

National Youth Work Strategy (2020-25)

National Youth Work Strategy (2020-25) – The Story so Far

For the past year, YouthLink Scotland has been engaging young people, youth workers and stakeholders on the co-production of the renewed National Youth Work Strategy (NYWS) for Scotland.

This has involved local and national engagement with over 1000 people consulted in person, including just under 600 young people from a range of backgrounds and continued engagement with our members and key networks.

The National Young People's Group (VOICE) was convened, supported by YouthLink Scotland, Young Scot and Scottish Youth Parliament. The group co-designed a survey to seek the views of young people - receiving over 800 responses from all over Scotland.

In January 2020, over 100 delegates attended a NYWS strategy event in Glasgow, co-designed and co-facilitated by the VOICE who shared the key themes emerging from the engagement events and their survey.

The most prominent themes include funding and investment in youth work, health and wellbeing, ensuring youth work is accessible to all young people, workforce development and value and impact of youth work and how this is communicated.

This is consistent with YouthLink Scotland engagement with the youth work sector, whose biggest priority is health and wellbeing, followed by ensuring that youth work is accessible to all young people and there remains a focus on funding and workforce development.

National Youth Work Strategy 2020-2025 - Survey for Young People

Who were the young people that responded to the survey?

- Over 800 young people responded to the survey - aged between 11-26.
- There were responses from young people in each local authority area
- Highest percentage of responses came from the Highlands at 9.1% followed by Glasgow and North Lanarkshire which both had 7.2% of the responses
- 72% of respondents were currently participating in youth groups/projects, the majority of which expressed that they had developed new skills, increased in confidence and had new opportunities as a result of attending their youth group

Impact of youth work

- 80% felt that a youth worker had had a positive impact on their life

Direction of youth work in Scotland

- 97% believed that youth work should be a right for young people in Scotland
- 97% felt there should be more youth work opportunities available to young people in Scotland
- 96% stated there should be more funding for youth work
- 96% think that young people in Scotland should have the right to be supported by skilled, competent youth workers who take account of their wellbeing

Main priorities for youth work in next 5 years

Young people were asked to share their 3 main priorities for youth work in the next 5 years.

Overwhelmingly, the young people stated that the main priorities should include:

- More funding
- More youth groups (available across all of Scotland)
- Focus on mental health and wellbeing

Other priorities identified by young people included:

- Inclusion and diversity
- Youth work providing a safe space for young people
- Removing barriers to participation (including travel and costs)
- Advertising youth groups (both raising awareness of the benefits of attending and local provision)
- Listening to young people
- Gaining skills (including social skills, employability, accreditation opportunities)

- Fun (including providing exciting and new opportunities)
- Climate change and environmental issues
- Training for youth workers

Key Themes Emerging from Thematic Events

The key themes for the National Youth Work Strategy 2020-25 presented in this document have been drawn from the reports produced by local authorities and the voluntary sector for the thematic events.

A repetitive and key ambition for the future of youth work included that every young person, no matter where they live, has a space and place that they can go along to and feel safe and supported.

Summary of Key Themes

- Funding and investment in youth work
 - The need for long-term investment
 - Protect youth work budgets
 - Sustainability
- Statutory basis of youth work
 - Commitment from Local and National Governments to strengthen the statutory basis of Youth Work
- Workforce development
 - Trained and professional workforce and volunteer sector
- Value and impact of youth work and how this is communicated
 - Promotion of Youth Work – highlight the importance, value and impact that youth work has on our young people
- Youth work is accessible to all
 - Youth work is open to all young people and all young people have the opportunity to be included and their voices heard
- Youth participation and youth voice
 - Listen to our young people and involving young people in decision making at all levels
- Partnership working
 - Increased and more efficient partnership working across sectors

- Health and wellbeing
Improve the health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities in health for Young People in Scotland
- Equalities and inclusive youth work
A real inclusiveness and diversity – including LGBTQI, faith based and Gaelic speakers
- Digital youth work
Modernising and future proofing youth work for young people’s future needs through digital youth work
Need for greatly improved digital connectivity: for improved access to learning, to friends and their peers across rural communities
- Youth awards and accredited learning
Promote youth awards and recognition of accreditation
- Volunteering

Young people recognise that opportunities for volunteering
Removal of barriers to volunteering
- Children and Young People’s rights
Realise the commitments of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Producing an Accessible NYWS

Comments were also made regarding the accessibility of the National Youth Work Strategy. Some suggestions included:

- Ensure the NYWS is relatable, understandable, meaningful and reflects Young people’s interests, knowledge, experiences, ambitions and hopes for the future
- This strategy must be a live document, “*not another strategy stuck on a shelf*” and reviewed regularly by young people and decision makers to consider the difference it is making to children and young people

Feedback from the NYWS “Story so Far” Event held in January, 2020

The key themes resonated with the delegates. However, other themes identified included:

- Some curiosity that climate change and inclusion and diversity didn’t feature strongly, focus on general life skills e.g. budgeting,
- Skills – youth work opening young people’s horizons to other opportunities for careers that they may not get in school, namely, but not exclusively, arts etc.

- That youth work is key to young people developing social and creative skills
- Advertising and promotion of youth work. Examples of barriers include, Local Authority restrictions on social media and poster bans in schools
- Need to link to Community Empowerment Act and;
- More training and investment in workforce development

Next Steps/Timeline

We are entering a period of secondary partnership engagement and strategy refinement. Due to the on-going Covid-19 situation, we will provide an updated timeline of action soon.