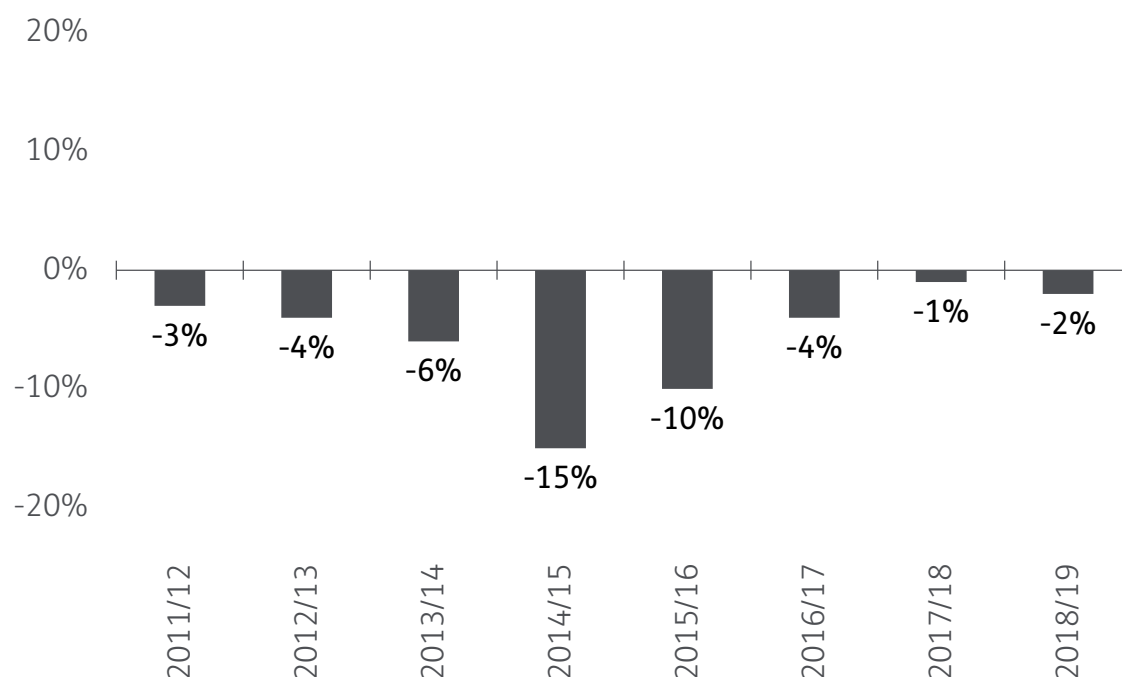
National picture:

The cuts in Wales have been less acute than in England. However, expenditure on youth services in Wales has still reduced by £19m in real terms since 2010/11. This equates to a 38% decrease in spending, from £50m in 2010/11 to £31m in 2018/19. This excludes the Isle of Anglesey, who have not returned figures for a number of years.



Excluding the Isle of Anglesey, last year spending by the local authorities on youth services in Wales reduced by £686k, which is equivalent to a 2% reduction on the previous year.

▼ PERCENTAGE ANNUAL CHANGE IN EXPENDITURE BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN WALES ON YOUTH SERVICES (EXCLUDING ISLE OF ANGLESEY)



Regional picture:

In Wales, it is young people in Mid Wales who have faced the greatest cuts to their youth services. Local authorities in Mid Wales have more than halved (58%) their spending on youth services since 2010/11.

However, no region in Wales have escaped the cuts, with all areas losing more than a quarter of expenditure since 2010/11.

Proportion of spending on young people:

Within Wales, youth services sit within the education budget, making direct like-for-like comparisons with England difficult. However, the pattern followed is similar.

Since 2010/11, expenditure on education by local authorities in Wales has remained fairly consistent, having actually increased by 4% (£126m). However, spending on youth services fell as a proportion of this, from 2% of the education spend in 2010/11 to 1% in 2018/19. However, the youth services spending figures exclude the Isle of Anglesey, whereas the expenditure on education figures represent a complete national picture.

ENGLAND AND WALES

Local authorities in England and Wales combined spent £1.41bn in real terms on youth services in 2010/11. By 2018/19, this had been reduced to £429m, which equates to a cut of £978m or a 70% reduction in funding over the eight-year period.

In the last year alone, the cuts across England and Wales totalled more than £27m in real terms, which is equivalent to a 6% reduction on the previous year.

IMPACT OF LONG-TERM CUTS: CUMULATIVE REDUCTION IN REAL TERMS EXPENDITURE BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND AND WALES ON YOUTH SERVICES



The result was a cumulative reduction in expenditure by local authorities in England and Wales of £5.77bn in real terms between 2010/11 and 2018/19.

CONCLUSIONS

In just eight years, local authorities have cut their expenditure on youth services in England and Wales by £978m in real terms, which is the equivalent of a 70% reduction in funding between 2010/11 and 2018/19.

The total cumulative reduction in expenditure by local authorities in England and Wales since 2010/11 was £5.77bn.

These figures demonstrate that the long-term benefits of youth services are currently being overlooked as local authorities are being forced to meet more immediate financial and statutory pressures, even within the services provided for children and young people.

However, as the increasing incidences of knife crime, mental health difficulties and social isolation among young people illustrate, these cuts are not without their consequences.

Youth services have traditionally provided a lifeline for many young people but the cuts are resulting in a situation in which individuals are increasingly being left without local spaces where they can engage in positive activities that support their development, as youth services are forced to close their doors.

Young people must become a priority once more and it is imperative that the Government acts to prevent these missed opportunities for young people to get support.

As a result, YMCA is calling on the Government to meet the following three tests in England:

- ▶ reinstate and ring-fence youth services funding to 2010/11 real terms levels
- ▶ provide universal youth services for all young people and targeted support for those who need it
- ▶ create a national youth services strategy

In addition, YMCA is calling on the Welsh Government to:

- ▶ reinstate and ring-fence youth services funding to 2010/11 real terms levels
- ▶ include minimum standards for universal and targeted youth services in statutory guidance
- ▶ develop a real partnership approach driven by the Welsh Assembly that puts third sector organisations at the heart of youth service provision
- ▶ develop a longer term 10-year vision for youth services in Wales

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YMCA enables people to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our Christian values, we create supportive, inclusive and energising communities, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

SUPPORT & ADVICE

ACCOMMODATION

FAMILY WORK

HEALTH & WELLBEING

TRAINING & EDUCATION