



THE ONSIDE YOUTH ZONE NETWORK DNA

‘Giving young people the
opportunity to discover their
passion and their purpose’



onsideyouthzones.org

The Network of Youth Zones share an ambition that reaches across the quality of delivery, the opportunities created for young people and the supportive relationships nurtured. These are intrinsic to the 'DNA' of a Youth Zone, and evidenced in the inspirational buildings, the 'tonight better than last night' ethos and our growth plans for the Network.

1. VISION AND VALUES

Our vision is for every young person across the UK to be happy, healthy, and able to thrive. We want to empower young people to lead positive, fulfilling lives by providing access to incredible spaces and excellent youth work, delivered by outstanding people, where they are needed the most.

Our Values

Young People First: young people are at the heart of everything we do, inspiring and challenging us to deliver services that exceed their needs and challenge them to be the best they can be.

Excellence: we encourage ourselves and each other to be the best we can be through continuous learning and improvement, and a focus on finding solutions.

Respect: we act with honesty and integrity, celebrating diversity across the whole organisation and caring about each other, our young people and the Youth Zone environment.

Collaboration: we create and nurture strong, creative partnerships, working together to achieve better results and outcomes for young people.

Ambition: we are passionate and driven in taking on new challenges, embracing new ideas and exceeding our ambitions for young people, the Youth Zones and our local communities.



2. STATUS

Each Youth Zone is a separate Registered Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee, part of the federated OnSide Network. Youth Zones receive valuable support and encouragement from OnSide, and in turn are expected to embody the ethos, the DNA of an OnSide Youth Zone and contribute to the success of the Network whilst remaining independent and self-sufficient.

The Board of Trustees ensures that each Youth Zone complies with all charitable and statutory legislation and fulfills its purposes effectively. This requires the right balance of skills and experience to drive the 'business' forward to be sustainable, professional, efficient and act in the best interests of the Youth Zone and its members. Each Trustee has a specific role to perform and is expected to actively contribute their time, skills and energy.



3. OPEN & ACCESSIBLE

Youth Zones are vital hubs for young people, providing them with access to a broad range of youth work support and activities. At the heart of every Youth Zone is its core delivery of universal, open-access sessions, which are tailored to best meet the needs of their local community and to complement existing youth provision.

Within this local context, Youth Zones aspire to achieve our shared Network DNA, offering at least 40 hours of universal sessions over 7 days a week, all year round, with Friday and Saturday evenings particular priorities, due to the lack of alternative opportunities for young people on these evenings.

Youth Zones aim to have over 100 young people engaging with each universal, open access session and 1,000 young people engaging a week.

Operating hours are determined locally, with weekday sessions starting soon after school finishes and running for sufficient length for good quality youth work to be delivered. During school holidays, Youth Zones typically deliver affordable holiday provision to Junior members.

There may be times when Youth Zones have to reduce their delivery hours or adapt their offer to respond to available funding. During these times, the Network will collectively support Youth Zones as they develop a plan to re-build towards delivery of our core DNA and to minimise any impact on young people, whilst maintaining aspirations.

Youth Zones seek to work in partnership with organisations where collaboration is mutually beneficial and by doing so, can add value to the offer for young people. Additional targeted support is often provided by Youth Zones to meet the needs of local young people and supporting the universal offer to be well-attended and inclusive. These decisions are made locally, in response to the priorities of the neighbouring communities.

AFFORDABLE

Open access sessions are affordable to all, with a nominal annual membership and session fee determined locally, not exceeding £5 and 50p respectively, with no additional charges for core activities.

Access to an affordable, nutritious hot meal is also offered, typically for £1.00. However, café charges and fees for holiday clubs, residentials and trips are decided at a local level, ensuring affordability is always maintained.



4. MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE

As a membership organisation, we want young people to become long-term members and feel a strong sense of belonging to gain maximum advantage from the support and opportunities available. Youth Zones are open to all young people, especially those most in need; everyone must feel welcome, safe and included, and they come because they want to. Membership includes young people aged 8-19 years and up to 25 for those with additional needs, and must reflect the community and all of its diversity. We actively encourage the full involvement of young people who are disabled or have additional needs. We monitor membership and attendance to ensure we are meeting our aspirations.

**A Youth Zone belongs to young people.
It is their space first and foremost.**

5. HIGH QUALITY YOUTH WORK

We deliver quality activities and services that facilitate positive participation and development opportunities to support and inspire young people to lead more positive lives whilst having fun. The Youth Zone buildings are vibrant and spacious, working best when youth work is delivered alongside and through a varied and creative offering, defined by our 'Get' programme: Get Active, Get Creative, Get Outdoors, Get Ahead, Get Sorted and Get Connected. This includes a wide range of universal and targeted services responsive to local need.

Youth Zones involve young people in developing and evaluating activities and services, giving them a voice and influence, ensuring we are responding to their changing needs and interests, and providing opportunities to gain new skills and experiences.

6. IN PARTNERSHIP

Our vision is for every young person across the UK to be happy, healthy, and able to thrive. We want to empower young people to lead positive, fulfilling lives by providing access to incredible spaces and excellent youth work, delivered by outstanding people, where they are needed the most.

Young People: It is their Youth Zone and so a sense of ownership is fundamental. They are at the heart of it and should participate in every aspect.

Community: The whole community should see the Youth Zone as a valuable asset, actively taking pride in and ownership of its success and contributing as passionate supporters and volunteers. Positive and collaborative relationships with, for example, local youth organisations, healthcare providers and police are critical to delivering high quality, diverse and integrated services,

Private Sector: Youth Zone leadership is provided by local business leaders through the Chair and a number of Trustees coming from the private sector. There is a high level of connectivity with the private sector to support programme delivery, patronage and governance.

Local Authority: The Council has a key strategic role to play, both at the development stage and after the Youth Zone opens, to ensure Youth Zone services are aligned to local priorities and add value to young people's services across the area.

7. A SAFE SPACE

Youth Zones are a space for young people to feel safe and supported. We operate to the highest standards of safeguarding in our policies, procedures and practice, including safe recruitment of our staff and volunteers and in our running of safe activities.



8. QUALITY ASSURANCE

By continually working on self-improvement in line with the Excellence Framework, Youth Zones quality assure their activities and operations. As part of the drive to continuously improve services for young people, they also participate in cross-Youth Zone peer assessments and benchmarking.

A key aspect of quality assurance is effective monitoring of participation data and evaluating outcomes. Youth Zones collect and analyse data on the impact and quality of the services in line with the OnSide Evaluation Framework, using OnSide's bespoke database system. Data is shared across the network for performance benchmarking, and aggregated to evaluate the network's combined impact. Alongside the Network wide indicators used, each Youth Zone may collect additional local data.

9. OUR PEOPLE

The Youth Zone staff and volunteers must be high calibre, dedicated, diverse, professional and well-trained, with a range of skills and specialisms supported by access to development opportunities. The involvement of volunteers is critical both to the connectivity with the community and the service provided to young people; the positive messages this gives cannot be overestimated. Operating to the highest standards, staff and volunteers are there to engage and build positive relationships with young people.

10. THE BUILDING

We build and maintain world class facilities, designed with a 'WOW' factor to demonstrate the respect and value we give to young people. Youth Zones are both state-of-the-art and functional, designed with clear insight into how young people engage, socialise and participate, whilst being flexible to respond to changing needs. They are in prominent, neutral locations (town centres wherever possible), chosen to maximise accessibility and give a clear sense of identity.

11. SUSTAINABILITY

We are committed to providing long-term and dependable services to support young people with life's challenges. To ensure the continued success and growth of the Youth Zone network, we need to ensure financial sustainability and robust governance. We achieve this through our diverse funding model which includes generous support from the private sector, local community and local authority, alongside trusts and grants, fundraising events, and contributions from young people.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE DNA

Heading	DNA feature	Measure	RAG rating
Vision and Values		YZ values align with The OnSide Network's values, are published and evidenced in YZ culture.	
Status	Compliant with all charitable and statutory legislation	YZs are compliant: 1. as a charity: with own governing document (Memorandum & Articles) and the Charity Act (see charity law) 2. as a company: with the Companies Act 3. as an employer: with employment legislation 4. as an organisation: with essential policies such as GDPR (implemented in line with the Network approach), safeguarding and health & safety 5. as a fundraiser or when accepting funding: with fundraising law. 6. with any other legal obligations: such as local contracts; licences; insurance cover; financial records, controls and regulations	
	Independent and self-sufficient	Financial performance.	
	Contributing to the success of the Network	YZ makes use of, participates in and contributes to relevant OnSide and Network initiatives, activities and support.	
		Submission of monthly statistics as requested by OnSide	
		Use of the OnSide Network branding as per guidelines.	
		OnSide have a nominated trustee and have access to the Youth Zone premises and pertinent performance and financial information.	
		Compliance with Network policies including Crisis and Issues Escalation Policy.	
	Skilled and experienced Board	Board composition and functions appropriate to needs of the Youth Zone.	
Open and accessible	Offers a core universal service for 8-19 yr olds whenever schools are closed, 52 weeks a year	Green: 40hours per week or more outside of school hours including Friday and Saturday evenings. Amber: 35hours per week with ownership of plan to increase.	
		Open 7 days a week for young people.	

ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE DNA CONTINUED

Heading	DNA feature	Measure	RAG rating
Affordable:	Cost per session, membership and food	All core universal sessions 50p and membership £5 or less. No additional charges for core activities Targeted services accessible through core sessions.	
	Holiday Zone	Holiday provision offered at an affordable cost	
Membership and attendance	Membership	Active membership reflective of population in terms of numbers, ethnicity, gender and geography (as per locally set targets).	
	Numbers engaging:	1000/wk through universal open access with allowance for Youth Zones with a smaller population in their catchment area.	
High Quality Youth work	A wide range of universal and targeted services that respond to local need across programme themes	High quality ambitious offer with an appropriately balanced universal and targeted offer across all programme areas. OnSide acting as peer to peer critical friend or Improvement Partner within formal escalation.	
	Inclusive offer	Inclusive sports, arts & personal development offer. Equality statement developed.	
In partnership	Diverse partnerships across the private, public and third sector	Demonstrable evidence of active partnership working.	
Our people	High calibre, dedicated, diverse, professional, well-trained team of staff and volunteers	Diversity of team with regard to gender, ethnicity, skills, experience etc.	
		Effective HR practices for selecting, training, managing and developing staff.	
	Volunteering	A quality volunteering offer and achievement of locally determined KPIs around volunteer numbers.	
The Building	Maintained to a high standard	Clean, well maintained, safe with appropriate service contracts.	
Sustainability	Wide range of funding sources	Funder profile, current and future Fundraising strategy. Funder engagement.	