

YouthLink
Scotland

ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23



#InvestInYouthWork

A WORD FROM OUR CEO



YouthLink Scotland's CEO, Tim Frew gives us an overview of the year.

Welcome to our annual report for 2022/2023. At YouthLink Scotland our vision is for a Scotland where young people realise their full potential through youth work, and we cannot possibly make any progress towards that vision, without the support of a vibrant youth work sector.

A big thank you to youth workers across Scotland who have continued to deliver quality youth work in what has been another tough year for young people, coming out of the pandemic and straight into a cost-of-living crisis.

YouthLink Scotland retains a strong reputation with the sector and government agencies and continues to play a key role in representation.

We have been pleased to see sustained commitment to the delivery of a National Youth Work Strategy, notwithstanding changes at ministerial level following the First Minister's resignation. A new strategy is now anticipated to follow the delivery of education and skills policies.



Tim Frew

CEO, YouthLink Scotland

A key aspect of our role as the national agency is to make the connections that create impact. Hopefully, you will get a snapshot of that throughout the report, but one or two things I wanted to highlight are listed below:

- ☞ We have strengthened many of our **partnerships** with public bodies and introduced new networks. For example, a new United Voices Network was established to promote and influence anti-racist youth work practice in the sector with the support from Corra.
- ☞ We have successfully advocated for increased **investment** and partnered with government to deliver key funding streams.
- ☞ We have produced quality publications on key **policy** areas such as child poverty, education reform and employability, including our research report on youth work's role during Covid-19.
- ☞ We led a sector-wide development to refresh the National Youth Work Outcomes and the embedded Youth Work Skills Framework which will greatly enhance our measurement of **impact**.
- ☞ We raised the profile of youth work in Scotland **internationally** contributing to several conferences, including the Council of Europe Symposium on Youth Work in Hungary.
- ☞ We have continued to deliver and adapt many **national projects** and programmes, such as No Knives Better Lives, Action on Prejudice, #IWill, YouthViP, Action on Sectarianism and the award-winning Scotland's Young People's Forest.
- ☞ We conducted **research** into positive masculinity and published the 'Imagine a Man' report and toolkit.

As we look forward with advances in digitalisation, education reform and public health, we know that a vibrant modern youth work sector co-designed with young people will be essential. Young people need youth work now more than ever as they seek to navigate some of the damaging impact caused by poverty and inequality. YouthLink Scotland will continue to work tirelessly with the sector, and all partners, in order that all young people have access to high quality youth work for 2023/24 and beyond.





Our outgoing Chair, The Very Reverend Dr. Lorna Hood OBE reflects on the six years that changed her life.



So, what is YouthLink Scotland? So many times, I've been asked that question over the last six years. In fact, that was my first question when I was asked if I had any plans for retirement, and would I perhaps consider chairing YouthLink Scotland?

The standard answer of "the national agency for youth work, representing more than 100 youth organisation members across Scotland, both voluntary and statutory" doesn't really do the organisation justice. It fails to capture the extraordinary commitment and unbridled enthusiasm of all the YouthLink Scotland staff, and the passion and knowledge of the youth workers I've had the privilege to meet at conferences and field trips over these years.

YouthLink Scotland is more than just the national agency for youth work, it is a unifying force for the sector – and to say my journey has been eventful is an understatement. It has been a learning curve that continues to challenge and astound me.

#InvestInYouthWork



Throughout my working life as a Minister in the Church of Scotland I engaged with the voluntary youth sector in a myriad of ways but mostly with the uniformed organisations. Other work was more sporadic. It was only stepping into my role at YouthLink Scotland that I began to realise the incredible diversity of youth work, matched by a highly skilled and educated staff who make up the workforce – the youth work managers, workers and volunteers. All united in their belief summed up in our strapline 'youth work changes lives' – a belief underpinned by their encounters and wealth of experiences.

An organisation's strength and adaptability are truly tested in times of uncertainty and instability. That came for all of us in 2020 as Covid-19 dominated our every waking moment and continues to challenge the sector as we slowly edge towards a post-pandemic age. But this was a challenge that the youth work sector embraced, showing amazing resilience and adaptability to change. Throughout that time the staff at YouthLink Scotland continued to support the sector far beyond what could have been asked of them.

Covid was a dreadful time for our young people but without the youth work sector and the support they had from YouthLink Scotland it could have been so much worse. And the staff here at YouthLink Scotland really were at the forefront of that drive and support, deciphering the extensive regulations which changed almost weekly and sometimes daily, and providing the government with a conduit for the grants that became available.

This must be recognised and in more than words. Supportive rhetoric must be matched with supportive funding ringfenced for that purpose, giving the sector security and importantly confidence to plan for the future. When and only when that happens, will we truly be able to claim that Scotland is the best place for a young person not simply to grow up but to thrive and reach their full potential.



Our new Chair Angela Leitch shares her vision for the youth work sector.



New YouthLink Scotland Chair Angela Leitch brings a wealth of experience to the role, having served as Chief Executive Officer at Clackmannanshire Council and East Lothian Council, and more recently guiding Public Health Scotland through Covid-19. Here she shares her excitement at joining Scotland's national youth work agency.

I've worked in the public sector for over thirty years and in that time most of the organisations I've worked for have been active members of YouthLink Scotland, benefiting hugely from its expertise and insights.

Appreciating the value it brings to the sector and the consequential impact that member organisations have on the lives of young people in our communities.

I can't tell you how delighted I was to be appointed to Chair this great organisation! I've seen first-hand how trained staff working with young people can make a difference to their lives and this is especially the case in disadvantaged areas.



Youth work comes in many forms. The diversity of the sector reflects the many differences in our communities and the varied needs of individual children and young people. As we emerge from Covid-19, feel the impact of the war on Ukraine and see the consequences of the cost-of-living crisis, there's never been a more important time to make sure the sector is strong and well supported.

Failing to invest in this frontline preventative service will have consequences on the health and wellbeing of our young people in the years to come and there's plenty of evidence to back this up.

It makes it more important that there's an organisation – YouthLink Scotland – to advocate on behalf of the sector and work constructively with partners, to ensure resources are appropriately prioritised for the services that children and young people need to thrive.

It's well known that as the National Agency for Youth Work YouthLink Scotland is a trusted body that has worked constructively in partnership with its member organisations in the face of many challenges. I would like to build on that legacy, maximising the varied skills and experience of other members of the Board and Executive team.



Investment

National Voluntary Youth Work Organisations Support Fund

The purpose of this Scottish Government fund is to support workforce development within the voluntary youth work sector in order that that the sector can continuously improve and offer high quality youth opportunities that meet the needs of all young people in Scotland. The fund also aims to support the implementation of the new National Youth Work Strategy for Scotland (in development).

£600,00

made available.

54

awards were made totalling

£597,683.

42

organisations benefitted from the fund.

There were

9301

direct beneficiaries (youth work staff and volunteers).

18

specialist equalities youth work organisations benefitted from this (16 of which were new to the fund).



CashBack for Communities Youth Work Fund



The Scottish Government's CashBack for Communities programme reinvests monies recovered through the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 to support disadvantaged young people who may be at risk of entering the criminal justice system and to support those communities in Scotland most affected by crime.

YouthLink Scotland administered the CashBack for Communities Youth Work Fund as part of the CashBack for Communities portfolio.

156

awards were made totalling

£877,593

32

local authority areas

13,776

young people benefitted

£764,772

in match and in-kind funding

Social Isolation and Loneliness Fund



The overall objectives of the fund were to:

- Enable the youth work sector to respond directly and at local level to the immediate and longer-term impact of Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis on vulnerable young people.
- Contribute to addressing child poverty in Scotland in-line with Scottish Government policy and the 'Every Child, Every Chance: tackling child poverty delivery plan'.
- Support youth work organisations to establish, develop and/or maintain contact and support for young people judged to be at particular risk of social isolation and/or loneliness.

A total of

£147,226

was awarded to

42

organisations in 15 local authority areas.



The fund reached 2,173 young people in total.

Equalities group and number of young people

Black, Asian and minority ethnic young people 532

Care experienced young people 140

Homeless young people 26

LGBTI young people 210

Rurally isolated young people 310

Young carers 96

Young parents 31

Young people affected by substance misuse 168

Young people living in high SIMD areas 1273

Young people not in education, employment or training 121

Young people with additional learning support needs 345

Disabled young people 210

Young people who have refugee status 23

Networks

Our networks provide opportunities for youth work practitioners, managers and other stakeholders to explore and learn from the latest ideas, information and practice, ensuring young people in Scotland continue to access the best quality youth work opportunities.

They also provide a platform for the youth work sector to collaborate and influence key decision makers. These are our networks:



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- Local Authority Youth Work Managers
- National Voluntary Youth Work Organisations Scotland
- Youth Work Training Forum
- Scottish Youth Work Leader's Forum
- Digital Youth Network
- Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Community of Practice
- Members Network
- Communications and PR Network
- Outdoor Learning Network
- Youth Work Health and Wellbeing Network
- Policy Planning Group
- United Voices Network
- Scottish Youth Work Research Steering Group
- National Youth Work and Schools Collaborative
- NKBL Community of Practice

Read more [here](#).

Spotlight on the United Voices Network

Supporting youth workers working with young people facing racism and antisemitism

With the support from the Corra Foundation our newest network, United Voices, was established for youth workers supporting young people facing racism and antisemitism.

The network members identified a number of key issues and priorities they wished to address:

- Education and young people's experiences in schools
- Workforce development
- Creating a stronger voice for communities in local and national policy development
- Funding and fundraising support
- Peer mental health support

"I value that the network can offer resources and where I have been in difficult situations that have required mediation, members of the network have been ready to step in and help me challenge racism, oppressive or discriminatory work practices that may affect the service users where I work. I feel lucky that this space is there to hold space for me when I get exhausted from challenging oppression."



- Network member, Vicky Nyanga-Ndiaye, Project Esperanza



Policy

A National Policy Convention

The Journey to a National Policy Convention and Feedback from the Sector

Following valuable feedback from Policy Seminar delegates, which emphasised the need to strengthen policy initiatives at local and national levels and enhance the visibility of youth work in public sector policy, YouthLink Scotland hosted its inaugural Policy Convention in 2021 on the right to youth work. This event witnessed the active participation of nearly 200 delegates, including young people, youth workers, politicians, policy experts, and international speakers.

Policy Convention: Youth Work is Human Rights Work 2022

Building on the success of the online Policy Convention in 2021, YouthLink Scotland introduced "Youth Work is Human Rights Work" on Human Rights Day, December 8, under the unique banner of "YouthLink Scotland's Winter Festival of Policy."

The event featured contributions from local, national, and international speakers, highlighting the role of youth work in advancing the rights of young people across various public policy areas. Subsequently, it generated a series of comprehensive reports and recommendations

Find our [more](#).

Policy Engagement and Responding

YouthLink Scotland actively collaborated with the youth work sector to provide direct responses to over 25 policy consultations conducted by the Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament, including its committees, Cross Party Groups, and inquiries, as well as broader stakeholder consultations related to youth work practice and its contribution to local and national policy goals. This included:

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- Policy evidence review of youth work's role during and after the recovery from Covid-19.
- Scottish Government's plans for a new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Scotland.
- Liz Smith MSP's proposal for a Parliament Bill on the right to a residential learning experience for all young people.
- Scottish Government's consultation on the restriction of alcohol promotion and advertising.
- Policy briefing on positive masculinity and the role of youth work.
- Policy briefing on the overlap and distinctions between youth work and play work.

You can read our policy consultation responses [here](#).

We have also participated in statutory and voluntary working groups where youth work is integrated into public policy areas, such as the incorporation of UNCRC, Ministerial Grouping on Tackling Social Isolation and Loneliness, and the Refresh of the Play Strategy, Voluntary Action Plan, digital, and climate action.

Research

Youth Work's role during and in recovery from Covid-19

YouthLink Scotland received funding from the Covid-19 Learning and Evaluation Oversight Group to conduct an evidence review on youth work's role during the pandemic. Supported by Northern Star, key findings included:

- 🗨️ Consultations with 24 sector organisations.
- 🗨️ Identification of 76 reports specifically discussing youth work's role during Covid-19.
- 🗨️ Recognition of youth work's adaptability through digital, outdoor, and other programs.
- 🗨️ Acknowledgment of its positive impacts on mental health, connection, volunteering, family engagement, and employability.
- 🗨️ Support provided for various marginalised groups facing participation barriers
- 🗨️ Identified challenges encompassed by access to facilities, funding, and re-establishment of youth work.

Read more [here](#).

Masters Student from University of Edinburgh

YouthLink Scotland supported a Masters student in completing a placement-based dissertation exploring "The Role of Youth Work in the Scottish Educational System." The dissertation report is available [here](#).



Year 1

In May 2022, YouthLink Scotland introduced the "Imagine a Man" research report, delving into the experiences of boys and young men in Scotland. The report gathered insights from 1,230 young people, focus groups and interviews. Key findings included:

- Persistence of gender expectations without defining boys and young men solely by them
- Willingness of most boys and young men to share their concerns with adults.
- Desires for equality and eradicating masculinity stereotypes
- Expressions of needing increased funding for youth work to foster discussions, portray positive masculinity stories, and offer diverse adult role models, including women.

Read more [here](#).

Year 2

We collaborated with three youth groups in Glasgow, Dundee, and Shetland. This work focused on exploring positive masculinity through youth-led research.

Twelve young researchers, supported by seven practitioners, engaged with 367 young people in their communities.





Open Project

Through the Ideas Fund, YouthLink Scotland supported young people from the OPEN Project in Shetland to conduct youth-led research, a safe space for young people to investigate the impact of alcohol and other drugs.

Infrastructure in the Highland and Islands

YouthLink Scotland supported the development of a Highlands and Islands Network. This network focuses on creating community-researcher partnerships to enhance mental well-being.

Partners like Science Ceilidh, University of the Highlands and Islands, Scottish Community Development Centre, and Public Health Scotland collaborated in building capacity and advocating for social impacts that support mental health.

Informal Research Ethics Group

YouthLink Scotland has facilitated the creation of an Informal Research Ethics Group, providing a platform for researchers across the third sector to convene online approximately every six weeks.

Scottish Youth Work Research Steering Group

The group has convened four times during this period. The group is actively involved in conducting research ideas gathering workshops to ensure alignment with the sector's needs and set research priorities for the coming years.

YouthLink Scotland remained an engaged member of the Third Sector Research Forum (TSRF), a community focused on third sector research. Additionally, in January 2023, they supported Dr. Ian Fyfe to conduct workshops, engaging with various stakeholders like local authorities, the Digital Youth Network, and the Youth Work and Schools Collaborative.

These workshops aimed to explore the idea of future-proofing youth work. Read more [here](#).

Influencing



This year we continued to influence policymakers and key decision-makers, keeping the profile of youth work high on the policy and political agenda, all steered by our primary goal, that all young people have access to high-quality youth work.

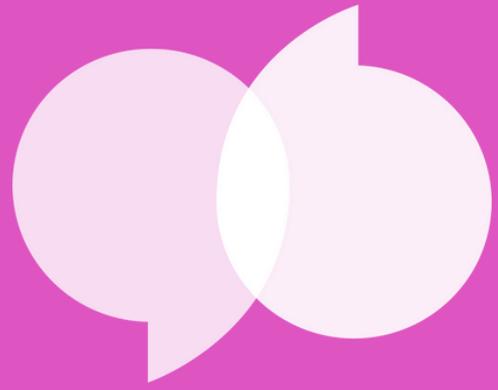
National Youth Work Conference

This year's National Youth Work Conference was held in Glasgow on 8 November with a focus on youth work and poverty.

More than one in four children and young people are officially living in recognised poverty in Scotland. This can have a significant impact on health and wellbeing, access to services, educational attainment and employability pathways.

In addition, many young people currently experience poverty related stigma and discrimination. Youth work plays a vital role supporting the needs of young people whilst ensuring they have equal access to services and that their voices are heard.

The conference explored youth work's role in poverty reduction, demonstrating best practice across the sector from practitioners, academics and keynote speakers, including the voices of individuals who have first-hand experience of the daily poverty-related issues faced and ways that the sector could work together to resolve some of these issues and continue supporting young people.



Link Magazine

The sector magazine 'Tackling Poverty' was published to coincide with the conference.

As the cost of living crisis brought poverty into sharp focus, we explored the role of youth work in helping young people to overcome the barriers of poverty.

You can read the magazine [here](#).

Manifesto Campaign Resources

In February 2023, we launched [Invest in Young People, Invest in Youth Work](#), a campaign resource for youth workers, young people and wider Scotland. This mini manifesto is broken into three sections, for National Politicians, Councillors and Grassroots Action.

It centres around the three key asks of our sector:

- A right for all young people to access youth work opportunities
- Investment in youth work services at national and local level
- Formal recognition of the positive impact of youth work across public policy

Cross Party Group on Children and Young People

We provide the joint secretariat for the CPG with Children in Scotland. This year the CPG met four times on the following themes/issues:

- Cost of Living Crisis
- Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
- Education Reform
- BAME Children and Young People – Impact of Poverty

Representation on Committees, Boards and Working Groups

YouthLink Scotland has represented the sector on a wide range of groups some of which are highlighted below:

- Scottish Attainment Challenge Working Group
- Scottish Government Working Groups – various
- Skills Development Scotland – Careers Review Programme Board.
- Cyber Resilience Network
- Scotland’s Funders’ Forum
- Scottish Public Leaders Forum
- Scottish Education Leaders Forum
- Employability Stakeholder Group
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Board
- UNCRC Incorporation (Various Groupings)
- Participation and Rights Network
- Third Sector Employability Forum
- Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) Intermediaries Group
- Volunteering Round Table
- CLD Standards Council for Scotland Sub Committees
- NYWS Stakeholder Reference Group
- Police Scotland Youth Volunteers Programme
- Education Scotland/YouthLink Scotland (Various Groupings)
- Young Scot Board
- JETS (4 Nations Training Group)
- 3 Nations (National Voluntary Youth Agencies Group)
- #IWill in Scotland Advisory Group
- Step up to Serve UK Advisory Council
- National Outdoor Education Advisory Group
- Children’s Sector Strategic and Policy Forum
- Cyber Resilience Learning and Skills Network
- Cyber Week Scotland Communications planning
- Young Scot Digi Know? Project Advisory Group
- CLD STEM Strategy Implementation Steering Group
- Working with Scotland’s Communities Survey Advisory Forum
- International Youth Policy Dialogue
- Scottish Volunteering Forum
- UK Volunteering Forum
- CLD Standards Council and Joint Education and Training Standards

Socials

230,000
website hits and over
62,000
users.

7%
increase in Twitter
followers to
21,000.

1.5m
impressions and
37,250
engagements on
Twitter.

Increase in
Facebook followers
to
6,700
up from
4,700

282,000
impressions on
Facebook

20%
increase in followers
of @IWillScotland
Twitter account to
1,200

Publications

YouthLink Scotland has continued to co-produce a wide range of publications to support the sector and get the evidence of the impact of youth work out there.

Here is a flavour of our publications this year:

- [Invest in Young People Invest in Youth Work](#) what you can do to support our young people (April 2022)
- [Scotland's Young People's Forest Phase 1 Progress Report](#) (April 2022)
- [Green Employability. What is a green job, and what skills can young people develop to make them more employable in the climate sector?](#) (May 2022)
- [Imagine a Man: What it's like to be a boy or young man in Scotland in 2021](#) (May 2022)
- [Professional Learning Resource Developing Youth Work and School Partnerships](#) (June 2022)
- [Lost in Translation](#) Working towards a shared language between schools and youth work (June 2022)
- [Youth Work: a guide for schools](#) (June 2022)
- [Youth Work and Employability: an audit of reach and impact](#) (June 2022)
- [Education Reform: Position statement from Scottish Youth Work Leaders](#) (September 2022)
- [The Link Tackling poverty: the power of youth work to change lives](#) (November 2022)
- [Youth Work Week Toolkit](#) (November 2022)
- [YouthLink Scotland Annual Report 2021-22](#) (November 2022)
- [Our Bright Future and YouthLink Scotland: Green Employability in the youth work sector](#) (November 2022)
- [Let's Talk Scottish Education YouthLink Scotland Response](#) (December 2022)
- [Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework Refresh](#) (December 2022)
- [Policy Convention 2022 Youth work is human rights work - Report](#) (February 2023)
- [Your Mental Health and Wellbeing Insights Report](#) (February 2023)
- [Youth Work's Role During and in Recovery from Covid-19](#) (March 2023)
- [Scotland's Young People's Forest Toolkit](#) (April 2023)
- [Young People & Volunteering Policy Briefing](#) (May 2023)
- [Digital Youth Work Survey 2023 Results & Key Findings](#) (May 2023)
- [YouthVIP: Youth Volunteering Schools Resource](#) (May 2023)
- [Imagine A Man Toolkit](#) (June 2023)
- [Imagine A Man Policy Briefing](#) (June 2023)

Digital Youth Work



The Digital Youth Work Conference at Abertay University in February 2023, was attended by more than 100 youth workers from Scotland and beyond.

This event served as a vital platform for knowledge exchange and collaborative learning. The conference was delivered on Safer Internet Day and received funding from the Cyber Resilience Unit of the Scottish Government

Bavaria Exchange Trip



A bilateral exchange initiative unfolded between Bavaria and Scotland in 2022, focusing on digital initiatives and young women. In June, 20 youth workers from Bavaria visited Scotland, reciprocated by 20 Scottish youth workers visiting Bavaria in October.

The impact encompassed exploration of "digital street work," closer integration of digital platforms with opportunities for young women, bolstering Scotland's digital youth network, and paving the way for ongoing exchanges among young people.

Digital Youth Work Research

An extensive research report was launched to understand the landscape of digital youth work in Scotland, assess its impact, and identify future need. The focus was on understanding whether digital youth work contributes to enhancing young people's cyber resilience.

Read more [here](#).

In addition, we:

- Represented the youth work sector on the Digital CLD Awards Development Group and CLD Standards Council Digital Competence Review Steering Group.



digital
YOUTH WORK

- Held a range of training opportunities including: VR and Youth Work, Digital Transformation, Making Digital Youth Work Accessible and Evaluating Digital Youth Work. Developing thinking around Cyber Resilience was an aspect of all the sessions
- Facilitated the Digital Makerspaces Learning Community exploring activities for the youth work makerspace environment and creating some resources which are now incorporated in the Learning Zone.

International

In the last year we have:

- Collaborated with the Scottish Government Team developing proposals for the new Scottish Educational Exchange Programme, including piloting a survey with the youth work sector.
- Promoted training and funding opportunities to the sector where possible.
- Supported the review of UK-German Connection.
- Actively participated in the International Youth Policy Dialogue Grouping and connections with four nations counterparts.
- Delivered a bi-lateral exchange for practitioners with Bavaria, with a view to future youth exchanges (funded by Bavarian International Youth Exchange Foundation).
- Built new international relationships and hosted delegations from Norway, Catalonia and Montenegro.

Our vision for education is that every child and young person can experience their right to an education which helps them to develop their personality, talents and abilities to their fullest potential.

YouthLink Scotland also works to promote and advance the role of youth work across the lifelong learning journey, including its contribution to the post-school ecosystem and youth employability.

one What is your Challenge?
I will take part in Beach event

two What things will you do to have you done in your Challenge?
1: I will build my confidence writing as part of a group.
2: I will have fun trying new experiences.
3: I will learn new things.
4: Meet new people.

three Show what you did in your Challenge.
Write, draw, add a photo, or make a video.
Tell us what you have learned.
Walks, went to Art. Drawing about life's expectations.

Record the time spent on your Challenge
Date: 22/07/2022

Age: 18

Gender: F

Signature: [Handwritten]

Education and Skills

Scottish Attainment Challenge



We have continued to deliver the Scottish Attainment Challenge national programmes to foster collaboration between youth work and formal education. YouthLink Scotland's Youth Work and Schools Partnership programme, one of the Scottish Attainment Challenge national programmes, works closely with Scottish Government and other SAC partners to promote and develop the role of youth work in closing the poverty related attainment gap.

We do this by sharing good practice, supporting practice development and helping to gather evidence of the impact of youth work on attainment. Read the latest case studies and best practice [here](#).

Supporting the sector

- Published a suite of professional learning resources to support youth work and school partnerships.
- Delivered professional learning opportunities to over 350 youth work and formal education practitioners.
- Worked with Education Scotland colleagues and Regional Improvement Collaboratives to facilitate projects aimed at accelerating improvement.
- Collaborated with the youth work sector to refresh the National Youth Work Outcomes and further embed the Youth Work Skills Framework in the model, providing resources and support to use this as a shared impact measurement approach.
- Representation of the youth work sector on the Career Review Programme Board and development of a sectoral change plan to articulate youth work's role in delivering as part of the career services ecosystem.

The [National Youth Work Outcomes and Youth Work Skills Framework](#) supports young people to recognise and articulate their journey through youth work.



Education Reform

YouthLink Scotland has been engaging across all aspects of Education Reform, to elevate the voice of young people participating in youth work.

We have consulted the sector and amplified the voices of over 700 young people as part of the National Discussion on Scottish Education. We have contributed the sector's voice to the following:

[Young People's Perspectives on Education Reform](#)

[YouthLink Scotland's Response to the National Discussion on Education Reform](#)
[This report focuses on the a vision for a reformed education system - and what needs to change in order to deliver the vision](#)

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[YouthLink Scotland Response to All Learners in Scotland Matter](#)
[YouthLink Scotland response to recommendations following the National Discussion on Education Reform](#)

[YouthLink Scotland Response to the Review of Qualifications and Assessment](#)
[Our response to Professor Hayward's interim review from a youth work perspective](#)

[YouthLink Scotland Response to It's Our Future, the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment](#)

Scottish Youth Work Leaders' Forum

Read more [here](#).

#InvestInYouthWork



"We call for Education Reform to drive a transformed education system that seeks to address the purposes described in Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)."

- Scottish Youth Work Leaders' Forum





~~No knives~~ Better lives

NKBL is a collaboration between the Scottish Government and YouthLink Scotland —the national agency for youth work in Scotland. We're a national initiative, delivered at local level with support available to any local authority in Scotland.

We seek to understand and take action on the causes and consequences of youth violence in Scottish communities. We bring people, knowledge and practice together to learn about what drives violence amongst young people, sharing information and resources.

Our highlights:

257
courses
undertaken on
the Learning Hub.

Presented to
458
multi-agency
practitioners.

20
Virtual Reality
game sessions in
secure and
residential care.

290
practitioners
trained in-person
and live online.

355k
users reached
through Instagram
and TikTok.

18
five-star reviews
on nine online
courses.

120
young people
worked with
directly.

926
young people
played Nae
Danger
interactive
game.

Public Health and Wellbeing

We know youth work is the ultimate preventative spend. It's vital that youth work is built into education services, mental health services etc and should be a critical part of public health – ensuring a holistic approach to young people's wellbeing.



Your Mental Health and Wellbeing Insights Report

The Scottish Government commissioned YouthLink Scotland to work in partnership with Young Scot, Children's Parliament, and Scottish Youth Parliament as part of an engagement activity to gather the views of children and young people on accessing information and support for mental health and wellbeing.

According to the findings, children and young people aged 8-to-25 years old reported common themes when it comes to getting information or support for their mental health and wellbeing.

They stressed the importance of relationships with others in spaces where they feel comfortable to talk about mental health and wellbeing.

The respondents weighed up the risks and benefits of support before accessing it, with confidentiality being the most important factor when seeking information and support.

Read more [here](#).

Inquiry into the Health and Wellbeing of Children and Young People

Our views on the Scottish Government's Inquiry into the health and wellbeing of children and young people during the pandemic.

Read more [here](#).

ECO-FEST



Learning for Sustainability

Scotland's Young People's Forest



Youth Leadership Panel

12

Youth
Leadership
Panel
meetings.

Collaboration
with youth
climate
leaders in
Stockholm in
March

2023

A site visit to
Baron's Haugh
in March

2023

Speaking at
the Dandelion
Festival in
Glasgow.

Contributing to
discussions
addressing the
nature crisis in
Scotland.

Participation
in a BBC
Scotland
Documentary
featuring
interviews at
RSPB Baron's
Haugh Nature
Reserve in
Motherwell in
November

2022

Testimonial

"Setting out to do something you're not sure you're cut out for, within a supportive team where everyone brings different skills, provided with the resources you need, and managing to do what you set out to is what empowerment feels like. It's what we need to happen across the world, in every sphere of society at every scale. It was amazing to be part of that process, and I felt extremely privileged to have been given the chance."

- Josie, Youth Leadership Panel member



Expert Advisory Group

Two online meetings in August 2022 and November 2023.

Focused on developing ideas for future funding and grants at local and national levels in Scotland to ensure stability and sustainability for the project.

Young people on the panel shared knowledge about potential sites and provided initial thoughts and reflections on in-person visits.

Collaboration with the Advisory Group to inform decisions on the project's future.

RSPB Baron's Haugh Partnership.

YouthLink Scotland, Young Scot, and RSPB Scotland established a partnership agreement with key aims for a 12-month engagement.

The RSPB will provide support for the panel at the Baron's Haugh nature reserve one day every two months.

The key aims include equipping young people with the necessary knowledge and skills to govern and maintain their own Young People's Forest.

Supporting the creation of inspiring natural spaces for people to explore the connectedness of natural and cultural heritage.

Learning about native Scottish wildlife and land management to support native species.

Developing ideas for welcoming, accessible forested places.

Contributing to creating outdoor spaces for people to reconnect with nature.

Empowering other young people in the local area to take action on climate change and environmental issues.

Sharing knowledge from the partnership between RSPB and Scotland's Young People's Forest.

Scottish Enterprise

Ongoing communication with Scottish Enterprise regarding the Riverside Business Park site.

Scottish Enterprise support the process of securing land for potential site options.

Exploration of Master Planning processes and other site options across Scotland.

Woodland Trust Scotland Partnership

Partnership established with the Woodland Trust to support the program's environmental goals.

Providing expertise in planning, resourcing, and capacity for site management.

Guiding young people toward a sustainable future for the programme.

Site Preparation

Discussions held with funders and partners through the Expert Advisory Group.

Identifying the best approach to ensure sustainable and impactful activities.

Meeting with a local youth worker from the Riverside Site (Irvine) area to better inform site-related decisions.

SYPF Toolkit

Development of the Young People's Forest Toolkit, designed with input from the Youth Panel and Advisory Group.

Launched on April 11, 2023, as a free, downloadable toolkit for youth workers.

Focus on green skills and climate education for young people.

Offers inspiration, activities, and lesson plans for engaging youth groups and empowering them to take climate action.

Training and Webinars

YouthLink Scotland delivered training and webinars linked to the SYPF ambitions.

Topics covered include climate hot seat question time, green employability, and eco anxiety.

Climate Hot Seat Question Time Event

Brought young climate activists and politicians together to discuss climate and nature emergencies.

Questions addressed themes of urgency, taking action, climate change, transport, and renewable energy.

Resources

Green Employability resource for young people and youth workers.

'Local Elections 2022 – Useful Resources' to engage young people in policy and decision-making.

Research review on Green Employability, examining green job pathways, opportunities, and barriers for young people in Scotland's youth work sector.

Read more [here](#).



Our Bright Future

Our Bright Future, a part of the larger Scotland's Young People's Forest initiative, has played a significant role in engaging young people in environmental issues and fostering green employability in the youth work sector.

Over the course of its activities, OBF achieved the following:

- Conducted 5 events, which provided valuable insights and opportunities for youth engagement
- Attracted 156 event participants, indicating strong interest and participation
- Featured 12 expert speakers, contributing their knowledge and expertise
- Created 2 resources for young people and youth workers
- Produced 4 promotional YouTube videos to raise awareness and disseminate information about the programme.



#iwill

#Power
Of Youth

#IWill Scotland

The #iWill movement in Scotland aims to encourage and empower more young people to take action, make a difference and influence change within their communities, the environment and broader society through activities such as volunteering, fundraising, mentoring, campaigning and activism.

Empowering Young Leaders

16 new young people recruited and inducted as Ambassadors.

80 opportunities provided for Ambassadors to amplify their voices on their social action and create positive change.

Power of Youth Day

Celebrated on June 6th with an online campaign dedicated to young people in Scotland.

Hosted a Parliamentary reception during Volunteers Week, with the presence of 60 partners.

#iWill Week 22

Held from November 21st to 25th, featuring 12 events and a Scottish Parliament motion and debate.

National Recognition

3 Ambassadors nominated for National Diversity Awards.

Ambassadors acted as keynote speakers at conferences and events, reaching an audience of 1280.



New Initiatives

Successfully organised the first UK Wide #iWill Residential.

Welcomed 17 new Power of Youth Charter Signatories in Scotland. Conducted 16 training sessions for Ambassadors.

87% of young people reported an increase in skills and well-being from being engaged in the movement.

Collaborated with Ambassadors and the UK Movement to develop a new model for the future growth of #iWill in the coming financial year.

Ambassadors played a pivotal role in influencing policy, contributing to national discussions on education, the SG youth strategy review group, youth work as a human right policy convention, SG climate change policy, and actively participated in party political conferences.

Organisational Growth

Forged a new partnership and secured investment through the Co-op Foundation, officially launched in May 22.

Testimonials



Ciara: "I thought raising awareness of disabilities would lead to a more inclusive and diverse environment. It has led me to disability activism where I can advocate for all disabled students to be heard and authentically be."

Tyler: "With the strength of the youth voice in Scotland, we are making more of a difference and having a bigger impact."



[Read more here.](#)





#YouthVIP is a partnership between YouthLink Scotland, Project Scotland, and Young Scot, working alongside a steering group of young people from across Scotland.

#YouthVIP was created as a result of the [Scottish Government's National Volunteering Framework](#), developed to provide a clear and definitive narrative for volunteering in Scotland.

Collaboration and Impact

Regular communication with all 32 TSI's/partnerships, with 22 of them actively engaged.

Ongoing brand development to disseminate the program for wider organizational and partner use. 28 Local Authorities have embraced the Get the Gen training, with 208 participants from 67 different organisations.

Developed the Youth Volunteering Guidelines as a trusted resource. Continuing collaboration with the Legacy Group and the recruitment of 24 new young volunteers.

Successfully organised the YouthVIP Summit in October 2022 with 60 attendees.

Launched an interactive resource for Youth Volunteer Champions Schools created with young people. Ran the #VolunteeringMakesMe campaign from December 5th to 9th, 2022, to promote the benefits of volunteering.

Initiated positive conversations with Volunteer Scotland to consider quality assurance in youth volunteering.

Read more [here](#).

Testimonial

"The support from YouthVIP has been exceptional and has helped advance youth volunteering across Scotland. A continued positive focus on building the outstanding youth volunteering we have in Scotland and fully achieving the YouthVIP recommendations as part of the Volunteering Action Plan for Scotland would be great. Greatly appreciate the fantastic work that YouthVIP has undertaken that has been exemplary and made a real difference for youth volunteering and volunteering in general. Many thanks."

"I found out about volunteering with Young Scot about over a year ago and it totally changed my life. For the past year and a half, I have been volunteering on the Historic Environment Scotland (HES) project. It was an experience of a lifetime. I loved meeting new people, making new friends, and making a massive difference. It is definitely an opportunity I think everyone should have and should go forward for, if you see something you like. Go for it, you never know what could happen. Young Scot has given me so many opportunities and I could not be more grateful, I recommend it 100%."

Young Volunteer



Participative Democracy Certificate

Highlights:

- 44 youth workers received comprehensive training to facilitate the PDC award for the young people they support.
- 23 young people successfully completed and received the PDC accreditation.

Participatory Budgeting Course

In May 2022, we celebrated the launch of its inaugural formal qualification for young people in Grant Making and Participatory Budgeting (PB). This course, available at SCQF Level 5, is provided free of charge and aims to empower young people and community activists to actively participate in decision-making processes at national and local levels.

YouthBank Scotland

YouthBank Scotland is an empowering initiative led by and for young people, dedicated to supporting young people in their endeavours to make meaningful contributions to their communities.

Objectives:

- Engage young people actively in decision-making and grant-making processes.
- Invest in the potential and innovative ideas of young individuals.
- Encourage and inspire others to adopt similar practices of empowerment.

The Participative Democracy Certificate (PDC) is a youth-focused award designed to provide SCQF level accreditation to young individuals actively engaged in group decision-making processes.

This certificate aims to nurture and cultivate participants' communication, decision-making, and negotiation skills within the framework of democratic engagement.

It emphasises youth-led participation, ensuring that the voices of young individuals are not only heard but acted upon in local decision-making on services and budgets.

The programme was developed collaboratively by YouthLink Scotland - the national agency for youth work, in partnership with various organisations including COSLA, Young Scot, the Democratic Society, Homeless Network Scotland, Glasgow Young Movers, and the Scottish Centre for Community Development. Fife College is spearheading the course delivery over the next three years.

Read more [here](#).

Highlights

Three SCQF level training units have undergone re-accreditation and substantial revamping.

An impressive total of 28 qualifications were achieved by young participants, signalling a successful year in enabling and recognising the efforts of our young people.

Read more [here](#).



action on
prejudice

Action on Prejudice aims to tackle prejudice and discrimination in Scotland through training, resources, and community engagement.



Highlights

Website Launch

The new website, launched in October 2022, garnered 1,519 visits within the initial five months. Despite the lack of updates on the old website during the transition phase, the annual targets for visits to both old and new websites were surpassed by over 1,000 users and visits.

Training Programmes

Three training programmes — Introduction to Intersectional Youth Work, Introduction to Racial Literacy, and Disability Equality Training — were conducted, reaching approximately 120 youth workers across Scotland. Positive feedback highlighted increased confidence in approaching sensitive topics, facilitating open discussions, and acquiring practical tools for more inclusive practices.

EDI Community of Practice

The Equality and Diversity in Youth Work Network transformed into the EDI Community of Practice to extend its accessibility to the wider youth work sector.

Themed sessions on hate crime, intersectionality, and human rights attracted around 60 practitioners. Feedback indicated increased insight, access to valuable resources, and constructive engagement with partners from various sectors.

Read more [here](#).



Action on Sectarianism focuses on addressing sectarianism in Scotland through education, resources, and social media engagement.

Key Highlights

The resources provided by Action on Sectarianism were well-received, with 24,705 downloads and 15,115 page views on the website, showcasing the demand and engagement with the materials offered.

Social Media Impact

Sunshine Communications' efforts on Instagram and Facebook, including promoted posts, significantly amplified engagement with Action on Sectarianism's initiatives.

The statistics from April 2022 to February 2023 indicated a notable increase in engagement, impressions, and reach across these channels, showcasing positive responses to the campaign.

Read more [here](#).

Workforce Development



Our mission is to empower and strengthen the youth work sector to better serve the needs of young people.

We are committed to delivering impactful training programmes that align with our professional frameworks and cater to the evolving demands of youth work.

Highlights

2615

learning places delivered

103

different themes covered in our training sessions

60

unique learning events

23%

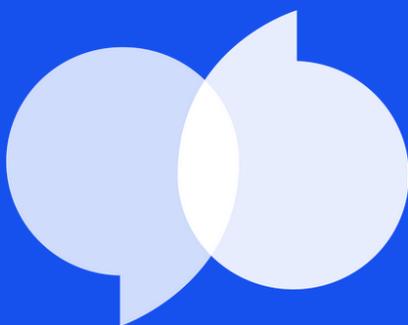
in-person delivery of events/sessions

32%

in-person learning places in large conferences

32

Local Authorities reached with our programmes



Read more [here](#).

Spotlights on key initiatives

The Learning Hub - NKBL e-learning: A versatile platform providing asynchronous professional development opportunities, focused on violence prevention and restorative approaches.

National Youth Work Conference

Addressing the pivotal role of youth work in poverty reduction, featuring diverse voices, workshops and discussions.

Award-Winning Learning for Sustainability Training: Recognised internationally for promoting sustainable development through engaging workshops and collaborations.

Digital Youth Work Conference: A platform to explore innovative practices and discuss the integration of technology into youth work.

Course Content

An extensive array of sessions and workshops covering themes like climate change, cyber resilience, mental health, intersectional youth work, and more.

Partnered with various organisations, each course contributes to professional learning time and aligns with the CLD Competences and National Occupational Standards for youth work.

Geographical Spread

Our training reached participants across all 32 Scottish Local Authorities and extended beyond Scotland, offering learning opportunities nationally and internationally.

Training for Young People

While our primary focus is on capacity-building within the sector, we also offer training directly to young people, fostering their leadership, social action, and decision-making skills.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL REPORT

YouthLink Scotland

The following is an extract of the financial information contained in Youthlink Scotland's audited report and financial statement for the year ending 31 March 2023. Copies of the full accounts may be obtained from the registered office.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023 (including income and expenditure account)

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2023	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2022
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Income						
<i>Income from charitable activities:</i>						
Services	1,503,574	-	1,503,574	1,536,968	-	1,536,968
<i>Income from other trading activities:</i>						
Conferences and Training	248,077	153,290	401,367	183,704	120,915	304,619
Investment income	3,301	-	3,301	1,704	-	1,704
	1,754,952	153,290	1,908,242	1,722,376	120,915	1,843,291
Total Income						
Expenditure						
<i>Expenditure on charitable activities:</i>						
Services	1,719,540	153,290	1,872,830	1,697,104	120,915	1,818,019
	1,719,540	153,290	1,872,830	1,697,104	120,915	1,818,019
Total Expenditure						
Net income/(expenditure) before transfers	35,412		35,412	25,272		25,272
Gross Transfer between Funds	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net income/(expenditure) before other recognised gains and losses	35,412			25,272		
		-	35,412		-	25,272
Revaluation of Investment	(8,413)	-	(8,413)	1,898	-	1,898
Net income/(expenditure) and net movement in funds for the year	26,999		26,999	27,170		27,170
Reconciliation of funds						
Total funds brought forward	418,055	-	418,055	390,885	-	390,885
Total funds carried forward	445,054	-	445,054	418,055	-	418,055

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2023

	Unrestricted £	Restrict ed £	Total Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total Funds 2022 £
Fixed assets	12,097	-	12,097	8,474	-	8,474
Current assets						
Debtors	102,094	-	102,094	119,252	-	119,252
Cash at bank	569,424	-	569,424	646,865	-	646,865
Investment	97,441	-	97,441	105,958	-	105,958
						872,075
	768,959	-	768,959	872,075	-	872,075
Liabilities						
Creditors falling due after less than one year	336,002	-	336,002	459,817	-	459,817
Net current assets	432,957	-	432,957	412,258	-	412,258
Creditors falling due in more than one year	-	-	-	2,677	-	2,677
Net assets	445,054	-	445,054	418,055	-	418,055
The Funds of the charity						
Unrestricted						418,055
General	445,054	-	445,054	418,055	-	418,055
Restricted	-	-	-	-	-	-
	445,054	-	445,054	418,055	-	418,055

#InvestInYouthWork



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