Sitemap & Navigation Policy

Youth Start Limited
Company Number: 16864238
Registered Office: 370 Osmaston Park Road, Derby, DE24 8FB
Website: youthstart.co.uk

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Introduction

This Sitemap & Navigation Policy sets out Youth Start Limited's approach to website structure, navigation, and sitemap management for the Youth Start website (youthstart.co.uk).

A well-structured website with clear navigation and an up-to-date sitemap is essential for providing a positive user experience, ensuring accessibility, and supporting search engine optimisation. This policy explains how Youth Start organises website content, manages navigation, maintains sitemaps, and ensures that users and search engines can easily find and access information on the website.

By using the Youth Start website, you acknowledge that you have read this Sitemap & Navigation Policy and understand how the website is structured and how to navigate it.

Purpose of This Policy

The purpose of this Sitemap & Navigation Policy is to:

- Explain the structure and organisation of the Youth Start website
- Describe the navigation systems and tools available to users
- Explain how Youth Start maintains and updates the website sitemap
- Describe how Youth Start ensures accessibility and usability of website navigation
- Explain how Youth Start supports search engine optimisation through sitemap management
- Ensure compliance with UK accessibility standards and best practice guidelines

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Website Structure and Organisation

Site Architecture

The Youth Start website is organised using a clear, logical, and hierarchical structure that reflects the needs of the two primary audiences: employers and young people.

The website structure is as follows:

Level 1: Homepage - youthstart.co.uk (main entry point)

Level 2: Primary Pages - About Us (youthstart.co.uk/about) - How It Works (youthstart.co.uk/how-it-works) - For Employers (youthstart.co.uk/employers or youthstart.co.uk/hire) - For Young People (youthstart.co.uk/young or youthstart.co.uk/apply) - Case Studies (youthstart.co.uk/case-studies) - Contact (youthstart.co.uk/contact)

Level 3: Secondary Pages - Frequently Asked Questions (youthstart.co.uk/faq) - Evidence-Based Scenarios (youthstart.co.uk/evidence) - Blog (youthstart.co.uk/blog) (future development) - News (youthstart.co.uk/news) (future development)

Level 4: Legal and Compliance Pages - Privacy Policy (youthstart.co.uk/privacy) - Cookies Policy (youthstart.co.uk/cookies) - Terms & Conditions (youthstart.co.uk/terms) - Accessibility Statement (youthstart.co.uk/accessibility) - Cookie Preferences (youthstart.co.uk/cookie-preferences) - Compliance (youthstart.co.uk/compliance)

Design Principles

The Youth Start website structure is designed according to the following principles:

- **Simplicity:** The website structure is simple and uncluttered, with a maximum of three levels of navigation (excluding legal pages)
- **Dual-audience focus:** The website clearly distinguishes between content for employers and content for young people, with separate pathways for each audience
- **Clarity:** Page names and URLs are clear, descriptive, and easy to understand
- **Consistency:** The website structure and navigation are consistent across all pages
- **Accessibility:** The website structure supports accessibility and is compatible with assistive technologies
- **Mobile-first:** The website structure is optimised for mobile devices and responsive design
- **Search engine optimisation:** The website structure supports search engine crawling and indexing

URL Structure

Youth Start uses clean, descriptive, and SEO-friendly URLs that reflect the content and hierarchy of each page. URLs follow these conventions:

- **Lowercase letters:** All URLs use lowercase letters (e.g., youthstart.co.uk/employers, not youthstart.co.uk/Employers)
- **Hyphens for word separation:** Words in URLs are separated by hyphens (e.g., youthstart.co.uk/how-it-works, not youthstart.co.uk/howitworks)

- **No special characters:** URLs do not contain special characters, spaces, or punctuation (except hyphens)
- **Descriptive keywords:** URLs include descriptive keywords that reflect the page content (e.g., youthstart.co.uk/case-studies, not youthstart.co.uk/page3)
- **Short and concise:** URLs are as short as possible while remaining descriptive
- **Permanent URLs:** URLs are permanent and do not change unless absolutely necessary. If a URL must change, a 301 redirect is implemented to preserve search engine rankings and avoid broken links

Navigation Systems

Primary Navigation Menu

The primary navigation menu is displayed at the top of every page on the Youth Start website. The primary navigation menu provides access to the main sections of the website and is consistent across all pages.

The primary navigation menu includes the following links:

- **Home:** Links to the homepage (youthstart.co.uk)
- **About Us:** Links to the About Us page (youthstart.co.uk/about)
- **How It Works:** Links to the How It Works page (youthstart.co.uk/how-it-works)
- **For Employers:** Links to the For Employers page (youthstart.co.uk/employers)
- **For Young People:** Links to the For Young People page (youthstart.co.uk/young)
- **Case Studies:** Links to the Case Studies page (youthstart.co.uk/case-studies)
- **Contact:** Links to the Contact page (youthstart.co.uk/contact)

The primary navigation menu does not include dropdown menus or sub-menus, in accordance with Youth Start's design principle of simplicity and clarity.

Footer Navigation

The footer navigation is displayed at the bottom of every page on the Youth Start website. The footer navigation provides access to secondary pages, legal pages, and additional resources.

The footer navigation is organised into the following sections:

Section 1: Quick Links - About Us - How It Works - For Employers - For Young People - Case Studies - Contact - FAQ

Section 2: Legal & Compliance - Privacy Policy - Cookies Policy - Terms & Conditions - Accessibility Statement - Cookie Preferences - Compliance

Section 3: Contact Information - Email: contact@youthstart.co.uk- Telephone: 07470435603 - Registered Office: 370 Osmaston Park Road, Derby, DE24 8FB

Section 4: Social Media Links (future development) - LinkedIn - Facebook - Twitter - Instagram

Mobile Navigation

On mobile devices, the primary navigation menu is replaced by a responsive mobile menu (often called a "hamburger menu") that is accessed by clicking or tapping an icon (typically three horizontal lines) in the top-right corner of the screen.

The mobile menu displays the same links as the primary navigation menu, but in a vertical list format that is optimised for touchscreen devices.

The mobile menu is designed to be:

- **Easy to access:** The menu icon is prominently displayed and easy to tap
- **Easy to use:** The menu links are large enough to tap easily and are clearly labelled
- **Consistent:** The mobile menu structure is consistent with the desktop navigation
- **Accessible:** The mobile menu is compatible with assistive technologies and screen readers

Breadcrumb Navigation

Breadcrumb navigation is displayed at the top of secondary and tertiary pages to show users their current location within the website hierarchy and to provide a quick way to navigate back to parent pages.

Breadcrumb navigation follows this format:

Home > Section > Current Page

For example: - Home > For Employers > FAQ - Home > Case Studies > Evidence-Based Scenarios

Breadcrumb navigation is not displayed on the homepage or primary landing pages (For Employers, For Young People).

Search Functionality

Youth Start will implement a search function on the website to allow users to search for specific content, pages, or keywords. The search function will be accessible from the primary navigation menu and will be displayed prominently on the homepage.

The search function will:

- **Search all pages:** The search function will search all public pages on the website, including primary pages, secondary pages, blog posts, and case studies
- **Exclude legal pages:** The search function will exclude legal and compliance pages from search results (unless specifically searched for by name)
- **Display relevant results:** Search results will be ranked by relevance and will display the page title, a brief excerpt, and a link to the page
- **Support filters:** Users will be able to filter search results by content type (e.g., pages, blog posts, case studies)
- **Provide suggestions:** The search function will provide suggested search terms if no results are found

The search function is planned for implementation in Q2 2026.

Call-to-Action (CTA) Navigation

Throughout the website, Youth Start uses clear and prominent call-to-action (CTA) buttons to guide users to key actions, such as:

- **Hire Reliable Staff:** Links to the For Employers page or employer application form
- **Find Your Career:** Links to the For Young People page or young person application form
- **Get in Touch:** Links to the Contact page
- **Learn More:** Links to relevant information pages (e.g., How It Works, Case Studies)

CTA buttons are designed to be:

- **Visually prominent:** CTA buttons use bold colours and clear typography to stand out from surrounding content
- **Action-oriented:** CTA button text uses action verbs (e.g., "Hire", "Find", "Get", "Learn")
- **Consistent:** CTA buttons use consistent design and placement across all pages
- **Accessible:** CTA buttons are keyboard-accessible and compatible with screen readers

Sitemap Management

XML Sitemap

Youth Start maintains an XML sitemap (sitemap.xml) that lists all public pages on the website and provides information about each page to search engines.

The XML sitemap is located at: youthstart.co.uk/sitemap.xml

The XML sitemap includes the following information for each page:

- **URL:** The full URL of the page
- **Last modified date:** The date the page was last updated
- **Change frequency:** How often the page is typically updated (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly, yearly)
- **Priority:** The relative importance of the page within the website (on a scale of 0.0 to 1.0)

The XML sitemap is automatically generated and updated whenever new pages are added or existing pages are modified.

HTML Sitemap

Youth Start maintains an HTML sitemap (youthstart.co.uk/sitemap) that provides a human-readable list of all pages on the website, organised by section.

The HTML sitemap is accessible from the footer navigation and is designed to help users:

- **Find specific pages:** Users can quickly scan the sitemap to find the page they are looking for
- **Understand website structure:** The sitemap provides an overview of the website structure and organisation
- **Access all pages:** The sitemap provides direct links to all public pages on the website

The HTML sitemap is organised into the following sections:

- Main Pages (homepage, About Us, How It Works, etc.)
- For Employers (employer landing page, employer FAQ, etc.)
- For Young People (young person landing page, young person FAQ, etc.)
- Case Studies (case studies page, evidence-based scenarios, etc.)
- Legal & Compliance (privacy policy, cookies policy, terms, etc.)
- Contact & Support (contact page, FAQ, etc.)

Sitemap Submission to Search Engines

Youth Start submits the XML sitemap to major search engines (Google, Bing, Yahoo) to ensure that search engines can efficiently crawl and index the website.

The XML sitemap is submitted through the following tools:

- **Google Search Console:** Youth Start submits the sitemap to Google Search Console and monitors crawl status, indexing status, and any errors or warnings
- **Bing Webmaster Tools:** Youth Start submits the sitemap to Bing Webmaster Tools and monitors crawl status and indexing status

Youth Start monitors sitemap submission status and resolves any errors or warnings promptly.

Sitemap Updates and Maintenance

The XML sitemap is automatically updated whenever:

- A new page is added to the website
- An existing page is modified or updated
- A page is removed from the website or redirected

The HTML sitemap is manually reviewed and updated on a monthly basis to ensure that it accurately reflects the current website structure.

Youth Start reviews the XML sitemap on a quarterly basis to ensure that:

- All public pages are included in the sitemap
- All URLs are correct and functional
- Last modified dates are accurate
- Change frequency and priority values are appropriate
- No errors or warnings are reported by search engines

Accessibility and Usability

Accessibility Standards

Youth Start is committed to ensuring that the website navigation and sitemap are accessible to all users, including users with disabilities. The website navigation complies with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA standards.

Accessibility features include:

- **Keyboard navigation:** All navigation menus and links are accessible using keyboard controls (Tab, Enter, Arrow keys)
- **Screen reader compatibility:** Navigation menus are properly labelled and structured for screen reader users
- **Focus indicators:** Visible focus indicators show which navigation element is currently selected
- **Skip navigation links:** "Skip to main content" links allow users to bypass navigation menus and go directly to page content
- **Consistent navigation:** Navigation structure and placement are consistent across all pages
- **Clear link text:** Navigation links use clear, descriptive text (not "click here" or "read more")
- **Sufficient colour contrast:** Navigation text and background colours meet WCAG contrast requirements
- **Touch-friendly targets:** Navigation links and buttons are large enough to be easily tapped on touchscreen devices (minimum 44x44 pixels)

Usability Testing

Youth Start conducts regular usability testing to ensure that the website navigation is intuitive, efficient, and user-friendly. Usability testing includes:

- **User testing sessions:** Youth Start recruits representative users (employers and young people) to test the website navigation and provide feedback
- **Task completion testing:** Users are asked to complete specific tasks (e.g., "Find information about mentorship support") and their success rate and time to completion are measured
- **Navigation flow analysis:** Youth Start analyses user navigation patterns to identify common pathways, bottlenecks, and areas of confusion
- **Heatmap and click tracking:** Youth Start uses tools such as Hotjar to track where users click and how they interact with navigation elements
- **Mobile usability testing:** Youth Start tests navigation on multiple mobile devices and screen sizes to ensure responsive design

Usability testing is conducted at least twice per year, and findings are used to improve website navigation and structure.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

SEO Best Practices

Youth Start follows SEO best practices for website structure and navigation to ensure that the website is easily crawlable and indexable by search engines. SEO best practices include:

- **Clear hierarchy:** The website has a clear hierarchical structure with logical parent-child relationships between pages
- **Internal linking:** Pages are linked to related pages using descriptive anchor text
- **Breadcrumb navigation:** Breadcrumb navigation helps search engines understand the website structure
- **XML sitemap:** The XML sitemap provides search engines with a complete list of pages and metadata
- **Robots.txt file:** The robots.txt file (youthstart.co.uk/robots.txt) provides instructions to search engine crawlers about which pages to crawl and which to exclude
- **Canonical URLs:** Canonical tags are used to prevent duplicate content issues and to specify the preferred version of each page
- **301 redirects:** When URLs change, 301 redirects are implemented to preserve search engine rankings and avoid broken links
- **Mobile-friendly design:** The website uses responsive design to ensure that it is mobile-friendly and meets Google's mobile-first indexing requirements

Robots.txt File

Youth Start maintains a robots.txt file (youthstart.co.uk/robots.txt) that provides instructions to search engine crawlers about which pages and directories to crawl and which to exclude.

The robots.txt file includes:

- **Allow directives:** Specify which pages and directories should be crawled
- **Disallow directives:** Specify which pages and directories should not be crawled (e.g., admin pages, duplicate content, private pages)
- **Sitemap location:** Specify the location of the XML sitemap

The robots.txt file is reviewed and updated on a quarterly basis.

Monitoring and Analytics

Youth Start monitors website navigation and sitemap performance using the following tools:

- **Google Analytics:** Track user navigation patterns, page views, bounce rates, and exit pages
- **Google Search Console:** Monitor crawl status, indexing status, sitemap errors, and search performance
- **Bing Webmaster Tools:** Monitor crawl status and indexing status on Bing
- **Hotjar:** Track user interactions with navigation elements using heatmaps and session recordings

Youth Start reviews analytics data on a monthly basis and uses insights to improve website navigation and structure.

Broken Links and Error Pages

Broken Link Monitoring

Youth Start monitors the website for broken links (links that lead to non-existent pages or external pages that no longer exist) on a monthly basis using automated link-checking tools.

When broken links are identified, Youth Start:

- **Fixes internal broken links:** Updates or removes links to non-existent internal pages
- **Updates external links:** Updates links to external pages that have moved or changed URLs
- **Removes dead links:** Removes links to external pages that no longer exist

404 Error Pages

When a user attempts to access a page that does not exist, Youth Start displays a custom 404 error page that:

- **Explains the error:** Clearly states that the requested page could not be found
- **Provides navigation options:** Includes links to the homepage, primary pages, and sitemap
- **Includes a search function:** Allows users to search for the content they were looking for
- **Maintains branding:** Uses consistent design and branding with the rest of the website
- **Tracks 404 errors:** Youth Start monitors 404 errors in Google Analytics to identify common broken links and navigation issues

301 Redirects

When a page URL changes, Youth Start implements a 301 redirect (permanent redirect) from the old URL to the new URL. This ensures that:

- **Users are not confused:** Users who access the old URL are automatically redirected to the new URL
- **Search engine rankings are preserved:** Search engines transfer the ranking value from the old URL to the new URL
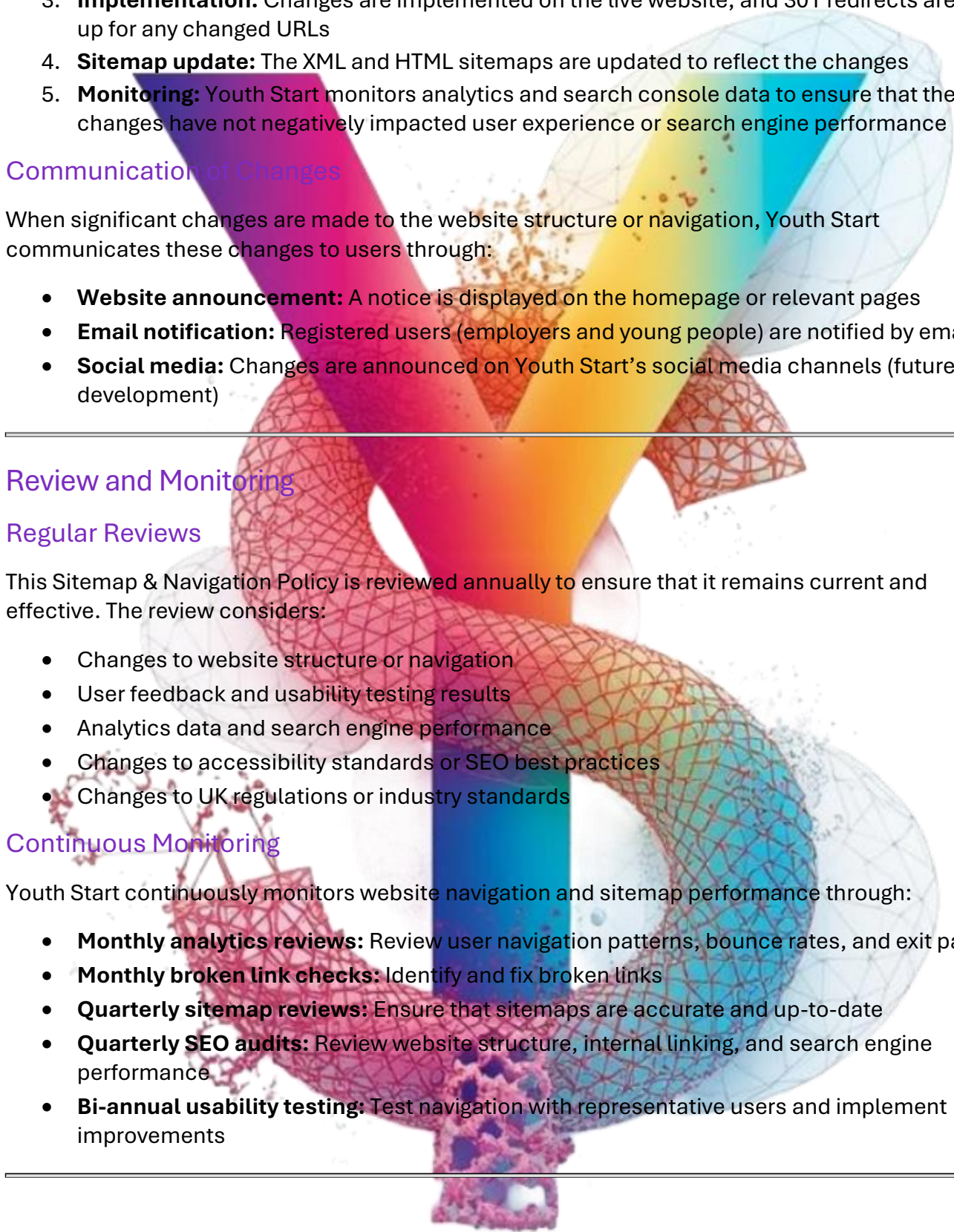- **Broken links are avoided:** External links to the old URL continue to work

Youth Start maintains a redirect log that documents all 301 redirects implemented on the website.

Updates and Changes to Website Structure

Planning and Implementation

When Youth Start makes changes to the website structure or navigation, the following process is followed:

1. **Planning:** Youth Start plans the changes, considering user needs, SEO impact, and accessibility requirements

2. **Testing:** Changes are tested in a staging environment before being implemented on the live website
3. **Implementation:** Changes are implemented on the live website, and 301 redirects are set up for any changed URLs
4. **Sitemap update:** The XML and HTML sitemaps are updated to reflect the changes
5. **Monitoring:** Youth Start monitors analytics and search console data to ensure that the changes have not negatively impacted user experience or search engine performance

Communication of Changes

When significant changes are made to the website structure or navigation, Youth Start communicates these changes to users through:

- **Website announcement:** A notice is displayed on the homepage or relevant pages
- **Email notification:** Registered users (employers and young people) are notified by email
- **Social media:** Changes are announced on Youth Start's social media channels (future development)

Review and Monitoring

Regular Reviews

This Sitemap & Navigation Policy is reviewed annually to ensure that it remains current and effective. The review considers:

- Changes to website structure or navigation
- User feedback and usability testing results
- Analytics data and search engine performance
- Changes to accessibility standards or SEO best practices
- Changes to UK regulations or industry standards

Continuous Monitoring

Youth Start continuously monitors website navigation and sitemap performance through:

- **Monthly analytics reviews:** Review user navigation patterns, bounce rates, and exit pages
- **Monthly broken link checks:** Identify and fix broken links
- **Quarterly sitemap reviews:** Ensure that sitemaps are accurate and up-to-date
- **Quarterly SEO audits:** Review website structure, internal linking, and search engine performance
- **Bi-annual usability testing:** Test navigation with representative users and implement improvements

Contact Information

If you have any questions about this Sitemap & Navigation Policy, or if you experience any difficulties navigating the Youth Start website, please contact Youth Start Limited using the following contact details:

Youth Start Limited
Registered Office: 370 Osmaston Park Road, Derby, DE24 8FB
Email: contact@youthstart.co.uk
Telephone: 07470435603
Website: youthstart.co.uk

Relationship with Other Policies

This Sitemap & Navigation Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Accessibility Statement
- Website Use Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Cookies Policy
- Terms & Conditions

Acknowledgment

By using the Youth Start website, you acknowledge that you have read this Sitemap & Navigation Policy and understand how the website is structured and how to navigate it.

Last Updated: 1 January 2026
Next Review Date: 1 January 2027