



Introduction

YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work. We are a membership organisation, representing regional and national youth organisations from the voluntary and statutory sectors. We champion the role and value of youth work and represent the interests and aspirations of our sector. Youth work is part of the wider grouping of informal and non-formal learning which is known as Community Learning and Development. Our sector has a workforce in excess of 75,000 – including over 70,000 adult volunteers. We reach in excess of 380,000 young people in youth work opportunities each week.

YouthLink Scotland is responding to the Out of School Care in Scotland – Draft Framework Consultation on behalf of our members; however we support the submissions made by individual members of the organisation.

We agree with the Minister for Children and Young People that the expansion of funded early learning and childcare from 2020 will help ensure that every child has the best start in life. We would emphasise the importance of recognising the vital role out of school provision plays in providing essential childcare services for families and a wide range of experiences for children. We also believe activity-based clubs and programmes (such as sports clubs, creative arts clubs, and outdoor activities) are extremely important. This needs further exploration, with the role of youth work provision being recognised separately.

We understand that available evidence highlights the importance of out of school care for the whole family, from improved outcomes for children through opportunities for play and learning. Access to childcare supports parents to work, train or study with the knowledge that their children are being well cared for and this can lead to social and economic opportunities for parents as well. We know that out of school care, including holiday childcare, has a vital role in addressing both economic and social exclusion, in particular, providing improved outcomes for children from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

This is where youth plays an important role. The key purpose of youth work is to 'enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential¹'.

¹ *National Occupational Standards for Youth Work 2008*

Youth work delivers person-centred informal learning and development, working with the young person as a whole, within their family and community. As a rights-based practice, youth work offers opportunities for all young people.

Youth workers engage with children and young people through age and stage appropriate learning and activity. They use a diverse range of engagement tools and vehicles for learning to respond to the needs and priorities of children, young people, families and communities. This includes both universal youth work and targeted interventions. We would encourage greater acknowledgement of after school and holiday provision delivered by youth work as important learning experiences.

Youth work's position within the wider school community puts youth workers in a unique place to build relationships with young people across school, home and community settings. This allows youth work to create links between school and community, to engage families and deliver family learning. Parental engagement and family learning are important aspects of youth work, particularly around transition points and when supporting young people through targeted interventions. It is important to have this crucial role recognised as part of the consultation so we can seize on the sector's potential. These are all important aspects of the after school and holiday provision delivered by the youth work sector.

Currently, The Youth Work and Schools Partnership programme² supports school and youth work leaders to work together effectively to plan, deliver and evaluate improvements in education throughout Scotland. This three year programme, delivered by YouthLink Scotland, received £324,000 funding from Scottish Government, as part of the wider Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC)³. The Scottish Government's ambition is for excellence and equity in education, where every child and young person is able to fulfil their potential. The youth work sector shares this vision and is helping to deliver it through providing diverse clubs and programmes. As part of this programme, YouthLink Scotland is working with the youth work sector to quantify the breadth and impact of youth work's contribution to after school and holiday provision and will share this with Scottish Government, to continue to inform the development of out of school provision.

The National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan⁴ provides a national approach and direction for delivery, focusing on four priorities:

- Closing the attainment gap
- Raising attainment for all
- Improving young people's health and wellbeing
- Improving employability skills and positive sustained destinations.

The SAC aims to raise the attainment of children and young people living in deprived areas, in order to close the equity gap, ensuring everyone is encouraged to be the best they can be. Youth work contributes to closing the poverty-related attainment gap in various ways, such as, by improving attendance and attainment, lowering exclusions, improving health and wellbeing, increasing employability and positive

² <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/programmes/closing-the-attainment-gap/>

³ <https://www.gov.scot/news/collaborating-to-help-close-the-attainment-gap/>

⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/2019-national-improvement-framework-improvement-plan/>

sustained leaver destinations and through providing after school and holiday learning opportunities.

The National Youth Work Strategy (2014-2019)⁵, sets out the national policy ambitions for the sector and defines youth work's role in improving the life chances of young people. As a rights-based practice, youth work is inclusive and nondiscriminatory. It empowers young people and provides learning opportunities, which nurture the interests and personality of the individual. Youth work practice enables young people to develop positive relationships with their peers and with adults by providing safe spaces.

The strategy also defines youth work's role and contribution to a wide range of Scottish Government policy, including the delivery of the three supporting pillars of the Scottish education system: Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), GIRFEC (Getting It Right for Every Child), and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW). Youth work is part of the learning community, supporting all young people to reach their potential. It develops a broad range of skills and so complements and enhances curriculum options for young people. For many young people, youth workers are the trusted adults they choose to approach for person centred support when making decisions about their learning pathways. It is often the youth worker who will provide care or develop plans alongside other care professionals and provide advocacy as a point of trust for young people. It is for these reasons that many young people choose to participate in after school activities through youth work.

Youth work collaborates with schools across Scotland in planning and delivering after school and holiday provision for children and young people. For young people, participating in youth work ensures breadth, personalisation and choice within the post-15 education and skills system, including flexible and valued pathways for all young people. Youth work also supports all young people to achieve CfE outcomes, which are embedded within the National Youth Work Outcomes⁶. There are many strong examples of youth work and schools working collaboratively, to provide out of school learning opportunities for young people. One example is the Excel Holiday Matters project, which is a partnership between St Francis RC Primary School in Edinburgh, City of Edinburgh Council Lifelong Learning and Jack Kane Community Centre. This extends learning beyond school term times, through holiday activities and informal educational opportunities. This project is reducing long term breaks in learning, reducing poverty and the stress for families during the holiday periods. During term time, the Excel partnership improves literacy and numeracy, health and wellbeing and parental involvement through activities such as after school groups. Examples such as this can be found across Scotland. In Inverclyde a collaboration of youth work providers delivers a summer programme for young people. School-based youth workers provide support to ensure the most vulnerable young people are able to attend. They also work as part of the authority's approach to addressing food insecurity, providing lunches for all young people.

Larkfield View Garden Projects. Young people participated in holiday inter-generational projects maintaining the garden area within a local care home. They worked with local residents to create recycled plant pots as well as keeping the garden area tidy.

⁵ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/1111/national-youth-work-strategy-2014-15.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/policy/youth-work-outcomes/>

Inverclyde Community Learning and Development team also work in partnership with schools and third sector community organisations to provide relevant and meaningful learning opportunities after school.

For example, **Community Tracks Projects** includes young people over the course of 3 weeks being supported to create their own working cycle bike that could be used by them, given to a family member, or donated to the community cycle bank. The project ran with the aim of reducing waste through upscaling of old bike frames and reconfiguring using new working parts to create a fully functioning bike. Bike tasks included changing wheel frames, tyres, gear and break cables and rust removal. Other aims of the project included increasing active travel opportunities for the participants and informing of CO2 reduction in the local community through choosing active travel over motorised vehicles.

Some of the successes of Inverclyde's youth work provision are noted below:

- Establishment of an informal learning environment where young people can work towards their potential
- Establishment of positive relationships with supporting youth work staff and community based youth workers
- Achievement of 331 wider SQA achievement qualifications
- Achievement in 32 Dynamic Youth Awards
- Achievement of 16 John Muir Awards
- Achievement of 31 Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Awards
- Achievement of 25 Community Achievement Awards
- Achievement of 74 Saltire Awards
- Establishing links with community partners
- Offering of holiday provision and buy in from pupils
- Active consultation with young people positively driving projects
- Support from staff in facilitation of school based extracurricular accredited projects.

It was also noted through evaluation that the young people participating felt benefits in a number of different ways. Using National Youth Work Evaluation tools, all year groups involved saw increases in their creativity, curiosity, sociability, self-awareness, integrity and resourcefulness. It was also highlighted from senior phase pupils who were supported to develop skills essential for progression in further education that they felt increases in ability to handle new challenges, working as a team, learning new skills, dealing with difficult situations, positivity about self, achieving, and being ready for employment.

The work undertaken highlights that youth workers have an integral role alongside the school based curriculum to improve achievement and opportunities for young people in a range of settings.

Throughout the last two years Inverclyde Youth Work Service Staff members have been able to create community links due to the supportive nature of senior management within the school. The community links, including before and after school and holiday time, has helped harness the skills of young people. Indeed, in 2018, a senior phase pupil who participated in the past youth work service groups was crowned SQA Young Person of the Year.

It is only when we incorporate all the component parts of the education system, recognising and valuing everyone's contribution, that we can truly say we are improving young people's outcomes and placing achievement at the heart of everything we do - and in order to do that we need to recognise the role of youth work and youth workers as one of the main providers of out of school support.

Youth work is integral to prevention, care, and support of young people and we feel the consultation and plan would benefit from seeing youth work as a focus area, rather than on the periphery of the childcare system.

To reiterate, we also know that out of school care, including holiday childcare, has a vital role in addressing both economic and social exclusion. The evidence tells us that out of school care can provide improved outcomes for children from more disadvantaged backgrounds in particular. Similarly, evidence shows that youth work opportunities improve outcomes for young people.

In order to support community based approaches to delivering out of school provision the services created must be sustainable, affordable, of a quality standard and meeting the needs of all stakeholders. At the same time it must offer those individuals employed in the service meaningful wages with mapped out career progression.

More broadly, money being allocated to youth work is being reduced each year. This is having a detrimental impact on many young people who are not able to access services they need, hitting the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people the hardest. It also has a knock-on impact on provision of voluntary sector services.

Research shows that investing in youth work leads to a significant reduction in mental health issues, youth offending and substance abuse, while it also increases educational attainment and leads to increased earnings later in life⁷. Cutting youth work funding will adversely affect all these factors and more for an entire generation of young people. The extra care provision should therefore co-exist alongside the youth work sector so both areas are capable of achieving their aims and assisting the Scottish Government with joined up policy ambition.

We believe the name of the consultation is too narrow and therefore does not show the range of services provided in an out of school care setting and who those services are provided by. "*Out of School Care*" is part of the provision provided by a range of people and groups and is an important grouping within other provisions. We assert in the strongest possible terms that the title for the Framework should be revisited. The aim would be more representative and reflective of the needs of our communities and those the Scottish Government is trying to reach if the consultation was reframed as something like "*Out of School Provision for Young People*" (or similar).

We agree with three key aims for a future out of school care framework, namely:

- High quality services which provide children with life-enhancing experiences

⁷ See for example: Young Foundation A framework of outcomes for young people, July 2012 and Hall Aitken, *Social and economic value of youth work in Scotland: initial assessment*, January 2016, <http://www.youthlinkscotland.org/index.asp?MainID=21159>

- Out of school care is accessible and affordable and meets the needs of children and young people, parents and carers and communities
- Out of school care services are embedded in communities and enable children and young people to access a range of spaces including the outdoors.

However, the development of out of school childcare provision should be on a par with nursery care. Given the range of providers and activities (differing depending on ages) involved, the new name should reflect the broader ambition and reality for people operating within the youth work sector and those offering childcare provision.

The Scottish Government can help to ensure that all families have access to an out of school care place for their child/ren if they want it through measures such as:

- Partner collaboration and appropriate signposting
- Cost ensuring equitable access to childcare services for all children and include bespoke services for those with disabilities
- A national strategy and plan for the development of new and existing services should include a mapping exercise highlighting Local Authority and Voluntary youth work services currently available
- Inclusivity of young people in opportunities impacts on young people's wellbeing and equality. We would urge that these issues are given full consideration in the development and implementation of the framework.
- Overcoming transport barriers which contribute to social exclusion and isolation, limiting opportunities for young people and this has negative consequences for our communities. For those experiencing poverty, lack of affordable transport is a significant barrier to education, work, volunteering, attending services including youth work opportunities and the benefits these provide.
- We would support broader discussions on how to widen access to concessionary travel (such as to low income workers in the first few months of taking up a new job, to all young people as recommended by the Scottish Youth Parliament).

One current example from the youth work sector, which demonstrates how youth work promotes learning provision in a safe space and advances social and educational advancement, is the Spartans Community Football Academy in Edinburgh. They deliver innovative after school and holiday opportunities, in addition to collaborating with schools to work with children and young people during the school day. Examples include, after school homework clubs (where pupils enjoy homework support that may not be available at home), and youth clubs using physical activity to engage children and young people in addressing food insecurity. This has been a natural element of most youth work provision, and similarly at Spartans children and young people eat tea alongside the youth workers. This term alone has provided learning opportunities for more than 100 pupils from four local schools.

In addressing food insecurity within out of school settings, the role of the community is key. Community-based youth work settings are where children, young people and their families tend to feel most comfortable in accessing services, especially when addressing food insecurity during holiday periods.

To make sure out of school care is an affordable option for more families we need to listen to youth workers. They tell us that out of school provision has a significant positive impact on the development of our young people. So, for it to be an integral function for the masses, it requires:

- Assistance with upfront costs
- Subsidised places for families with more than one child accessing provision
- A guaranteed number of free hours for all families in keeping with nursery provision

One way to more effectively deliver out of school provision in rural/remote areas, while also meeting the needs of families, is to create out of school services based within schools, but with transport included – enabling young people to be safely returned to their homes at an agreed times.

Those with disabilities and additional support needs should be considered at this stage and we would expect Scottish Government to liaise with appropriate people and groups to effectively assess and plan for their needs. By making it a requirement of all education services to utilise school buildings and other local authority centres which are already disability compliant would help to make no cost out of school care provision available.

Youth workers tell us with a concerning regularity that if people were not fed the sessions would cease, as the hunger is so overwhelming and distracting for individuals – young people and parents alike. We need to better recognise youth work's role in addressing issues around poverty and ensure that they are appropriately funded to continue supporting families.

The Community Learning and Development team in Inverclyde, provides youth work services within the school to support identified young people at risk of disengagement due to multiple factors, including hunger. As such, breakfast clubs have been created and now expanded to include after school activities, such as “*youth zone*”, based at Ravenscraig gym and linked to holiday activities with partners at Ocean Youth Trust, Duke of Edinburgh, and Fire Skills. The opportunities provide a focused youth work approach in a care setting. Young people are supported to develop where they feel secure with staff and peers and in turn this allows them to reach their full potential. Pupils are supported to access opportunities that help them in later life and the group have real examples where young people have gone on to further education, full time work, or traineeships with local employers.

Youth work also addresses barriers to learning through the provision of breakfast clubs, after school provision and school holiday programmes. School holiday programmes counter learning loss in literacy and numeracy, and help address the broader needs of families impacted by ‘holiday hunger’. As one example, a new initiative in Aberdeen is “*Food and Fun*”. This addresses holiday-related food poverty by providing activities for pupils during school holiday time - alongside the activities is the provision of breakfast and lunch. A range of partners are involved, including the Local Authority CLD team, Sport Aberdeen and Community Food Initiative North East. This is also an example of successful communication and collaboration across sectors working for young people.

On the question of what skills and experience should the out of school care work force have, we believe a range of qualifications are required depending the job the individual has within the service and it is important to ensure that individuals have both the practical and theoretical knowledge to carry out their role. If the plan was reframed around out of school offer or provision rather than “care”, it might open up a discussion on standardising throughout the sector, including what that means in terms of regulation. This is important given the relationship between out of school provision and attainment.

As one of our Local Authority Members put it: *“A manager of a childcare provision with 50 children and a staff of 20 will require very different skills from a childminder delivering a one to one service for a child with additional support needs. This does not mean that one qualification is of lesser or greater value than the other it merely means that it is appropriate for a particular setting”*.

It is important to promote working in the out of school care sector as a more attractive career choice. This could be through improving salary and conditions, and by understanding the value of youth work and its role in delivering for young people, as well as being a bonafide career route.

Furthermore, we can increase diversity across the out of school provision workforce via:

- Enhanced Wages
- Enhanced working conditions
- Marketing wages and working conditions and career progression as an attractive full time (many roles are part time or seen as stop gaps) career choice
- Joined up approaches to childcare across sectors
- Promotion of roles in the right places to attract broader workforce.

Conclusion

The out of school provision provided by youth workers from all over Scotland contributes to overcoming barriers to learning and achievement, tackles holiday hunger and develops employability and skills. YouthLink Scotland believes extra out of school care provision is crucial to enhancing the life chances of children and parents. We believe the focus should be on provision as a whole and care should be a category within that offer as part of a holistic approach that values and expands the role of youth work.

ENDS