

National Youth Work Conference 2025

#YLSConf25

Safe Spaces, Strong Futures -
Youth Work's Role in
Safeguarding Young People
and Promoting Wellbeing



YouthLink
Scotland

Programme

9:00am

Registration & Refreshments

9:30am

Welcome and Introductions:

Sophie Reid, Vice Chair of YouthLink Scotland

9.35am

Ministerial Address:

Ben Macpherson MSP, Minister for Higher and Further Education

9:50am

Keynote speaker:

Tania de St Croix, Senior Lecturer in the Sociology of Youth and Childhood at King's College London

10:20am

Workshops 1

1. **Sextortion: What Youth Workers Need to Know** - Fearless and Police Scotland
2. **From Voice to Action: Youth Participation in Homelessness Prevention** - Cyrenians
3. **Embedding Contextual Safeguarding in Youth Work Practice: A North Lanarkshire Perspective** - North Lanarkshire Council
4. **"A Space to Be: Growing up and Healthy Masculinities" Lessons from The Borders** - No Knives Better Lives (YouthLink Scotland) and Scottish Borders Council
5. **Time to Talk Collaborative** - 6VT Youth Cafe and The Junction
6. **Shameless Youths** - West Dunbartonshire Council and NSPCC

11:20am

Refreshments and Networking

11:45am

Workshops 2

12:45pm

Lunch

Programme

1:45pm

Youth Work Ambassadors Input

1:55pm

Keynote Speaker:

Jess McBeath, Director of Jess Digital

2:15pm

Panel Discussion:

This panel brings together partners from Police, Health, and Digital Education to explore how collaborative approaches can strengthen safeguarding and promote early intervention across communities.

- **Assistant Chief Constable Tim Mairs**, Police Scotland
- **Dr Claire Goodfellow**, Public Health Scotland
- **Ainsley Carnarvon**, Heart of Midlothian FC Innovation Centre
- Chaired by **Tim Frew, CEO of YouthLink Scotland**

2:45pm

Workshops 3

3:45pm

Closing Remarks & Youth Work Manifesto:

Tim Frew, CEO of YouthLink Scotland

4:00pm

Post-conference Networking and Refreshments

5:00pm

Conference Closes



Participating in the National Youth Work Conference can be recorded as seven hours of Professional Learning time, which can contribute to the 35 hours per year (pro rata) required for membership of the CLD Standards Council, another professional body, or your own learning and development plan.



Sophie Reid **Vice-Chair, YouthLink Scotland**

Sophie Reid is Vice-Chair of YouthLink Scotland and has been a trustee for over three years.

Sophie has previously served as Chair of the Scottish Youth Parliament and Spokesperson for Girlguiding Scotland. She campaigns on issues such as children and young people's rights and women's safety in public spaces. Sophie has been recognised

for this work, receiving a Diana Award and was featured on the Young Women's Movement 30 under 30 list.

Outside of her campaigning work, Sophie has worked in both the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government. Currently, she has taken up a role as a Compliance Analyst at Barclays.

Ben Macpherson MSP **Minister for Higher and Further Education**

Ben grew up in Edinburgh before studying a BA Honours degree in Philosophy and Politics at the University of York. After graduating he returned to Edinburgh and worked in a number of different roles before going on to complete a postgraduate LLB and a Diploma in Legal Practice at the University of Edinburgh. He then qualified as a solicitor and practised as a lawyer with one of Scotland's large commercial firms. As well as his legal training, Ben has worked in financial services, for an NGO, in renewable energy, in a school and in hospitality.



Ben was elected in 2016 as the MSP for the Edinburgh Northern and Leith constituency, where he lives.

Speakers

Tim Frew **CEO, YouthLink Scotland**

Tim has over 30 years of experience in the youth work sector across England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, working in both public and voluntary organisations. He has held various roles at YouthLink Scotland, leading key initiatives and national programmes.

Tim is also an Associate Assessor for Education Scotland, a member of the Young Scot Board, SQA Advisory Council, CLD Standards Council Executive Committee and has served in a wide range of roles representing the sector. He is still an active youth worker as a volunteer.



Dr Tania de St Croix **Senior Lecturer in the Sociology of Youth and Childhood, King's College London**



Dr Tania de St Croix has been a youth and community worker since she was a teenager, mostly working in detached and community-based youth work and adventure playgrounds. She now works at King's College London, where she is Senior Lecturer in the Sociology of Youth and Childhood. Her research is on the value and evaluation of youth

work, and she is especially interested in critical and radical perspectives and approaches.

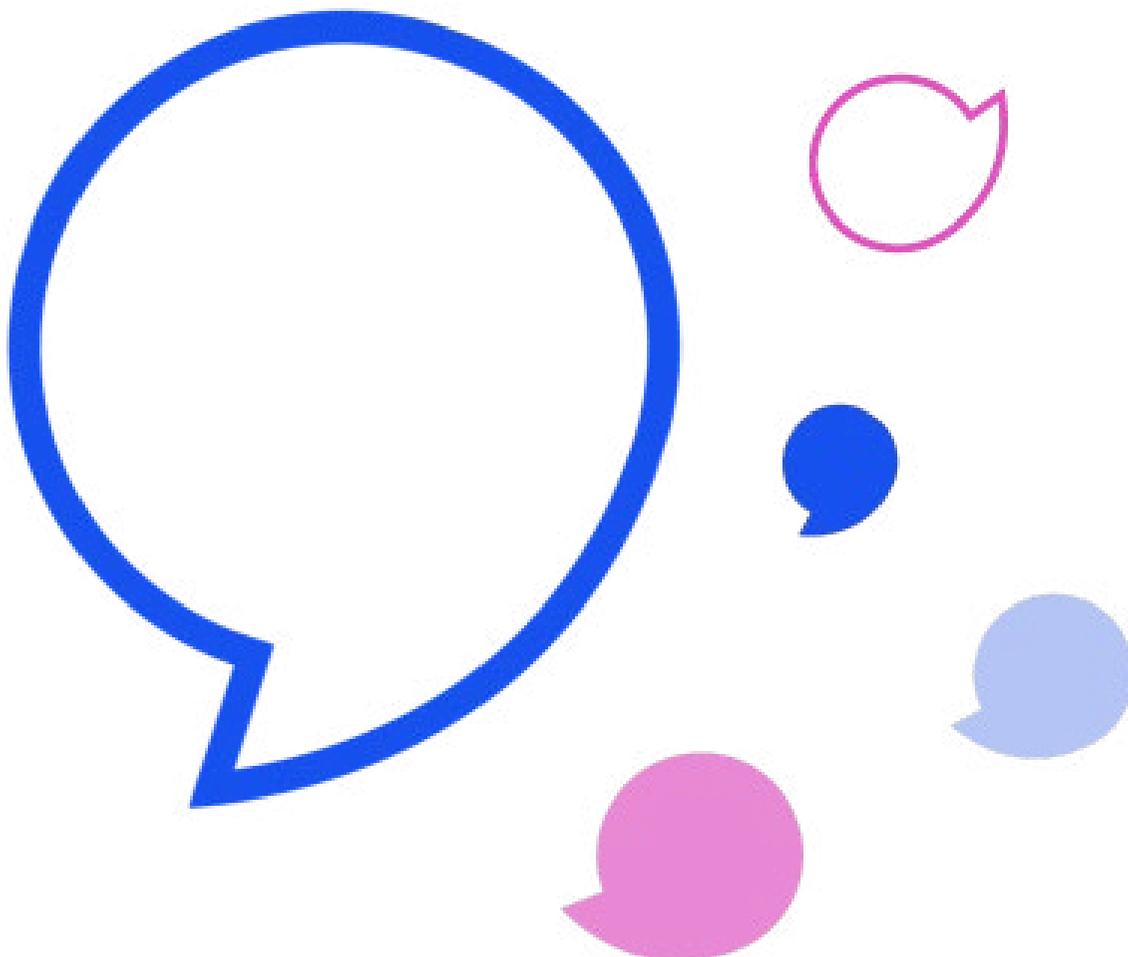
She wrote the book "Grassroots youth work: Policy, passion and resistance in practice" and she writes about youth work in journals such as Youth and Policy, Journal of Education Policy and Journal of Youth Studies. She was involved in the campaign In Defence of Youth Work and is committed to working alongside youth workers and young people to celebrate and defend open, critical and anti-oppressive approaches to youth work.

Speakers

Jess McBeath **Director, Jess Digital**

Jess is an online safety consultant with a focus on empowering digital citizens: we should all be able to live a good life online. Jess advises organisations and professionals on online safety strategy, policy and practice.

She is a member of the ASA's Advertising Advisory Committee and chairs Ofcom's independent Advisory Committee for Scotland. Jess has an MBA and a degree in Linguistics and AI.



Panel Discussion

This panel brings together partners from Police, Health, and Digital Education to explore how collaborative approaches can strengthen safeguarding and promote early intervention across communities.

The discussion will look at how youth work practice is viewed by other partners and how it might evolve to meet the challenges of a changing world — from supporting digital wellbeing and emotional resilience, to addressing youth violence, gender-based issues, and risky behaviours.

Panellists will share insights into how partnership working can build trust, reduce barriers, and promote wellbeing in both real world and virtual online spaces.

Assistant Chief Constable Tim Mairs **Police Scotland**

Assistant Chief Constable Tim Mairs joined the Police Service of Northern Ireland in 2002 and held roles in numerous areas, including Serious and Organised Crime Investigation and Operational Support, before moving to Police Scotland as an Assistant Chief Constable in July 2020. ACC Mairs is the Executive Lead for Local Policing in the East of Scotland, covering Fife, Forth Valley, the City of Edinburgh and the Lothians and Scottish Borders.



An experienced Public Order Commander, ACC Mairs is the Executive lead for Operation Moonbeam, the policing operation in relation to bonfire night disorder. ACC Mairs is also the Senior Responsible Officer for developing a new operating model for Local Policing.



Dr Claire Goodfellow **Public Health Scotland**

Claire Goodfellow is a Public Health Intelligence Adviser at Public Health Scotland with extensive experience in research and practice focused on improving outcomes for children and young people. Claire has led large-scale research projects supporting school-aged children, collaborated with partners across education, health, and the third sector, and published on topics including adolescent mental health literacy, loneliness, and social connection.

Claire currently works on the Public Health Approach to Learning (PHAL) at Public Health Scotland which is a collaborative programme between Public Health Scotland Education Scotland, and the Scottish Prevention Hub which aims to improve health, wellbeing and educational outcomes for young people.

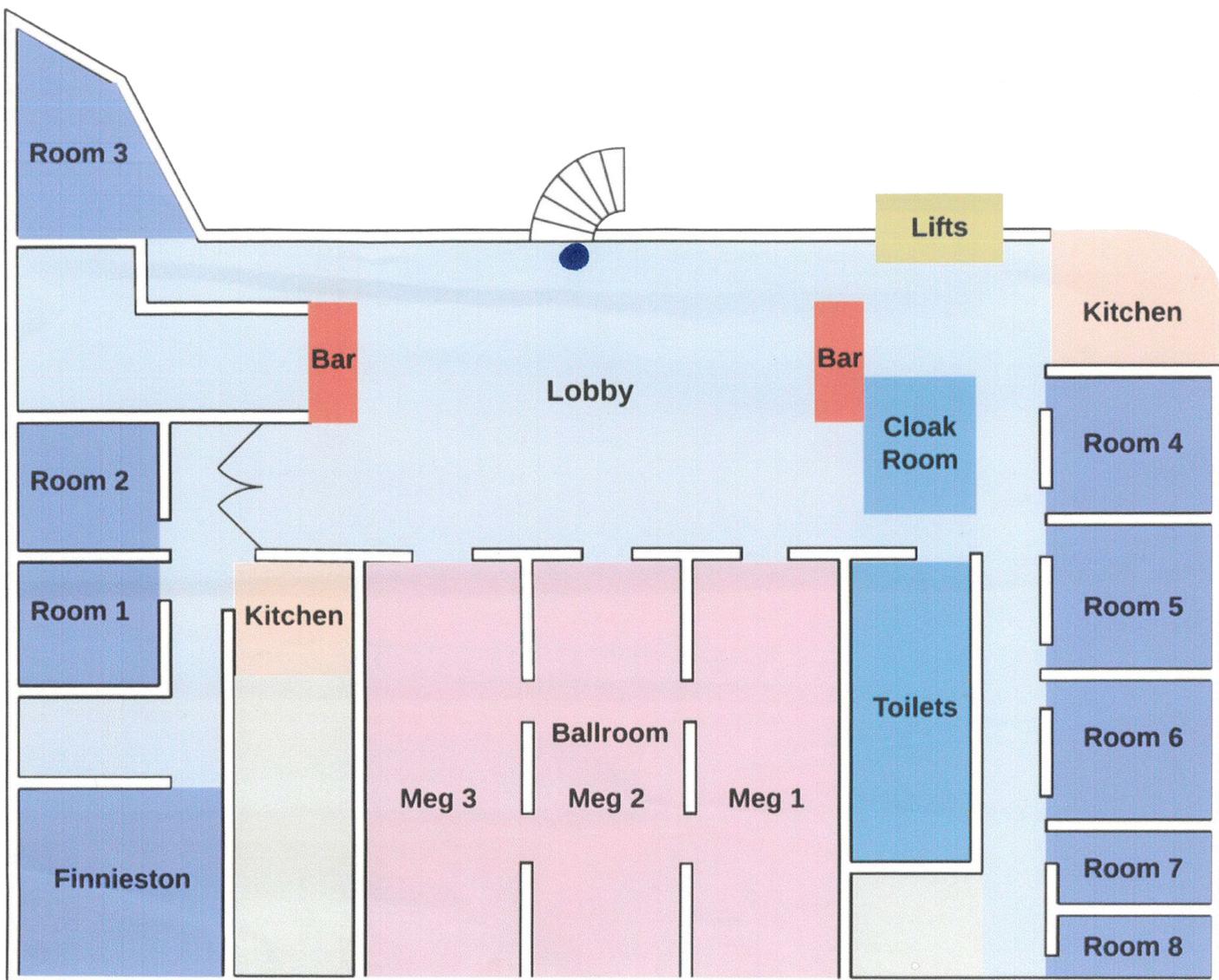
Ainsley Carnarvon **Heart of Midlothian Innovation Centre**

Ainsley Carnarvon is Head of the Heart of Midlothian Innovation Centre, where he provides strategic leadership and forges national and international partnerships that combine technology, creativity and youth work to inspire the next generation. With a background in STEM education, digital inclusion and community engagement, he is committed to creating safe and empowering spaces for young people. His work connects industry, education and the wider youth and community sectors, opening opportunities for those from marginalised and underrepresented communities.



Map

- MEG 3**
 - Room 4**
 - Room 3**
 - Finniaston**
 - Room 6**
 - Room 5**
- 1. Sextortion: What Youth Workers Need to Know** - Fearless and Police Scotland
 - 2. From Voice to Action: Youth Participation in Homelessness Prevention** - Cyrenians
 - 3. Embedding Contextual Safeguarding in Youth Work Practice: A North Lanarkshire Perspective** - North Lanarkshire Council
 - 4. "A Space to Be: Growing up and Healthy Masculinities" Lessons from The Borders** - No Knives Better Lives (YouthLink Scotland) and Scottish Borders Council
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 - 6. Shameless Youths** - West Dunbartonshire Council and NSPCC



Workshops

Workshop 1

Sextortion: What Youth Workers Need to Know



POLICE
SCOTLAND
Keeping people safe
POILEAS ALBA

While recent headlines have raised much needed awareness, many youth workers are still asking: What exactly is sextortion? How does it happen? And - crucially - how can we support young people if they're targeted?

This interactive workshop will answer those questions, share insights from young people and let practitioners delve into the range of resources available to them.

Facilitators: Lyndsay McDade (Fearless) & PC Verity Ferry (Police Scotland)

Socials: @Fearless_Scot & @PoliceScotland

Location: MEG 3

Workshop 2

From Voice to Action: Youth Participation in Homelessness Prevention



This workshop will use examples from Cyrenians' work with young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness to show the importance of trusted relationships and spaces to identify homelessness risk and prevent issues from escalating.

Through the lens of youth participation, we will also explore how young people's voices are leading change in organisational practice, service design and wider public policy.

This will include insights from young people involved with our youth participation work.

Facilitators: Maxine McGinn & Sean Tilbury

Socials: @cyrenians

Location: Room 4

Workshops

Workshop 3

Embedding Contextual Safeguarding in Youth Work Practice: A North Lanarkshire Perspective



This interactive session will take a deep dive into what Contextual Safeguarding means in a youth work setting, exploring how we can better understand and respond to the risks young people face beyond the home, such as peer influence, online harm, and community-based violence.

Drawing on North Lanarkshire Council's journey, we'll share practical examples of how contextual approaches are being embedded in youth work practice, including trauma-informed tools, cross-sector partnerships, and real-world challenges.

Facilitators: June Ford & Jennifer Lafferty

Socials: @nlcyouthwork

Location: Room 3

Workshop 4

"A Space to Be: Growing up and Healthy Masculinities" Lessons from The Borders

~~No knives~~
Better lives



This workshop explores the importance of engaging boys aged 8–12 in conversations about masculinity, belonging, and wellbeing at a much earlier stage than has traditionally been the case. Delivered jointly by No Knives Better Lives (NKBL) and Scottish Borders Community Learning and Development (CLD), the session draws on national research, youth-led enquiry, and direct practitioner experience to demonstrate why early intervention matters.

Facilitators: Vicki Ridley, (NKBL, YouthLink Scotland) & Stacey Gordon (Scottish Borders Council)

Socials: @NKBLScotland & @scotborders

Location: Finnieston

Workshops

Workshop 5 Time to Talk Collaborative



This workshop will showcase the award-winning 'Time to Talk' youth work collaborative. Time to Talk is a collaboration of five work organisations in Edinburgh focused on supporting young people's mental health and wellbeing.

This workshop will share the Time to Talk model and initial data on impact. It will use a case study approach to discuss how interventions in Emergency Departments can lead to sustained support for young people, and the unique role of youth workers in supporting mental health and wellbeing.

Facilitators: Dot Horne (6VT Youth Cafe) & Cara Spence (The Junction)

Socials: @6VTYouthCafe & @TheJunction_YP

Location: Room 6

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Workshop 6 Shameless Youths



Shameless Youths is a youth-led project, designed in partnership with the NSPCC, which recognises the supportive discussions between adults and young people around online activity.

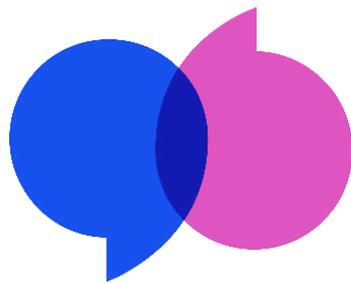
This workshop will:

- Look at the latest information and statistics on harmful online behaviours.
- Support to educate young people on online harms.
- Discuss how to have "shameless" conversations with young people who may be at risk of online harms.

Facilitators: Lucy McGovern (West Dunbartonshire Council), Euan MacLaren (NSPCC), Jenny Kerr and Jess Thomson (West Dunbartonshire Youth Council)

Socials: @WDCouncil & @NSPCC

Location: Room 5



YouthLink Scotland

#YLSConf25

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2026

