

A photograph of four young people (two women and two men) standing on a grassy hill at sunset. They are seen from behind, embracing each other in a supportive group hug. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow and lens flare effects. The background shows a hazy landscape with hills and a body of water.

Youth Work and Employability

September 2020

Introduction

YouthLink Scotland believes youth work's role within the employability system deserves greater recognition. There is a wealth of evidence demonstrating the integral relationship between youth work and employability, through the role youth work plays in supporting young people in schools, community and post-school contexts. This relationship should be developed further as we continue to adjust to the consequences of COVID19 and its impact on the labour market.

In order for Scotland's young people to move into sustainable employment, they need assistance to make the best transition from a Broad General Education (BGE), through all stages of the learning journey and beyond the senior phase. The youth work sector is crucial to the process of social and economic renewal as it supports young people to build lasting foundations. The sector should communicate the link to youth work and employability programmes, volunteering, and youth awards¹ and the positive impact this has on young people.

Youth work plays a key role, developing young people's skills, (which has been recognised as important by employers), as well as providing support and early intervention strategies to those at risk of disengaging from education and contributes significantly to the employment agenda. It is an important component of the national policy landscape and should be included in the next steps on Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) and No One Left Behind (NOLB) and the development of other employability programmes.

Volunteering² should be seen as a positive addition to the employability pathway mix at all times. Youth work supports employability through volunteer interventions

to support people in their paths to the labour market. Long-term jobseekers may need to develop both soft skills, such as, confidence and self-esteem, and hard skills – office competency, IT capability, updated job-specific skills. Additionally, support, advice and on-going mentoring is needed³ to create stronger communities and long lasting support, which is especially important during this transitional phase out of lockdown.

Youth Policy and Practice in Scotland

Scotland's youth work sector consists of 80,000 youth work practitioners (including paid youth workers and volunteers) reaching in excess of 380,000 young people in youth work opportunities each week⁴. Youth work takes place in a range of settings, such as in school, youth centres, or outdoors, and is delivered by youth workers, many of whom are volunteers. Youth work has made a major difference to the lives of over 450,000 people in Scotland today (over 13% of the Scottish population⁵).

Policy Landscape

*The Nature and Purpose of Youth Work*⁶ states that youth work in Scotland is characterised by three essential and definitive features: young people choose to participate; youth work must build from where young people are and youth work recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in the learning journey.

¹ <https://www.awardsnetwork.org/>

² Volunteering as a pathway into work also demonstrates the importance of effective local partnerships between relevant agencies (e.g. Department for Work and Pensions, Third Sector Organisations, Community Councils and Local Community Learning and Development Teams) in creating opportunities and support for volunteers.

³ https://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/practical_support/volunteering/vsc-policy-final.pdf

⁴ YouthLink Scotland (2016) Youth Work Changes Lives – A Prospectus. Edinburgh: YouthLink Scotland

⁵ Hall Aitken, Social and economic value of youth work in Scotland: initial assessment, January 2016, <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/1254/full-report-social-and-economic-value-of-youth-work-inscotland.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/1255/statementonthenatureandpurposeofyouthwork.pdf>

Youth work in Scotland is deeply embedded within the national policy landscape. Youth work makes a significant contribution towards Scotland's focus on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This includes: prevention, early intervention and improving outcomes for children and young people⁷ and is included in planning for the upcoming National Youth Work Strategy (2020-2025)⁸.

National Youth Work Strategy for Scotland (2020-25)

In partnership with Scottish Government and Education Scotland, YouthLink Scotland has led on the co-production of the National Youth Work Strategy (2020-25). We engaged thousands of young people and youth workers who have highlighted youth employability as a priority area for action. Analysis of the co-production process recognised the contribution that youth work makes towards the national outcomes, the positive impact of youth work on developing the young workforce and wide ranging activities and policies affecting young people's lives. It also revealed that young people and youth workers value universal and targeted interventions as having equal merit and its dual importance on preparation for employment and the gaining and sustaining of jobs for young people⁹.

Partnership Working for Employability Success

The youth work sector is committed to engaging with people and providers on the future of Scotland's employability system – including, developing joint action plans with local and national Government and wider third sector organisations to address emerging employability themes.

Youthlink Scotland believes good practice for supporting unemployed people into work should be shared and replicated. For example, during COVID19 lockdown restrictions, Venture Trust created a virtual employability hub to support participants to prepare

for and look for work. The team were able to signpost participants to prospective employment with some services and key industries, while working to ensure that they understood how to go about their work and travel. Venture Trust also recognise that volunteering is a valuable way to build skills for employability and understand the dynamics of a workplace to act as a stepping-stone to sustainable employment.

Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)

DYW is the Scottish Government's Youth Employment strategy to better prepare young people for the world of work¹⁰. Young people's entitlements in relation to DYW are set out in the Career Education Standard Entitlements 3-18¹¹. Partnership working is key to realising these entitlements.

Across BGE and Senior Phase, youth work helps young people to develop skills for learning, life and work. Youth workers support young people to recognise their skills and personal achievements (including using youth awards) and to understand how these relate to their learner journey and the world of work.

Youth work also contributes to delivering a curriculum that helps young people learn about and experience the world of work. This includes opportunities to learn in context, such as volunteering, youth participation and enterprise. These are often delivered in partnership with schools, colleges, employers and the wider community.

Youth work is an integral element of the learner journey for many young people. In BGE partnership with youth work can enrich the curriculum offer and open up a range of learner pathways. Youth work offers personalisation and choice in the senior phase, supporting progression pathways, and helping young people make choices about their next steps.

⁷ https://www.youthimpact.uk/uploads/1/1/4/1/114154335/youth_programme_quality_intervention__ypqi_-_the_youth_work_policy_and_practice_context_in_scotland_-_november_2019.pdf

⁸ The Scottish Government is committed to a new National Youth Work Strategy (2020-2025), building upon the 2014-2019 strategy. Co-production by children and young people and the youth work sector and overseen by the strategic partnership of YouthLink Scotland, Education Scotland and The Scottish Government is on-going.

⁹ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/news/april-2020/national-youth-work-strategy-2020-25-the-story-so-far/>

¹⁰ <https://www.dyw.scot/>

¹¹ <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/career-education-standard-3-18-suite-of-learning-resources/>



Employability Skills and Readiness for Work

Youth work plays an invaluable role in supporting the employment and employability of young people who are key to Scotland's future economic success. Therefore, it is crucial we do as much as we can to prepare young people for the world of work and open up job opportunities for all¹². As we all continue to adapt to the challenges of COVID19, we must recognise the crucial position of youth work as an imperative industry in a young person's employment journey.

The delivery of youth work advances the development of skills. The youth worker engages with the young person on their terms. The relationship is built on trust. In turn, the young person is more confident and prepared to join the work force, with better employability prospects.

As one example from Venture Scotland shows, Jodie felt her life was going nowhere before she discovered the organisation. Jodie was bullied all through school and in 2010 lost her big brother Douglas to suicide. Both her mum and sister's mental and physical health deteriorated rapidly, leaving her feeling alone, scared, isolated and suicidal. Jodie ended up in alternative education and had multiple breakdowns and panic attacks.

Jodie describes walking through the door of Venture Scotland as one of the best decisions of her life:



“ Venture Scotland made me want my future again, made me want to look after myself more, and gave me the skills to do that. Before I arrived, I was floating around between different employability courses. I was a young carer, a care leaver, and struggling with mental health issues. I was feeling down, I didn't have much direction. I felt like I was going nowhere fast.

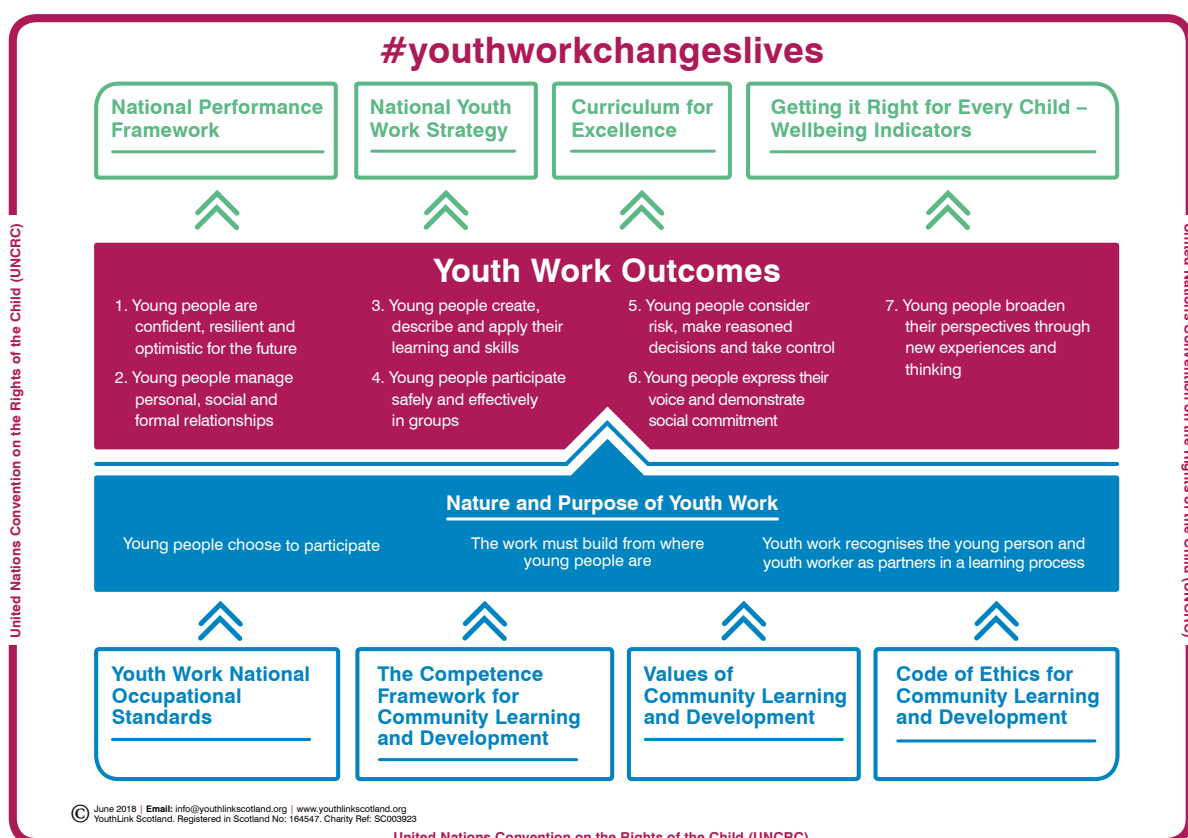
“Through Venture Scotland I got involved with Working Rite, a youth employment charity, and now have a job as an outdoor instructor. I'm into my second season and have realised I'm not terrible at my job!

“Things that would have terrified me before still terrify me, but I now have the skills and experience to deal with them and know it will be worth it. For me that is what Venture Scotland is all about.

“I had the time of my life. I learnt new skills, made new friends and self-discoveries – good and bad. I am forever and fundamentally a better person now with the skills to handle anything life throws at me.”

Another example is Change Cycle, a vocational employability programme delivered by Venture Trust. The programme works with partners to provide bike mechanic training in workshops where participants gain a qualification and learn to build and maintain a bike. The participants also learn how to ride the bike safely and get to keep the bike so they can travel to work or interviews. Around the workshop sessions Venture Trust work on employability skills and the programme culminates in a residential experience where the participants do a mix of vocational activity such as path building and some off road mountain biking. The employability team will then support individuals to find and take up employment opportunities.

¹² <https://www.gov.scot/policies/young-people-training-employment/>



Youth Work Outcomes

There are seven youth work outcomes for young people. These outcomes have been developed by and for the youth work sector in Scotland¹². These outcomes can be achieved in a range of youth work contexts and practices. They are:

- • **Outcome 1: Young people are confident, resilient and optimistic for the future**
- • **Outcome 2: Young people manage personal, social and formal relationships**
- • **Outcome 3: Young people create, describe and apply their learning and skills**
- • **Outcome 4: Young people participate safely and effectively in groups**
- • **Outcome 5: Young people consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control**
- • **Outcome 6: Young people express their voice and demonstrate social commitment**
- • **Outcome 7: Young people broaden their perspectives through new experiences and thinking.**

The Outcomes Model is founded on youth work practice, including the nature and purpose of youth work, youth work's National Occupational Standards, competences, ethics and values. The Model shows how the Youth Work Outcomes contribute to national outcomes, policies and strategy. This includes the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework¹³, the National Youth Work Strategy¹⁴, CfE^{15,16} and Getting It Right For Every Child¹⁷ (GIRFEC). These policies do not direct or inform the youth work outcomes. The outcomes exist irrespective of national policy drivers and enveloping the entire model is the UNCRC.

¹² The development of Youth Work Outcomes emerged from an initial discussion at a meeting of Local Authority Youth Work Managers (LAYWM) and National Voluntary Youth Work Organisations Scotland (NVYOS) about the need for 'shared outcomes' for Scotland's youth work sector. The development of the Outcome Model was sector-led, building upon the Statement on the Nature and Purpose of Youth Work. Sector has led development and testing of a set of indicators which support the model.

¹³ <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>

¹⁴ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/1111/national-youth-work-strategy-2014-15.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/Broad%20general%20education>

¹⁶ The curriculum for excellence review planned for 2021 is another vehicle to enhance and support future partnership working in this field.

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>



The youth work outcomes can be used for youth employment planning (embedded into organisational strategy, forming the basis for long-term strategic goals) and can also be used for specific youth work programme, or project planning, or for session/specific activities planning around communicating the value of youth work.

The Youth Work Skills Framework, due for launch in autumn 2020, outlines the key skills young people can develop through participation in youth work in Scotland. The skills (including related behaviours and qualities) that young people develop through youth work equip them to live, learn and work, enabling them to thrive and fulfil their potential. There are eleven key skills identified in the framework. They are, confidence, resilience, communication, building and maintaining positive relationships, organisation and planning, team work, leadership, decision making, problem solving, looking after myself and creating change. Each skill is mapped to the relevant youth work outcome, Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and My World of Work. The framework can be used with young people to help them recognise and articulate their skills development throughout their learner journey.

The skills framework identifies what a young person is able to do and the youth work outcomes explains the difference this makes for young people.

Youth Awards

The youth work sector has attached great importance to recognising and accrediting informal and non-formal learning achievement through youth awards. Long established awards such as the Queen's Scout¹⁸ and the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards¹⁹ have wide community recognition and strong currency amongst employers as evidence of valued employability skills and aptitudes.

A 2015 HMLe Review of Youth Awards in Scotland²⁰ recognised that,

“Young people gain a wide range of skills such as confidence, interpersonal, team working, leadership and employability through participation in youth awards”. In filming for the Awards Network, Tracy Black²¹, CBI Scotland Director, said, “whilst academic qualifications remain hugely important, employers tell us over and over that it's the right attitude and aptitude skills that young people bring to the workplace that are critically important”. Highlighting the value of the volunteering experience that is a common feature of almost all youth awards, Black said young people, “learn a variety of skills that they can take with them when they enter the workplace, whether that's interpersonal skills, communication skills, timekeeping”.

The range of youth awards available to young people through community-based youth work, and increasingly in school settings too, has grown considerably, providing more opportunities to recognise and accredit skills and learning across differing disciplines and interests. The Awards Network recorded achievement of 114,939 youth awards through its members during 2018/19, of which almost 31,000 carried accreditation recognised on the SCQF. All of these awards provided participants with skills and experiences to enhance their employability, equipping them with critical skills for learning, life and work.

¹⁸ Get Ahead: Scouting and Employability, Scout Association, 2015

¹⁹ <https://www.dofe.org/lifezone/employersbelieve/>

²⁰ <https://education.gov.scot/Documents/youth-awards-review-2015.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKKGPT-m-tE&feature=youtu.be>

²² <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/3183/impact-of-community-based-universal-youth-work-in-scotland-november-2018.pdf> The research was commissioned by the Steering Group and undertaken by a research partnership involving YouthLink Scotland, University of Edinburgh, University of St. Mark and St. John (MARJON) in Plymouth alongside three community-based youth work organisations in Scotland.

The Contribution of Universal Youth Work to Young People's Employment Skills

In November 2018, the Scottish Youth Work Research Steering Group published *The Impact of Community-based Universal Youth Work in Scotland*²² showing the range of opportunities that help young people in their journey towards the labour market. The research involved young people and youth workers in generating 129 Significant Change Stories.

The study confirmed that participation in youth work is important for acquiring and enhancing skills, such as those acquired through formal qualifications (both educational and otherwise, e.g. driving licence), work experience, life experience and accredited/achievement awards. Skills for life were closely linked to the tailored nature of youth work, in particular, the identification of strengths and interests suited to each young person, enabling appropriately matched employment opportunities. Links between the skills developed through youth work with vocational destinations and career aspirations were revealed. The opportunities engaged in through youth work (e.g. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award or participation in new experiences) allowed the young people to build confidence to pursue their interests and ultimately shaping their future destinations²³.

In January 2020, YouthLink Scotland, Northern Star, University of Edinburgh and Dumfries and Galloway Council published a report examining the Impact of Community-based Universal Youth Work in Dumfries and Galloway²⁴. This study collected 100 co-authored significant change stories from young people and youth workers. These stories revealed the importance of universal youth work to young people and its value

in supporting young people to develop and grow in the following areas – confidence and self-esteem, skills development, equality and inclusion, realising potential, broadening horizons, improving health and wellbeing and increased readiness for the employment market.

They found 68% of young people were able to clearly describe the progression routes open to them, with one third of young people ending up in a positive destination, such as employment, through their engagement with universal youth work. A number of young people credit the youth work intervention for securing successful employment and finding their chosen career path.

Young Person, 22

“ I started accessing youth work opportunities when I was around 15 or 16, I started attending evening drop ins just for something to do, I was just sitting at home bored, on my Xbox. I took part in various young leader training programmes, and was able to take part in several accredited awards, including my Bronze Duke of Edinburgh and Dynamic Youth Award which I think helped my CV as I wasn't great at school. Now, I work at an outdoor education centre, which specialises in working with young people, I think that the stuff I got involved in through youth work without a doubt helped me to get into this job ”

²³ Quotes from the Impact of Community Based Universal Youth Work Research: "I was lazy, never wanted to leave my room or socialise with my friends. Then I got involved with my local youth project where I received a job. This helped me massively in many aspects of my life... I have now moved on to full time job within my local community and owe a lot of what I've just said to my youth project." Q5 Male, 19.

"[He] was able to pass his driving test with the help of the project which gave him a new sense of freedom... [his] youth worker encouraged him to take on more supervisory roles. [He] excelled in this position. [He] was then encouraged by his youth worker to do his Modern Apprentice... [He] completed this with no problems. [He] has now moved on to a job within the local community and is thriving". Q6 Youth Worker.

²⁴ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/4312/final-report-dg-community-based-universal-youth-work.pdf>



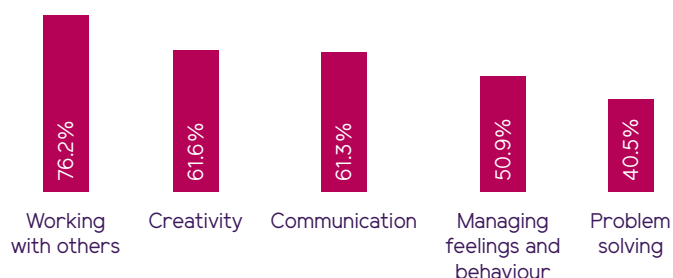
Skills Development Scotland (SDS)

The youth work sector works with SDS²⁵ to support individuals to build their career management, work-based and employability skills, from school, into further learning opportunities and employment.

One example includes Community Learning Development (CLD) youth services developing skills for learning and work. Young people surveyed in West Lothian in 2020, highlighted the range of employability and meta skills²⁶ that attending youth provision helped them develop.

Developing skills to improve Employability

Percentage responses of young people when surveyed about the positive impact of meta skills



These meta skills sit within three distinct areas of self-management, social intelligence and innovation, and are underpinned by the concepts of emotional intelligence, entrepreneurialism and confidence. Though all youth work activity provides opportunities for young people to develop meta skills (supporting future employability), most of the employability services and programmes are specifically targeted towards supporting the most vulnerable young people to make successful transitions into employment, education and work-based training.

²⁵ <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/>

²⁶ https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/44684/skills-40_a-skills-model.pdf

In school support

The More Choices More Chances (MCMC) Keyworker service enables young people to successfully transition onto sustainable positive destinations by providing individual support and access to appropriate group learning opportunities. School Keyworkers are available in all 11 mainstream secondary schools throughout West Lothian. They provide intensive one-to-one support for up to 250 young people per year who would benefit from additional support to progress to a positive destination. This is up to 12% of the annual school leavers who are registered on the School Leaver Destination Returns (SLDR). The young people have access to a range of courses entitled 'Opportunities for You'. These courses are managed centrally and offer development in areas such as Healthy Lifestyle, Team Building skills, Confidence, Personal Care, and Life skills.

Post school support (Skills Training programme & NOLB funded HYPE)

More broadly, keyworkers support those young people who are participating in School Vocational Programmes as well as the post school Skills Training Programme (STP) and Helping Young People Engage (HYPE) project. These programmes are delivered in the community and bring small groups of young people from different schools, and areas together to participate in learning activities that are engaging and provide a focus on transferable skills and employability. Activities include work-based training and courses in Sports and Fitness, Construction, Animal Care, Administration, Childcare, Multi-Media, Photography, Beauty and Hospitality. As well as helping to deliver skills, confidence and experience which are invaluable for a young person, these activities also provide them with additional qualifications. These range from Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) qualifications; industry recognised qualifications, personal development awards, e.g. Dynamic Youth Awards and in-house certificates.

The majority of young people participating in these employability interventions are aged 15 -19 years. A consequence of Scottish Government funding is the

expansion of HYPE to work with young people up to 26 years of age, in consideration of young people with additional support needs and those who are care experienced.

The Skills Training Programme consists of up to 26 weeks work experience four days a week in a work placement usually within council services, care/child care, catering, customer services/clerical and in operational services, plus a day of self-development and employability training. This gives young people the opportunity to gain the vocational and personal skills required to secure and sustain work. Young people learn new skills and gain the confidence necessary to progress on to further education, training or into work.

No One Left Behind (NOLB)

NOLB outlines the steps to deliver effective employability support in Scotland²⁷. It offers young people a wide range of activity-based courses where young people can grow in self-confidence, developing a range of life skills and addressing the barriers preventing them from moving on to their next steps. The NOLB model was developed from the successful Activity Agreement approach to post-16 employability support for young people furthest from the labour market. The youth work sector played a key role in delivering Activity Agreements, and continues to play a central role in delivering NOLB. In particular, the crucial role of a trusted adult is something that youth workers are ideally positioned to provide.

In West Lothian, the HYPE Team engage with young people through a youth work approach. At the end of each course all young people are awarded a HYPE certificate of achievement giving details of the practical skills that they learned during the course. Their certificate will also include details of the soft skills they developed from attending the programme and working as part of a group. All HYPE participants are encouraged to work towards formal accreditation. HYPE courses are closely linked to the labour market supporting young people to learn about careers and gain practical skills with courses such as Cafe Culture, Introduction to Animal Care, Gardening and Landscaping and Introduction to Beauty and Customer Service.

²⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/one-left-behind-next-steps-integration-alignment-employability-support-scotland/>

Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC)

The youth work sector has a key role in closing the poverty-related attainment gap. This includes supporting young people into positive, sustained post-school destinations, increasing achievement through approaches such as youth awards and providing learning opportunities to develop employability skills. For example, Dunedin Canmore Youth Projects work in partnership with S4 pupils at Gracemount High School in Edinburgh to offer their 'Give it a Go' programme. Almost all participating young people live in areas of significant deprivation. Many are school refusers or pupils with very low levels of attendance. Young people on the programme meet at least once a week at a local community centre, to access further support, designed with them to meet their needs, along with Skills for Work training, in conjunction with SDS. The aim of the programme is to give young people alternative options and more opportunities. Last year 90% of the young people who attended the programme secured a positive destination and all attained at least one youth award (Duke of Edinburgh / Saltire/ John Muir/ Personal Development).

The Future for Youth Employability in Scotland and the Role of Youth Work

COVID19 has had a detrimental impact on young people's employment. As an example, young people were furloughed at a higher rate (41% compared to 22% for all workers) and are disproportionately concentrated in sectors affected by lockdown.²⁸

Young people will lead the future in environmental jobs, as emphasis on environmental skills and jobs increase in coming years. The youth work approach is crucial to embedding resilience and adaptability and will help tackle unemployment, low paid employment and can help recover Scotland's natural environment.

Youth work organisations will continue to engage with young people and other professionals, including schools, colleges, and key services around employability. It is crucial therefore, that we cement and foster new partnerships with young people, youth workers, and all sectors involved in youth employability. In doing so, we can help create an effective workforce, contributing positively to wider policy frameworks. This will result in improved life chances for Scotland's young people. It is clear that youth work is crucial to young people's psychological readiness to prepare them for employment. The skills and resilience they develop enable a young person to prepare for work, handle the rigours of the work place and increase the likelihood of sustaining their employment.

The response of the youth work sector during COVID19 to the many issues faced by young people has been fantastic. The sector should build on this going forward by confidently highlighting the positive relationship between youth work and employability. As we transition out of lockdown, we must communicate the valuable role of the youth work sector in assisting young people, aiding the employability agenda, and helping Scotland build back stronger than ever.



²⁸ <https://www.ippr.org/blog/what-does-covid-19-mean-for-the-labour-market-prospects-of-young-people-in-scotland>

To view some of our other recent resources, please see the YouthLink Scotland website here:

<https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/covid-19-guidance/youth-work-recovery-resources>

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